

Sky College

Sky College, Pickeridge Close, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7HW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The school is a local authority provision for boys. Boarding is used flexibly to meet individual needs and can offer an extended school day for a small number of pupils. Pupils can board for up to four weekday nights during term time. The school has 51 boys on role; six are currently using the boarding facility. In addition, four boys have extended days when they take part in activities and have access to additional staff support.

Inspection dates: 29 to 31 January 2018

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of previous inspection: 8 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Children enjoy boarding. They like the staff who care for them. They are proud of their boarding house and their achievements in boarding and in college. In addition, they convey that the activities that they get to do are very good.
- Staff and children have developed strong relationships based on trust and mutual respect.
- The staff team members have the children's well-being and growth at the heart of all they do. They are dedicated to their roles, well trained and committed to the children who they care for.
- Safeguarding procedures are well known to staff, who fully understand their roles and responsibilities in this area. Staff receive good-quality training, which ensures that their knowledge and skills reflect any developments in safeguarding practice. The leadership and management of the boarding provision are good. There is a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and plans are in place to further develop the boarding provision.
- A therapeutic approach is integral across all aspects of the college. This provides children with the support that they need to develop and progress.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Ensure that the records of the annual appraisals of staff reflect the two-way nature of this process.
- Ensure that the independent visitor's monitoring reports cover all the required areas, including: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish).

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

Recommendations

- The records of staff's annual appraisals need to improve to reflect more of the two-way nature of this process.
- Ensure that the monitoring reports of the independent visitor include:
 - checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children;
 - evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded;
 - assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and
 - opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish).

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make from good to excellent progress from their starting points in boarding and thrive in all aspects of their lives. They are valued and nurtured by staff who care passionately about each child. Children build positive relationships with the staff team members and with the other boarders. Children who board have increased attendance, engagement and achievements in comparison with day pupils. This is due to the ongoing support that staff provide for children who board.

Moving into boarding is taken at a pace which is best for each child and their family. Staff employ sensitivity and skill and they work closely with families to gradually build confidence and allay any anxieties. This measured and sensitive approach sets the foundation for ongoing work with the child and their family.

Children have access to a range of therapists at the college who help them to understand their behaviours, emotions, feelings and to learn self-management strategies. The college's therapeutic approach is integral to all of the work across the college, ensuring that a consistent approach is taken to caring and educating each child.

Healthcare arrangements at the college are good. Staff work with external professionals effectively to ensure that children's healthcare needs are met. In addition, healthy lifestyles are promoted through support and guidance around healthy eating and exercise.

An excellent range of activities are available to occupy children outside of education time. Children find these interesting and rewarding and children are supported to learn new skills and pursue new hobbies.

The boarding accommodation is welcoming, spacious and comfortable. Each child has their own room, including those who stay on a flexible boarding basis. Children are encouraged to personalise their rooms with posters and photographs.

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

Safeguarding practices at the college are excellent. The safeguarding lead is exceptionally knowledgeable. She ensures that staff are very well trained and have a clear working knowledge of safeguarding processes. Staff spoken with understood their roles and responsibilities with regard to protecting children. Records of safeguarding events are excellent. These clearly evidence the high-quality work undertaken.

Children said that they felt very safe at the college. This view was echoed by the parents. Staff work with children to develop trusting relationships and provide them with positive role models. Children said that they had a number of staff who they would speak to if they were worried or upset.

The staff are skilled at teaching the children to keep themselves safe. Of particular note is the excellent online safety work that the staff have done with children.

Since starting boarding, children's risk-taking behaviours have dramatically decreased. The staff support children to develop by using positive reinforcement, including the reward points system. Staff ensure that they help children to understand how their behaviour impacts on themselves and others. Children are very proud of their achievements in this area.

Children are supported to learn about equality and diversity. Recently, staff have successfully supported children to understand gender equality.

Since the last inspection, there have been no incidents of restraint or of children going missing from the boarding provision.

Risk assessments are in place when required. Staff keep these under review so that they reflect the current risks to each child. Children are involved in the development of their risk assessment. This helps to develop their understanding of risk and how to reduce it.

The recruitment process follows the safer recruitment guidelines. This approach protects children from adults who may wish to harm them. Since the last inspection, the quality of recruitment records has improved. The record of staff interviews is more comprehensive and there is clarity on how the decision was reached to employ or not.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for further development. They are committed to providing children with a high-quality boarding experience. They actively keep themselves and the staff team up to date with developments in practice and research.

Regular visits to the boarding provision are carried out by an independent person. At the last inspection, it was raised that the reports of these visits would benefit from increased evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided and more detailed comments on the records reviewed. This has not been addressed and the recommendation stands, as these reports do not aid the leaders and manager in developing the service that they provide.

The boarding provision is led by a well-trained, experienced head of boarding. He is well respected by his team, by the children and by the children's parents. Staff are very positive about the support that they receive from the head of boarding. They feel that he welcomes their ideas and provides them with very good-quality support both formally and informally. Currently, records of staff's annual appraisals do not reflect the two-way nature of this process. In addition, some records did not consistently evidence enough of the discussion and lacked clarity regarding the goals and targets set for the coming year. This has already been identified by leaders and managers as an area for development.

Staff are effective and strong advocates for the children in their care and their

families. They will robustly advocate for children when they feel that children are not receiving the services that they need. The staff team members are very skilled at working with other agencies and across the college site. They appropriately and effectively share information. This work ensures that there is a consistent and holistic approach to care.

Since the last inspection, recording systems in the school have improved. Children's records now provide a good insight into their boarding lives. The addition of children's scrapbooks, which contain photographs of activities and events, is a good addition.

Each child has a detailed individualised plan, which is kept under review to ensure that it meets both the child's current and emerging needs. Children are involved in devising their own plans, helping to develop a sense of ownership.

The school's policies and procedures are suitable and adhered to in practice. All are now dated at the point of review. Some policies were being reviewed and updated during this inspection. As a result, the school's website is in the process of being updated.

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: SC038758

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Richard Berry

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Wendy Anderson, social care inspector



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