

The Caldecott School

Station Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6PW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a non-maintained special school which provides a service for day and residential children between the ages of seven and 16 years of age. It is a school for children who experience social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties and who may also have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or autism. The residential provision can accommodate up to 10 children. At the time of this inspection, there were two children in residence.

The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 November 2023

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: 31 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff welcome new children to the home following a thorough referral process and transition planning period. This is regularly reviewed and adapted to meet the needs of each child. Staff are nurturing and caring. One child said, 'I was really upset on the first night, the staff stayed with me and hugged me until I could fall asleep.' A parent added, 'So far, it's been absolutely amazing, I can't fault them whatsoever.'

Communication between staff, children, teachers and the children's families is excellent. Children are supported by staff to achieve their targets. The progress that children make is significant and often exceeds expectations. For example, children who had not engaged in formal education before arriving are now preparing to sit exams and attain functional skills awards. The staff ensure that children's achievements are celebrated in a personalised way.

Staff use key-work sessions to support children to reach their goals. These sessions are captured extremely well in written records. They follow the child's journey and record their progress and further goals. These discussions are a valuable way of further enhancing the positive relationships between the staff and children and supporting children to build on their skills. Children's voices are heard in all aspects of their care planning. This ensures that children feel respected and valued.

The children enjoy happy and fulfilled lives. The staff offer a multitude of activities in the home and outdoors. The children enjoy bicycle rides, walks and looking at wildlife in the extensive grounds. Children enjoy weekly visits to local attractions alongside various activities and sensory areas in the home.

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

Staff use inventive strategies to help to repair relationships between children and their families when this is required. Staff work collaboratively with families to help them to learn new routines and to better understand children's emotions and experiences.

The head of boarding ensures that safeguarding practice is strong. Any concerns are thoroughly investigated and recommended actions are carried out. All staff receive training in safeguarding children and whistle-blowing. They confidently talk about the action that they would take to safeguard children should this be required.

The staff promote and celebrate positive behaviour with the children. Staff also spend time sensitively reflecting with children when they have struggled emotionally. The small team of staff offer children consistent boundaries. They support children to

understand their behaviours and the impact that they can have on themselves and others.

The staff ensure that any incidents when children need to be held are performed safely. Physical intervention is rare and only used as a last resort. The children are offered an opportunity to reflect on the incident, and staff are also well supported by the head of boarding.

Senior leaders ensure that there is a robust selection procedure when recruiting new staff. Records are appropriately maintained, and safer recruitment processes ensure that only suitably vetted staff are employed to work with the children.

The boarding house is large, spacious and furnished to provide a warm and nurturing environment for the children. There are clear arrangements to oversee any health and safety issues. Regular checks ensure that the environment is well maintained.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The head of boarding is passionate and committed to the care, safety and welfare of the children. He has effective oversight of all aspects of the daily running of the boarding house and care that the children receive.

A child-focused ethos is embedded in staff practice and ensures that children have an active voice in their lives. Children are involved in writing their care plans and are expertly supported to achieve their goals and ambitions.

Communication between staff, education professionals, children and their families is a real strength. Daily handovers ensure that all adults are aware of how the children's days and evenings have been. This ensures that people are well prepared and able to respond to how children are feeling. One parent commented:

'Over the last year, [name of child] has improved even more and come on leaps and bounds, there are loads of opportunities at the boarding house to learn life skills. They have taught them so many things, it is excellent.'

The staff receive a comprehensive induction into the boarding provision. The head of boarding provides staff with regular and meaningful supervision and an annual review of their performance which sets out an individualised development pathway. The staff speak extremely positively about their experiences of working with the children and feel supported by the head of boarding and each other. One described the setting as a 'family away from home'.

The boarding provision is always discussed at the regular governors' meetings, and updates are provided by the head of boarding. These feed into the headteacher's reports, which are shared with the governing board. However, while regular visits to the boarding house are carried out by two of the governors, arrangements to confirm which governor has overall responsibility for the oversight of the residential provision

are still being discussed. This has not impacted on the quality of care that children receive.

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

Point for improvement

- At least one governor should have responsibility for the oversight of residential provision but responsibility for the quality of provision lies with the governing body as a whole.

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: 1276600

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Stacey McShane

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01303 815678

Inspector

Sara Stoker, Social Care Inspector

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