

Charlton Park Academy

Charlton Park Road, London, LONDON, SE7 8HX

Inspection dates	01/12/2015 to 03/12/2015	
The overall experiences and progress of young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Parents value the service and trust the staff. They appreciate that their children get a lot out of the residential experience and are well looked after. One says: 'I can't speak highly enough of the place. I am so grateful.' Another states: 'We really, really like Rainbow House. He is very safe there. Always looks forward to his stay.'
- The focus on positive behaviour management works well. As staff really know the young people and how they communicate, they are able to focus on what they 'say' through their behaviour.
- Parents and young people value the individual online 'Wiki' software which helps both parties understand what has been going on at the residential house and of any progress and achievements. 'Wikis' are person centred and empowering, as students can share information, express themselves and celebrate their progress and achievements in a safe way.
- There is a focus on keeping vulnerable young people safe. Appropriate training maintains staff skills in safeguarding. The building is maintained safely. An effective recruitment system helps ensure that only suitable adults have access to the young people. The independent visitor, who is regularly in the house and knows young people well, strengthens safeguarding.
- Despite changes in the management of the residential setting this year, an experienced deputy, with the support of the leadership team, has provided consistency and continuity for young people.

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- consider training more staff to drive the school minibus
- look into the possibility of having a reference request letter which relates only to the residential provision
- continue to recruit to permanent vacancies in the care and nursing staff teams.

Information about this inspection

The school received three hours' notice prior to the start of this inspection. Inspection activities include: contact with the statutory safeguarding authority to gather their views; scrutiny of documents and records; observation of students and activities during residential time over two evenings, interviews and observations of staff; scrutiny of 'Annex A' information provided by the school; and contact with parents. Parent View information is not specific to residential care.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Graves

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

This is a residential special school maintained by the Royal London Borough of Greenwich. It provides up to 220 places for students aged 11 to 19 who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. It also provides 12 residential places (including part-time places) in four shared bedrooms in the on-site residential unit known as Rainbow House, situated in the main school. There are currently 203 students on roll, eight of whom use the residential service. The residential service is available on weekdays during term time only.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of young people

Good

Young people look forward to their stays in Rainbow House, with some getting very excited about attending. One parent describes how their child 'will not come downstairs without their suitcase' when they know it is a day when they are staying in residential.

Outcomes are good. That young people develop the confidence to stay away from their families is a considerable achievement in itself. With improved confidence, most want to increase the nights they stay in residential and make the most of their stays. One says, 'I would like to spend more time here.' Young people look forward to seeing the friends they have made outside of the school setting.

Targets are clear and drawn up with the input of families and all professionals involved in young people's lives. Young people gain confidence and independence skills as they work towards meeting their targets, for example, pushing a trolley to help staff clear the table after meals.

An independent visitor says, 'Residents have good, positive attention. They learn good communication skills and listen to each other in meetings.'

Young people experience a wide range of activities. They enjoy marking special occasions such as Christmas with trips out, celebratory meals and parties. They participate in the wider community, for example, by representing their peers at Children's Society meetings. Good use is also made of the varied sensory toys and equipment provided in the residential accommodation to meet individual needs and interests, as well as extensive facilities in the school building, such as a hydrotherapy pool, to give young people an enjoyable experience and help them progress.

The residential provision's Statement of Rights is very evident in practice. Personal choice regarding participating in activities is central to young people's stay. Staff empower young people by asking for their views about all aspects of the residential experience, for example, what they would like to eat and when they would like their personal care. Weekly meetings provide a formal opportunity for young people to give their views. To upgrade bedrooms, a few young people are choosing the colours of soft furnishings. Young people can be as active and involved in activities as they wish. Some feel tired after a busy day in school and may prefer to 'chill' and relax in their 'home away from home'; this is respected and facilitated.

The quality of care and support

Good

The quality of residential care is good and person centred. A member of staff comments on their job: 'Brilliant! Love it! The kids are fantastic.' A nurse says: 'The students absolutely come first.' An independent visitor says a strength of the service is a sense of both the staff and the young people 'belonging'. Also that, 'Young people want to come. Christmas and celebrations are good – Halloween, Chinese New Year, Woodlarks – they help with fund raising.'

There is a strong focus on equal opportunities and equal access. Staff see the young people as teenagers as well as taking into account their cognitive functioning. A member of staff says, 'Vital for them to do the normal activities teenagers do and get a chance to do things for themselves – to be as independent as possible.' A parent says that their child experiences 'great activities – all age appropriate'. Some choose to attend Scouts weekly.

The school is a 'Centre of Excellence' for the MOVE programme (Mobility Opportunities Via Education). Staff track progress or declines in meeting young people's targets so that they may adapt individual programmes. They work closely with the physiotherapist, making speedy adjustments to individual programmes when there are changes in young peoples' health. They also make adaptations to enable young people to continue to use the service, for example, supplying specialist beds.

Staff try to make the building as homely as possible. They maintain a clean and tidy environment and there are good laundry arrangements. A parent says, 'Very homely there, warm and friendly.' Visits by the safeguarding governor are effective in identifying any shortfalls in the premises or practice. For example, they identified when there was a 'dip' in the appearance of the building and when record keeping declined under a previous head of residential.

Young people benefit from strong relationships with a core staff group, some of whom have worked in the residential house for a considerable time. Agency staff are used consistently to fill vacant posts. This can cause worry to parents who believe agency staff may not know their children as well as permanently employed staff, although no evidence supports this. There is one trained member of the residential staff who drives the minibus. Although school staff are sometimes available to drive and good use is made of public transport, a parent suggests that training further staff would enable young people to go out more often, particularly to places hard to reach by public transport.

Gentle and supportive management of their behaviour helps young people feel secure. Staff do not use sanctions or restraint but manage young people's behaviour positively.

An attractive student handbook helps students understand what to expect during their stay, the rules and who will be caring for them.

How well young people are protected

Good

Parents speak of trusting the staff to care for their children. Some report finding it difficult to 'let go' but now value how much their child gets out of using the residential service. They find that effective communication with staff reassures them and keeps them fully informed about any changes in their child's health or well-being. A social worker describes Rainbow House as a 'good service' and finds that staff are 'very interactive' with the young people.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of each young person's needs and know them well. This helps to safeguard young people as staff are alert to any changes in their behaviour or mood. They are aware of the particular risk of abuse to young people with disabilities, including communication difficulties. Staff experience training geared to the needs of such vulnerable young people, updated to reflect current issues, for example, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. There is effective oversight of keeping young people safe by the designated person, governors and leadership team. The designated officer in the local authority finds the school's designated person is 'proactive, gets in touch to seek advice and guidance'.

Young people stay in a safe environment with a well-maintained building and regular safety checks and fire drills. Risk assessments contribute to a safe environment and keeping young people safe when on trips out.

Staff know that young people's needs and therefore their care plans, can change rapidly, for example, due to declining health. Care planning is therefore comprehensive and multi-disciplinary, with young people's own input evident. Staff remain alert to updates and changes in

care plans with input from all the professionals involved in young people's lives, for example, speech and language therapists and physiotherapists. Staff do not use sanctions or restraint due to the young people's needs. Rather, they focus on changes in behaviour and what the causes may be.

A robust recruitment system including checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service and obtaining references helps ensure that staff are safe to work with young people. Reference requests are generic so not entirely relevant to residential staff. Staff know they must disclose charges or convictions once in post; this helps ensure their suitability from the time of the initial checks.

Medication arrangements are sound. There is appropriate storage and administration, witnessed by a second member of staff. Two medication errors occurred since the last inspection. Staff followed procedures in reporting this immediately and seeking urgent advice, fortunately with no ill effects on the young people concerned. Management took action in reviewing practice and staff conduct and tightened administration procedures as well as disciplinary action. Overall, there are few incidents or accidents.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

A staff member describes the leadership and management team as 'listening and responsive', following up any concerns or suggestions raised. The impact of changes in the management of the residential service is limited due to the constancy provided by a long-standing deputy with support from the leadership team. A new manager is currently undertaking their induction into the post. Two governors who visit the residential provision in the role of 'critical friends', provide effective challenge, support and oversight.

Communication with families is effective. Leaders and managers make sure families receive information about students' health, well-being and progress. Monthly newsletters include updates on what is happening or planned for the residential provision.

Staff training is regular and relevant to the young people's needs. Staff are confident about suggesting training which they feel would benefit them and the young people. Records of training are difficult to negotiate but the new manager may adapt these when she has completed her probation. Staff get the support they need and appraisals are due soon.

Changes implemented in response to suggestions for improvement made at the last inspection show the residential provision's capacity to improve. All young people have now had the opportunity to practise an emergency evacuation of the premises during residential time. There are now better entrance arrangements to the residential area. Advertisement of permanent vacancies resulted in some recruitment to the staff team but this is an ongoing process. Trained agency staff cover some vacancies, including nursing staff. This provides young people with a degree of consistency and ensures appropriate supervision with sufficient staff to young person ratios.

To ensure that all information about the residential service is up to date, management took action during the inspection to clarify admissions to the residential provision; this now makes clear that only young people who are on the school's role may apply to stay in the residential house. Also updated is the Ofsted contact number.

The leaders and managers have a good understanding of the residential provision's strengths and weaknesses. They take decisive action to maintain the quality of care and young people's safety. They aim high and want the best for young people, including considering options for

future development which may benefit them.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	138547
Social care unique reference number	SC044128
DfE registration number	203/7199

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	203
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to19
Headteacher	Mark Dale-Emberton
Date of previous boarding inspection	10/02/2015
Telephone number	020 8249 6844
Email address	MDALE-EMBERTON@charltonparkacademy.co.uk

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