

Northeast Manor School

Northeast Manor School, Newhaven Road, Rodmell, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 3EY
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Northeast Manor is a co-educational, independent day and weekly residential special school for children aged between 10 and 17 years. The school also offers flexible boarding arrangements for individual students. The school provides educational and residential provision primarily for students who have autistic spectrum disorder and/or dyslexia. The residential accommodation is provided in two separate boarding houses for up to 30 boarders. Currently no female boarders are accommodated. At the time of this inspection, one boarding house was unused. The school is located near to Lewes, East Sussex.

This inspection was aligned with an education inspection that resulted in an overall judgement of good. A separate report is available.

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 March 2018

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers outstanding

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

Date of previous inspection: 14 November 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Experienced and capable leaders are managing the school. They are reflective of practice, putting the needs of boarders first. They are providing clear strategic direction and consolidating the strengths to drive forward continuous improvement.
- Boarders are happy with their residential experience and make good progress. They develop confidence and grow in their self-esteem. For example, those who struggle with social communication make friends in their peer group.
- The education, care and therapy teams work exceptionally well together. They all know the individual needs of each boarder, communicating effectively to provide a consistent approach.
- Staff keep boarders safe. The risk assessment process is impressive. Boarders can do the activity of their choice in the community while being kept safe.
- Strong safeguarding practice is embedded in the culture of the school. All staff know what to do in the event of a concern, no matter where an incident occurs. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) refers to external agencies when necessary.
- The DSL keeps good records, including a detailed chronology demonstrating when she has challenged other professionals' practice. She advocates stalwartly for all students' welfare.
- Staff address e-safety on many levels. Senior leaders have conducted a comprehensive audit of practice and have plans to further improve systems. Staff work with boarders and their parents to ensure boarders' ongoing safety in the cyber world.
- Boarders are in good health. Staff agree with parents the delegated responsibilities. These include the individual protocols for medical emergencies.
- Boarders' behaviour is exceptionally positive. They are respectful of each other and the adults around them. Senior staff use restorative practice to manage any misunderstandings due to social communication difficulties.
- Staff plan admissions carefully. They use a bespoke approach so that the individual needs of a new boarder are met, for example by building up the number of nights stayed.
- Key staff keep the physical environment safe. They are responsive to requests for repairs. They have a rolling refurbishment programme to improve the boarding facilities, such as plans to renovate the showers.
- Governance is a strength. A board of governors with a range of expertise acts as a critical friend. Governors include boarding in their monitoring and reporting, often visiting the accommodation and spending time with boarders to gain their views.

The residential special school's areas for development:

- Some care staff have not started a level 3 qualification within three months of confirmation of employment.
- The missing-from-care policy does not require staff to share information with the police about boarders identified as being at risk of going missing, unless there is a missing episode.
- Senior leaders have not considered site security, especially the school boundary, in future development plans.

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

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for residential special schools:

- All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within 3 months of confirmation of employment. (National Minimum Standard 19.2)

Recommendations

- Review the missing person policy to include the sharing of the risk assessment and person profile with the police and any other relevant personnel before any episode of missing.
- Consider the inclusion of site security arrangements in future development plans, especially the boundary of the school site.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Boarders enjoy staying at the school. They relish the experience, engaging in a range of activities. Boarders, who have social communication difficulties, make friends. They enjoy a level of social interaction commensurate with their individual needs. For example, staff allow boarders on the autistic spectrum to take a break from social interactions and spend time alone in their room when they wish to do so. Boarders make good progress, such as being able to lead school tours and mentoring younger boarders. A boarder said, 'I enjoy boarding. There is nothing I want to change.' Another boarder said, 'It is a very good school. I like being here.'

Boarders enjoy warm and trusting relationships with staff. Their voice is key to that experience. Boarders feel that staff are available to them and listen to their views. They know how to complain, but do not feel the need to do so. A member of staff said, 'Strong relationships between staff and children are the backbone of our residential care and something we are very proud of.' A parent said, 'The staff are amazing at supporting [name of boarder]. I cannot speak highly enough of them. They are brilliant with the boys and my son enjoys it there.' Another parent said, 'Things have got better and better. My son is happy and settled.'

Boarders access the activities of their choice. For example, some boarders choose to access sports in the community while others prefer to use the school gym. Other boarders elect to do an activity in the common room. A parent said, 'The activity programme is doing wonders for my son's social skills.'

The head of boarding requests the relevant information before accepting a referral. She plans admissions carefully, tailoring the process to meet the individual needs of each boarder, such as building up the number of boarding nights. A parent said, 'My child had several taster sessions of boarding, which were extremely well managed, and which enabled us as a family to decide that boarding was the right choice.'

Catering staff know individual boarders' dietary needs. Boarders enjoy a good range of food while being kept safe, for example in the event of an allergic reaction to certain foods.

Therapeutic staff use an evidence-based approach to meet the individual needs of boarders within the multi-disciplinary environment. They use a protective behaviours process to help boarders develop their own thinking and problem-solving skills. Boarders gain confidence to keep themselves safe, while seeking the help of staff when they need it. The impact of this support is evidenced over time, with boarders making good progress in their emotional well-being and social awareness. Their confidence and self-esteem grows.

Staff meet boarders' health needs. They agree with parents the delegated responsibilities. They administer medication under the guidance of the school nurse.

Staff support boarders to develop independence skills such as travelling in a taxi or cooking. A parent said, 'The boarding programme of activities gives my child the opportunity to learn vital life skills in a safe and supportive environment.

Boarders say they can contact their parents in a variety of ways, but predominantly through their electronic devices or smartphones.

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

The DSL is extremely dedicated and tenacious in working in the best interests of boarders' safety and welfare. She advocates for the welfare of boarders when any issue comes to light, no matter where or when the incident occurred. Her records of child protection and safeguarding are of high quality. All staff are notably alert in using lessons learned from safeguarding incidents to teach boarders how to keep themselves safe. Other professionals have total confidence in the response they get from the school's safeguarding leaders when dealing with concerns about individual boarders.

Staff know what to look out for to help keep boarders safe and protected, including potential risks of extremism, radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. If staff identify any concerns about boarders, they use the school's effective systems to pass these on promptly to the relevant people.

The whole school approach to e-safety is good. Key staff have completed an audit to challenge and review their own systems. Staff keep boarders safe on a multitude of levels. They educate boarders, have filter systems in place and have clear rules on access to the internet through unsecured networks. Staff agree with parents the privacy settings on devices and the expectations of behaviour. Both parties monitor the use of electronic devices, with the school taking the lead to refer to other agencies for support and help if required.

Boarders know where to seek help and support. Useful information is readily available throughout the boarding facilities and they can speak to staff at any time.

Staff are adept at writing comprehensive risk assessments. They are not risk averse and seek to find creative ways of managing risks so that boarders can access their activity of choice. Of particular note is their approach to keeping boarders who have particular health needs safe while they are in the community. Staff agree individual emergency protocols with parents, and the delegated responsibilities are clear.

Key staff adopt safer recruitment practice. They record the systematic checks of the suitability of staff and other adults on the single central register. These records

include details of any person over 16 living on the school site, with clear information relating to their interactions with boarders.

Bullying is rare and dealt with well. The assistant headteacher maintains a comprehensive oversight across the school day and boarding time. She ensures that staff take alleged or actual incidents and concerns seriously, and that they thoroughly investigate them. Staff are able to analyse what behaviour is due to social communication needs rather than bullying. They work in close partnership with boarders and parents using a restorative practice approach. Boarders live in a calm and harmonious environment.

The conduct and behaviour of the boarders are exemplary. Boarders, who struggle with social integration, demonstrate considerable maturity and social grace, stopping to greet adults and visitors they pass and demonstrating impeccable manners. A parent said, 'My son loves the boarding and he has developed into a polite young man. This is due to the school's strong stance on behaviour. When our son does something wrong they are straight on it and communicate very well.'

Missing from care is not an issue. In conjunction with parents, staff write detailed risk assessments to keep boarders safe. The current policy, however, does not include the sharing of the risk assessment and person profile with the police until there is an episode of missing.

Maintenance staff keep the houses in good condition. They are responsive to immediate needs as well as having an ongoing refurbishment programme, for example to improve the shower facilities. They ensure that the necessary health and safety certificates are in place for the environment. They ensure that staff carry out regular trial evacuations to ensure that boarders know how to leave the building in an emergency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Education, care and therapy teams work in a joined-up and cohesive way. They write care plans that are of an excellent standard. This provides for a consistent approach for boarders who thrive on structure and predictability. The multi-disciplinary team places boarders' needs at the centre of their practice. A parent said, 'The staff are really attentive. Everyone throughout the school knows my child's needs.'

Staff do not see disability or health issues as a barrier. They work with parents to minimise risk and delegate responsibilities effectively. Staff arrange access to the facilities in the local community, for example a local football team training ground. Boarders develop a sense of belonging and purpose while pursuing their dreams, such as professional football training. Their self-esteem and confidence blossoms as well as their sporting ability. A boarder said, 'This has changed my life.'

All staff celebrate the uniqueness of each boarder. There is an inclusive culture in which staff understand the idiosyncrasies of each individual and allow them to express their identity. A member of staff said, 'We are an inclusive school and will not tolerate prejudice in any form.' A parent said, 'He can just be who he is and fits in perfectly, unlike at his previous two schools where he was the 'oddball' and was very well aware that he was different to everyone else. Finally he is happy being himself.' Another parent said, 'He has changed from being a struggling child who felt the difference between himself and other 'normal' children and a failure, to being a confident young man, accepted and appreciated for his quirkiness, and he has a lovely group of friends.'

Parents speak highly of their relationship with the school. They say staff keep in contact regularly and provide them with updates. There is a sense of joint working, with professionals and staff aiming for the same goals.

Senior leaders have shown exceptional leadership and have ambition for continuous development and improvement. A parent said, 'There have been significant improvements with the new headteacher.' Senior leaders use monitoring systems to drive forward change. There is a culture of continuous improvement, with senior leaders using self-reflection and independent monitoring to bring about any necessary change. However, development plans do not currently include site security, and especially whether improvements to the school perimeter are required.

A team of competent and experienced governors underpins the leadership. The governors act as critical friends, often visiting the boarding houses and listening to boarders' views. They provide a report about their independent visits that the head of boarding uses as a further tool to improve practice.

The head of boarding gives formal supervision with staff, providing support and challenge with a strong focus on boarders' needs and development. Staff speak highly about the head of boarding arranging for their individual training. However, she has not arranged for some to commence a level 3 qualification within three months of confirmation of employment.

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: SC050107

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Ms Claire Farmer

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Inspectors:

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