

Centre Academy East Anglia

Church Road, Brettenham, Ipswich IP7 7QR

Inspection dates

13/09/2016 to 15/09/2016

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement 3

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement 3

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement 3

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision requires improvement because

- There are six national minimum standards that are unmet and that have the potential to impact on children's welfare and health.
- Care planning does not consistently identify children's health needs or specific vulnerabilities.
- The systems to administer medication and safely control stock are not robust.
- Incidents that indicate bullying are not always logged as such. Additionally, staff are not trained in bullying prevention and detection.
- Safeguarding systems are established and understood, although training has not been sourced for the designated lead in order to cascade training to staff.
- The activity programme lacks local community engagement and fails to provide an exciting range of varied activities.
- The school keeps children safe. Supervision of children is adequate. The management of safeguarding concerns and allegations is good.
- The accommodation has improved, with refurbishment of decor and additions to improve privacy.
- The food choices provide adequate alternatives and healthy options at all meals.
- The impact of the residential experience adds to the personal and social development and achievement of children. They benefit from being at the school.
- Children's behaviour is good, providing good peer role models to new residential pupils, and resulting in a harmonious and supportive environment.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell to ensure that children's physical and mental health and emotional well-being are promoted. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of medicines (including controlled drugs) and dealing with medical emergencies. Policies for administration of medication should reflect guidance provided by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (Handling of Medicines in Social Care). (NMS 3.6)
- Children develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills through the accessible and stimulating environment created by the school. Children are supported to take part in school-based and out-of-school activities. (NMS 10.1)
- The school has, and consistently implements, a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying, including cyber bullying, and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used, and how this will be recorded and managed; and arrangements for searching children and their possessions. (NMS 12.1)
- Staff receive appropriate training and support to recognise and deal with incidences of challenging behaviour or bullying. This training should include assistance in managing staff members' responses and feelings arising from working with children who have emotional difficulties which result in challenging behaviour. Staff training is regularly refreshed. (NMS 12.3)
- Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up to date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school. (NMS 19.1)
- The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere, such as in the child's statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day-to-day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan, there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable, the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in their development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans. (NMS 21.1)

What does the school need to do to improve further?

There were no areas identified on this inspection.

Information about this inspection

The welfare inspection of the residential provision was undertaken by two inspectors following a notice period of three hours. The inspection activities included: meetings with staff, senior managers, children and young people; scrutiny of policies and records; and observation of practice, meals and early evening routines. Parents gave feedback directly to inspectors through telephone discussions.

Inspection team

Deirdra Keating

Lead social care inspector

Natalie Burton

Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Centre Academy East Anglia is a residential special school located in the Suffolk village of Brettenham, between Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds. It can take a maximum of 50 boys and girls, including 29 places for boarders. The school is situated in 10 acres of grounds in the village of Brettenham, Suffolk, 14 miles from Bury St Edmunds and 30 miles from Cambridge. The boarding accommodation is in two buildings on the school site. Boarding is provided five nights per week during term time for pupils aged from nine years to 19 years. Pupils' special educational needs include dyslexia, dyspraxia, Asperger syndrome, autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The school was last inspected in February 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement

The quality of the residential provision has improved, although work remains in order to meet the unmet national minimum standards identified. The provision is managed to ensure children's and young people's safety. Safeguarding systems are routinely implemented by staff. The residential routines run smoothly. However, there are few extracurricular opportunities outside the school.

There is a commitment to making improvement, although changes take some time. The implementation and understanding of the minimum standards does not exceed minimum requirements.

Generally, children and young people enjoy boarding, despite limited activity programmes. They present as being confident. They interact socially in a respectful manner with one another, staff and other adults. This provides good role models and peer support.

The small, homely environment suits children and young people well. This has resulted in positive academic progress. Several young people gained four or more GCSE grades, progressing to the American diploma course and subsequently achieving university access. The level of aspiration is high, and young people are encouraged and supported to realise their unique potential. Work is celebrated and displayed, including artwork, photography, and design and technology projects.

The views of children, young people and parents are increasingly positive. Children and young people talk about feeling safe in the small, close-knit community. One young person described it as: 'The family that you can choose.' Parents report that, after poor educational experiences, the small inclusive environment has helped to build their children into rounded and confident individuals. Parents' quotes include: 'This school has transformed her and renewed her confidence and ability.' Another said: 'My child has enjoyed four years and made excellent progress. This has turned his life around.'

Giving children and young people an active voice in the school and valuing their ideas have improved hugely. This engagement has brought about changes, including a new mobile phone policy and reduced prep study time. The management team is more approachable and accessible. Their increased profile has encouraged children and young people to come forward to discuss their concerns. There are some defined roles assigned to residential pupils. This helps residential pupils to take on positions of responsibility that build future life skills.

The residential accommodation has benefited from a light-touch cosmetic refurbishment that has improved the quality of the environment. There are no concerns with maintenance.

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement

Children and young people are welcomed warmly, and induction is tailored to their individual level of understanding. Regular communication with parents aids this induction process. The small team of staff and the small classes help children to settle and adjust to residential school life. A family-type atmosphere prevails in which children support and

respect one another and staff.

There are systems in place to support children's and young people's health, including administering their prescribed medication. Systems are not robust. A sample check revealed an error in the stock count that had not been picked up by staff. While prescribed medication is audited, there is no stock record of non-prescribed medication. This could lead to errors not being detected.

Care plans developed for residential children and young people remain basic, and do not consistently identify concerns about their health or how staff will monitor it. This does not provide enough oversight of welfare and could impact poorly on their health. Social tracking objectives continue to track children's and young people's progress and social development. This demonstrates their development of social skills and life skills.

The activity programme has been expanded and children were observed enjoying on-site classroom-based activities, including chess club, Airfix club, band and drama club. Teaching staff give their time and energy to facilitate these activities. However, there are few off-site activities and, although existing activities in the community now include all age groups, there is a lack of stimulation and variation. The timetable is dull. There is a lack of engagement in the local community, preventing children and young people meeting peers outside the school.

Cosmetic environmental changes have made for a more homely environment. The main house looks colourful and bedrooms have been coordinated. A new common room provides an extra space for girls to relax in the evening. Privacy in the shower rooms is increased by using cubicle partitioning. This provides better communal spaces and encourages young people to take pride in the environment. White appliances have been replaced in the Coach House kitchen, and the house is fresh and clean. This is appreciated by children and noted by parents.

Food is cooked at the school and served in the dining room by catering staff who know individual children well, and cater to their likes and dislikes. Dietary restrictions are catered for unobtrusively, and healthy options are available at every meal. The mealtime service is personalised and sensitive, reducing the anxieties of children and young people who can find groups and confined areas a challenge. This helps children and young people to develop mealtime etiquette and social skills.

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement

Children and young people say that they do feel safe. The small cohort and country-style house generate a family-type atmosphere.

Incidents are few, although they do take place due to relationship dynamics. Behaviours that are indicative of diagnosed difficulties can lead to tensions, and this has caused a concern that has resulted in a complaint. Staff are aware of incidents. They observe and intervene quickly. While support is provided for individuals and risk assessments are carried out, there is a lack of evidence to demonstrate the action taken. Bullying incidents are not always logged as such. This reduces the ability to monitor and identify the trends and individuals.

There are no significant challenging behaviours presented. Behaviour is good and a courteous approach of mutual respect prevails throughout the school. Where measures

of control have been implemented, these are appropriate, and seek children's and young people's views. There are no incidents of children and young people going missing from the school and no use of physical restraint within the residential provision.

Staff are trained and aware of the route to take in the event of a safeguarding concern. An appointed designated safeguarding lead refers to outside safeguarding agencies. A concern that was raised was quickly investigated by the management team. Records demonstrate the interviews, questions and lessons learned. All staff have received training in the 'Prevent' duty for schools. Although no concerns have been raised, this ensures that staff have an awareness. There have been no allegations since the last inspection, and this has been confirmed by the designated officer from the local authority.

Children, young people and staff all feel able to raise concerns that affect them. They feel that they can speak with staff or use a personal mobile phone to access an outside adult or family member. In addition, there is an independent visitor, linked to the neighbouring church, who is known to children and young people.

Health and safety checks are completed weekly, and in line with the school's health and safety policy. Checks incorporate ensuring that the fire exits are kept clear from obstruction, and steps are taken to minimise potential hazards. This provides protection against accidents and fire.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

The residential provision is satisfactorily managed by the head of care and supervised closely by the principal and headteacher. The addition of the head of care to the senior management team has prompted a more integrated approach to managing the provision and addressing previous shortfalls. These shortfalls have been mainly met, and improvements are evident. A number of other shortfalls have been identified and these require a continued drive and renewed energy to bring the school to a better standard.

The care team is established, and provides stable continuity of care for children and young people who are adjusting to residential school life. Supervision of children's and young people's whereabouts is managed to ensure their safety and well-being.

The staff team is supervised and staff say that they feel supported in their professional development. There is an appraisal system and termly supervision.

Two staff are part-way through qualifying at level 3. The head of care is pursuing training courses in physical restraint and de-escalation, despite this being very rarely used. Training to support staff on their knowledge of children's complex diagnosis's and autistic spectrum disorders has not been sought. Neither has the designated safeguarding lead been successful in securing training to enable her to deliver accredited safeguarding training to the staff team. There is a lack of awareness of special educational needs practice development, such as the education health and care plan. This does not fully equip staff with the skills and knowledge required to provide informed care of these children.

Leaders and managers have some knowledge of the areas that require improvement. There is a willingness to address the shortfalls and raise standards. While progress is

visible, the pace is slow.

Independent visitor reports are critical of the school. The visitor has raised issues within the body of the report and indicated pertinent shortfalls. This has led to better monitoring of the records by residential staff. The governing board has provided a basic review of the welfare provision.

The school's relationship with parents has undoubtedly improved. Of a number of parents who were contacted, the majority were complimentary and identified the positive impact of being at the school. Others said that when they had their concerns, these were listened to and acted upon by the management team. The record of such complaints shows all required elements in responding to concerns and bringing them to a satisfactory close.

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	124890
Social care unique reference number	SC024588
DfE registration number	935/6058

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	17
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	4 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Kim Salthouse
Date of previous boarding inspection	09/02/2014
Telephone number	01449 736404
Email address	admin@centreacademy.net

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