

Meadows School

London Road, Southborough, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 0RJ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Meadows School is a non-maintained residential special school, owned by Barnardo's children's charity. At the time of the inspection, there were 80 students on roll with three students residing at the school. The residential provision is in one house in the local community within walking distance of the school. The school provides education and residential provision for students who have an education, health and care plan and who have social, emotional and/or mental health needs.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 February 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 20 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The staff have a purposeful focus on providing specific support for students. Students respond to the nurturing, individualised support that they receive and flourish. Working collaboratively with staff across the school, including the strong well-being team, the staff use their in-depth knowledge of each student to ensure that support advances their development.

All the staff have a common aim of preparing the students, socially and emotionally, for their future life after school. Students are helped to develop their independence, self-confidence, self-identity and to keep themselves safe. Their emotional well-being and mental health have a high priority. Support is easily accessible through a school psychologist, school counsellors, the team of therapists and referrals to external specialists when necessary. This strong aspect of pastoral support helps the students develop coping strategies and resilience to manage their difficulties. Relationships between staff at all levels and students are warm and good humoured and have a positive impact on the progress that students make.

The recent introduction of an enrichment curriculum alongside the academic curriculum provides greater bespoke opportunities to meet students' individual needs. The residential staff contribute to supporting students in both their classroom-based learning and their enrichment activities. Students thus receive consistent, personalised assistance to manage their school life from staff who know them very well.

Students are confident in approaching staff and putting forward their views. Regular key-work sessions, residential meetings and student voice provide opportunities for students to express their opinions and make suggestions. The managers and the staff are responsive, demonstrating that they value and respect the students' views. Currently, there is no independent person appointed outside of the school whom the students can contact if they have any concerns.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

The safeguarding of students is embedded in all aspects of school life. An extremely strong safeguarding ethos is inherent in all the staff's practice, ensuring that students' safety and well-being is predominant.

Led by a skilled and experienced designated safeguarding lead, the team of safeguarding officers is proactive and responds appropriately to all concerns raised. Effective systems are in place for the staff to raise concerns. Appropriate referrals are made to external safeguarding agencies when necessary.

Safeguarding training for the staff is wide-ranging and frequently updated so that they have the necessary knowledge and awareness of the current risks that students may face and are able to implement protective strategies. Educating students to keep

themselves safe is a priority. External specialist services are used effectively to raise the staff's awareness of specific safeguarding issues such as criminal exploitation. For example, a charity specialising in early intervention work has provided training for staff and is also working on a one-to-one basis with some students identified as being at risk of involvement in county lines and gang activity. Knowing each student very well, the staff successfully identify their individual needs and tailor support to advance their development and reduce the potential of harm.

Care plans thoughtfully focus on students' current objectives. Targets are specific and well defined to help students achieve their goals. Individual risk assessments and crisis management plans clearly identify the behaviour causing concern, but some lack explicit strategies to guide the staff in protecting the students.

Relationships between the staff and the students are meaningful, trusting and positive and are at the heart of successful behaviour management in the residential provision. Behaviour is excellent. The staff model appropriate social interactions, supporting the students to make friends, to maintain friendships and to learn to live with others. Students stated that 'the staff are lovely and very helpful', that they feel safe and can talk to staff if they have any worries or concerns. Students respond to the support that the staff offer.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The strong and united senior leadership team is highly competent, experienced and confident in maintaining a positive culture in which the staff support students to achieve to the best of their ability. Senior leaders are passionate in their drive for improvement. They provide effective leadership so that all the staff embrace change and help each student to fulfil their true potential.

The experienced and knowledgeable residential team works collaboratively with the well-being team and education colleagues to provide appropriate guidance to students to meet their individual needs. All the staff share a common purpose of providing students with an excellent residential experience to enhance their learning outcomes and make significant personal and social development to advance their future life chances.

The residential staff undertake a wide range of training to meet the diverse and complex needs of the students. Expanding their knowledge of safeguarding issues and of promoting students' well-being is a high priority. The staff are positive about the support that they receive from senior managers both informally and through regular supervision and appraisal.

The head of care is confident and decisive in challenging views and decisions that are not in the best interests of students. His depth of experience and knowledge of the students is influential in ensuring that students' specific needs are met.

A governor, who has extensive and relevant experience, oversees the residential provision and safeguarding within the school. In addition to routine management and independent visitor monitoring, his expertise provides senior leaders and the governing body with constructive and effectual scrutiny and oversight.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that a new independent person is identified, and children are informed who this person is and how to contact them.
- Ensure that all residential students' risk assessments provide the staff with clear strategies and guidance to reduce risk.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC024060

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Eddie Riley

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspector

Jan Hunnam, Ofsted Inspector

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