

Unsted Park School

Munstead Heath Road, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1UW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Unsted Park is a residential special school for boys and girls aged seven to 19 years. The school provides day and residential provision for students with autistic spectrum disorders and associated conditions. Residential placements are provided over two floors within the main building.

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 November 2018

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 5 December 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Students are positive about their experiences of the residential provisions. They said that they feel listened to and that there are a lot of activities they can explore. For many, the newest resident, Foxi the dog, has really helped them to develop social skills and increase their exercise.
- The head of care, appointed since the last inspection, has taken steps to improve the experiences for residential students, with vigour and drive. He has brought increased professionalism and enthusiasm to the experienced staff team. Staff are positive about the new approach to care.
- Parents talked positively about the school and about how the residential provision has helped their child to develop. They said that there is excellent communication and that they are able to share their views on their child's care. They said that they feel they are part of their child's care planning.
- Students are protected from harm. They are supported to understand the risks of being online and of increased independence in the community. Systems for reporting child protection and safeguarding concerns in the school are strong, supported by the additional scrutiny of the safeguarding team.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The head of care has spent his first two terms in post identifying areas for development. There has been good progress in remedying some concerns and addressing areas for improvement, but not all these changes are fully embedded in practice. Recommendations have been set for those areas that were identified during the inspection as requiring most improvement.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that risk assessments are consistently relevant and reflective of students' needs that have been identified across all their plans and assessments.
- Ensure that all changes to medication are confirmed by the prescribing practitioner.
- Ensure that checks of the independent visitor's suitability are also available on the single central record.
- Promote greater professional curiosity when considering the comments students make that are deemed to be of a safeguarding nature.
- Ensure that staff consistently consider the impact that bullying has on other students using the residential provision.
- Review the reformat of the school website to make it easier for parents and students to navigate.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Residential students are positive about their experience of the residential provision. They feel that they are listened to by staff. Most students said that the residential provision helps them with their education. This is in part due to the long distances they would need to travel otherwise. Students and parents are very positive about the residential provision. They feel that staff listen to their views and ideas.

Staff hold regular meetings with residential students. The notes demonstrate that students raise the worries and questions that are important to them, and that staff act to resolve these issues, however small. The involvement of the head of care in these meetings supports the swift resolution of students' concerns and requests. When residential students are unhappy with a decision that has been made, they feel they are listened to by staff, even if the outcome does not change. Complaints are rare, but when residential students do raise a concern, care is taken to listen to what they have to say, to thoroughly and sensitively investigate their concerns and to feed back to them in a timely way.

Residential students make good progress as a result of accessing the residential provision. Students are encouraged to practise and develop their independence skills, such as budgeting and making meals and using public transport. Plans and target tracking have been extensively developed by the head of care and the staff team but are still embedding into practice. For example, the goals that are included in the residential termly report are not always translated into the placement plan. For one student, the termly report includes a sensible and realistic goal for them to cook one meal a week with staff support, but this goal is not included in the placement plan. Keyworkers are extremely knowledgeable about their key students' needs and are keen for them to develop and succeed.

Managers have introduced a 'positive behaviour support plan' tool, to record the different stages of crisis for each student and the support that should be tried or avoided to de-escalate the behaviour. The inclusion of the way that the student is likely to present at each stage is helpful, as is the guidance about the techniques that staff should and should not use. There is some duplication between this and other behaviour and risk documents, and a small number of suggested approaches are included in one and not another. The support plans are clear and helpfully direct staff on how best to support students. They contain each student's voice throughout. Records of physical intervention are clear and demonstrate strong and constructive debriefs for students and staff.

The residential environment has been significantly improved, utilising the input of students. Careful consideration is given to creating a calm sensory environment. Residential activities have been improved to help students to develop their fine motor and sensory processing in line with occupational and speech and language therapy plans. The recent arrival of the residential dog, Foxi, has encouraged some students

to take more exercise and, with careful staff support, the time they spend with Foxi is helping children to increase their interaction and empathy. Students who are interested are also learning how to care for a dog, which they really enjoy.

Medication storage and administration have improved because of some challenging situations with students. Records are now stored securely. There are good links with external medical professionals. However, medication amendments for those over the age of 18 have not always been confirmed by the prescribing practitioner.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Residential students said that they feel safe at the school and that they can approach staff or another trusted adult with any worries or concerns. Staff are confident in their role in protecting and safeguarding students and they know who to report concerns to. Students are supported to understand their vulnerability and the risk of exploitation in all forms, but this is done in a manner that does not scare or alarm them. Regular sessions in residential time explore various life skills including preparation for employment or university and recognising who a genuine friend is.

Processes for recording and reporting child protection and safeguarding concerns are clear across the school. Joint working with partner agencies is sound, and incidents are reported as required. The safeguarding team across the school and the residential provision has regular meetings to discuss students of concern and any developments in ongoing investigations. In addition, the 'watch list' is a helpful tool to enable staff and managers to maintain a watching brief about lower-level safeguarding concerns relating to students. Records do not always evidence the professional curiosity and clear decision-making process that staff describe.

Bullying has been flagged as a concern for some residential students. Staff have been supporting all the students involved. Leaders have considered well the impact on students during the school day and have taken decisive action. However, they have not fully recognised the potential impact on the residential provision.

Risk assessments are detailed and appropriately include past behaviour alongside the level of risk and the controls that are needed to reduce risks in the future. The documents do not always include information about when children last exhibited each behaviour and whether it was in school, in the residential setting, at home or in the community. This is a missed opportunity to show the students' progress and increasing or decreasing risk. The need for the robust sharing of information between school and residential staff was not included in the risk assessment for one child, even though this is an important aspect of the support staff are, in practice, providing to him.

Students are protected from avoidable risks through safer recruitment practice. However, the checks of the independent listener's suitability are not available on the

single central record.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, a new head of care and headteacher have been appointed. They are reinvigorating the school, and this is reflected in the renewed enthusiasm that the care staff have for their roles.

Staff are positive about the increased momentum in the improvement in the residential provision. They said that they now feel involved in the overall plan for the home and have a say in how changes are introduced. The head of care regularly circulates the residential development plan to all staff, inviting suggestions and comments. Staff said that this makes them feel involved in the plans to improve the home, and that they feel listened to. They described very good support to fulfil their roles and to manage any difficult situations they experience in their personal lives. The staff team is increasingly stable and sufficient.

Residential staff are confident in the training they receive, both core training and more bespoke opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. For example, staff requested additional training on mental health first aid, and this was provided. They said that they feel much better equipped to meet students' needs as a result. The training that staff have received in radicalisation and sexual and criminal exploitation has informed their thinking about potential risks faced by the students.

The head of care has introduced many changes to recording systems and the way in which the care that students receive is planned. The placement plans are now meaningful and practical documents that are likely to be helpful to staff in managing the students' day-to-day experiences in the residential provision. It is positive that each student's views are included, although some information is missing across the plans. The model, which includes goals and targets being recorded alongside photographs, is envisaged, over time, to reflect the students' progress and achievements in all aspects of their residential and education targets.

All recommendations and breaches of national minimum standards at the last inspection have been fully met. There is an ambitious development plan in place. The head of care is identifying many areas that can be developed further and is open to the thoughts and ideas of students, parents and staff. Information about students is easily accessible by those who have a need to know, and parents said that information sharing has significantly improved in the residential provision. It was noted, however, that the school website is difficult to navigate.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC363144

Headteacher/teacher in charge:

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Jennie Christopher, social care inspector (lead)
Stephanie Murray, senior Her Majesty's Inspector



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