

Centre Academy East Anglia

Centre Academy East Anglia, Church Road, Brettenham, Ipswich IP7 7QR
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Centre Academy East Anglia is a residential special school located in the Suffolk village of Brettenham, between Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds. It provides education for a maximum of 50 boys and girls, and includes 29 places for residential pupils. The residential accommodation is in two buildings on the school site. The residential provision operates for five nights per week during term time, for pupils aged from nine to 19 years. Pupils' conditions and disabilities that lead to their having special educational needs include dyslexia, dyspraxia, Asperger syndrome, autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The school was last inspected in September 2016.

Inspection dates: 25 to 27 April 2017

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

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 13 September 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- There are five unmet national minimum standards. Two of these were also unmet at the last inspection.
- Internal monitoring arrangements are weak and ineffective. When internal systems identify issues, they do not result in clear plans of action.
- The school's safeguarding processes are not strong enough. Key staff lack sufficient understanding of the systems in place.
- Individual risk assessments and plans continue to lack depth. They do not routinely consider all relevant information.
- The medication policy and practice is not consistent with the relevant guidance. The system is still not robust.
- Fire tests are not happening at the expected frequency.
- The staff have not had access to some training that is relevant to the needs of the children and young people using the service.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- An ethos of acceptance permeates the school. Leaders and managers promote tolerance and understanding.
- Children and young people and their parents speak positively about the impact of the school.
- There are warm relationships between the staff and the children and young people.
- Children and young people and their parents cite numerous examples of progress in relation to the children and young people gaining independence skills and attainment in education.

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 standards for residential special schools:

- 3.6 The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell, and ensures that children's physical and mental health and emotional well-being are promoted. These include first aid, care of those who have 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').
- 7.1 The school complies with the regulatory reform (fire safety) order 2005.
- 11.1 The school ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school, and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.
- 21.1 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 his or her 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.

Recommendations

- Ensure that staff receive training in relation to supporting children's and young people's mental health and understanding and responding to self-harm.
- Ensure that staff supervision and appraisal sessions result in tangible plans for the staff member's professional development and improvement.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers have addressed some of the previously unmet national minimum standards. However, some remain unmet and, in addition, further breaches have been identified. The service has a number of strengths, but significant work is required to ensure that the residential provision delivers a good service for the children, young people and families who use it.

The children and young people and their parents talk positively about the residential provision. The children and young people talk with confidence and maturity about their experiences.

There are strong and warm relationships between the children and young people and the staff who support them. One child said, 'The staff are really considerate and caring people.' The staff know the children and young people well. As a result, the children and young people trust the staff. A child said, 'We have special needs and with that comes a lack of confidence. The school understands that and knows you may not be ready to do things straight away. They wait.'

There is anecdotal evidence that children and young people make progress educationally, socially and emotionally. A child, speaking about the difference that being at the school has made to them, said, 'A lot better grades. A lot more independence. A lot more confidence. A lot of people tell me I am like a different person here.' A parent said, 'It has been the making of her. She was a very unhappy girl when she left her previous school, and her self-confidence and self-esteem were on the floor. It is now a lot, lot better than it was.' Another parent said, 'He [child] has come on leaps and bounds. He is looking at university. Before attending, it did not even look like he would even be thinking about going. Educationally, he has blossomed.' However, children's case records do not clearly capture this progress.

The staff seek to involve the children and young people. They have regular house meetings, which have resulted in some new activities being offered. The children and young people report that they have ample activities. They said that they enjoy day-to-day life in the school. They are pleased that changes took place in relation to leisure time, with less emphasis on 'prep' and more on activities. The children and young people are able to attend the gym and they go on weekly swimming and shopping activities.

The staff support the children and young people to prepare for their transition into the world outside of the school. The children and young people and their families consistently cite significant increases in the children's and young people's independence skills. The children and young people feel that the school is a safe environment in which to take chances and learn from mistakes. A child said, 'I am learning in a safe environment and if I mess up I get support and learn.' Another

said, 'I think the school has a progressive philosophy in getting us ready for the outside world. When I came here, I could not do anything for myself. I could do no cooking. I had no experience of using a laundry machine. I had no experience with road safety and so on. I had no experience with using a library. Thanks to the school, I am now able to do those things.'

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

An experienced safeguarding lead is in post. Since the last inspection, she has had access to additional training. In the absence of the safeguarding lead, a senior manager covers the role. However, during the course of the inspection, this senior manager was unaware of the detail of the new processes in place to capture safeguarding concerns. Although she had an understanding of the individual cases of children and young people who have been the subject of safeguarding concerns, there was a lack of knowledge regarding basic internal systems. The child protection and safeguarding policies lack clarity and do not reflect current practice. There is reference to an onsite counsellor. However, these arrangements have recently changed and this service is only available at an additional cost. This cost is not made clear in the policy. In addition, there has been no recent monitoring of safeguarding files in line with the school's own policy. Lack of effective monitoring means that opportunities to identify shortfalls in processes or records are missed. These issues have the potential to compromise the welfare of the children and young people placed in the school.

Individual risk assessments and management plans continue to lack depth. They do not consistently consider necessary information. They do not provide sufficient clarity regarding how staff should respond to children's and young people's needs. In addition, children and young people are not involved in the production of their plans. The staff lack clear guidance on how to support the children and young people to become increasingly safe.

Regular fire drills take place in the residential provision. However, fire tests are not always completed at the frequency required in the school's own policy and procedures. These gaps have not been identified by the school in their internal monitoring.

The staff have supported children and young people and their families to access mental health support when needed. However, despite some children and young people experiencing mental distress and some having issues with self-harm, no training in these areas has been provided for staff.

No children have gone missing from the residential provision. However, the missing children policy required updating to reflect current practice, procedure and guidance. This updating took place during the course of the inspection.

There are few incidents of difficult behaviour in the residential provision. The children and young people report that behaviour is well managed. A child said, 'There is a certain level of trust that is given. If you break that trust, you may lose privileges, such as going to bed earlier or missing swimming. It is not harsh. It feels really fair.'

The whole staff team has attended training in relation to bullying. The children and young people reported that bullying is not a significant issue in the school. They said that they are happy with the support that they receive and that when issues arise the staff intervene promptly. Parents reported no concerns. One child said, 'The staff are very good. If I have a problem, I can go to them and it will be sorted very quickly. This is the first school I have been to where bullying is not an issue.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Four of the six national minimum standards that were not met at the last inspection are now met. The activity programme has expanded. The systems to manage bullying have improved. All of the staff have received training in managing bullying. The residential manager has undertaken physical intervention training, and plans are in place to disseminate this to the staff team. The designated safeguarding lead has accessed safeguarding training. However, two of the national minimum standards remain unmet. Firstly, the school's policy on the care of children who are unwell is not consistent with the relevant guidance. Although leaders and managers attempted to remedy this during the course of the inspection, the initial update contained gaps and contradictions. In addition, the system in use did not formally capture information about staff's assessed competency to administer medication. This does not safeguard children and young people as far as is reasonably practical. Secondly, individual children's and young people's risk assessments and management plans remain basic.

The internal monitoring arrangements lack quality and depth. Leaders and managers have not identified shortfalls that were found during this inspection, for example inaccurate policies, a lack of compliance with expected internal procedures and the quality of some records. In addition, leaders and managers have not ensured that plans for individual children comprehensively address their needs. Nor have they ensured that the quality of safeguarding records and procedures has been sufficiently monitored and understood.

An independent person visits the school half termly. They provide written reports on the quality of the residential provision. These reports offer some challenge and include consultation with children and young people and staff. However, they do not result in clear action plans to address the issues identified. Consequently, the independent visits and reports provide limited contribution to the improvement and development of the residential provision. A similar issue exists with staff support. The

staff receive supervision and appraisals. However, these sessions do not result in tangible plans for individual professional development or improvement.

The children and young people are clear that they make progress. One child said, 'I am a lot happier. I used to have severe anxiety and depression. I came here, and when people instil the confidence it gives you a sense of pride. You are told that you are great and eventually you get the feeling it is OK to be confident and be who you are.' Parents support these assertions. However, this progress is not sufficiently reflected in the children's and young people's associated paperwork. The lack of evidence of progress does not enable effective monitoring of the children's and young people's progress by leaders and managers, or enable them to understand the impact that the residential provision has on the children and young people.

The principal and headteacher are passionate about the service that they provide. They are able to talk in depth about the needs and experiences that the children and young people have. The children and young people are aware of the belief that the staff and leaders have in them. As a result, children and young people feel valued and respected. One child said, 'The staff give us respect. They treat us as adults and like mature people.'

The quality of the residential accommodation is generally adequate. A programme of refurbishment is in place, and there remain areas where refurbishment is needed. The children and young people are able to personalise their rooms. They do this to varying degrees. There are many photographs and pieces of art created by children and young people adorning the walls.

The children and young people have the opportunity to contribute their views on the residential provision in weekly meetings. In addition, there is also a student council committee. This includes children and young people who use the residential provision. Both of these forums effect change. The student council is active in charitable undertakings, and this involves links with the local community.

An ethos of acceptance permeates the school. Leaders and managers promote tolerance and understanding. Consequently, the children and young people feel understood and demonstrate significant empathy for one another.

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 difference 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 and 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: SC024588

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mrs Kim Salthouse

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Ashley Hinson, social care inspector (lead)



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