

Limpsfield Grange School

89 Bluehouse Lane, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0RZ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Limpsfield Grange School is a maintained day and residential special school catering for girls between the ages of 11 and 16 who have communication and interaction difficulties. All pupils have education, health and care plans. The majority have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder, including Asperger syndrome, and suffer from high and persistent levels of anxiety. Residential accommodation is available from Monday to Thursday. Currently, 29 pupils access the boarding provision. Some of these are on a shared basis, with pupils staying on different nights, as there are 24 available beds. The school is situated in the residential area of Oxted, Surrey. The school was last inspected in February 2017.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 March 2018

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 22 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- This is a school that truly understands autism and the challenges this can mean for the students and their families. The school, in its own unique way, empowers and supports students to live with or overcome challenges and provide a positive experience of education and care. This unique experience is something students confidently take into adult life.
- Residential students make outstanding progress, including in relation to their well-being, achievement, communication and independence.
- Parents are highly satisfied with the residential provision.
- Residential students are extremely happy at the school. They thoroughly enjoy the residential experience.
- The school has a thorough, whole-school approach to safeguarding. The staff are dedicated to keeping residential students safe, and safeguarding is central to all their work.
- Difference and individuality are recognised and highly respected.
- The management and leadership team is stable, strong and extremely effective. Together, its members provide high standards of role modelling, promote a culture of excellence and share high expectations with everyone across the school.
- The school's leadership team has an active role in national research projects and in disseminating and sharing its members' expert knowledge and experiences of girls who have autism to other professionals and researchers. Its members are committed to continued participation in research projects so they are at the forefront of delivering best practice and outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Residential students benefit from the unique approach taken by the school with regard to educating and caring for girls who have an autistic spectrum disorder. Professional practice consistently exceeds the standards of good. There is significant evidence of improvement for students because of actions taken by staff. The school's approach also results in students making excellent progress.

The residential provision has a very positive impact on life outcomes for students, for example in student destinations post-16 years old. Practice is child-centred in approach, addressing the strengths and areas to develop for each student. The determined focus on areas such as well-being, achievement, communication and independence (the WACI curriculum) can be seen in records and data, student feedback and observation of social interaction. There is a high standard of recording of progress. Individual targets, across all the WACI areas, set by key workers are regularly discussed with the residential students and closely monitored by the residential staff. Residential students keep their own diaries where they can write down their feelings every day after school; this allows the staff to respond swiftly to any student who may need additional support during the evening.

The school's WACI curriculum has been devised as part of the 'Autism and Quality of Life Project' being undertaken by a university in conjunction with the school. The school is constantly seeking to develop ways to track and evaluate how satisfied students and families are with their lives, in order to redesign its curriculum. Learning from this underpins the school's current and future approach to supporting emotional happiness.

Residential students who experience social isolation and low self-esteem are supported to gain confidence and develop strategies and skills to overcome their fears and anxieties. The strategies are creative and individual to each student. As a result of increased self-esteem and confidence, many students are able to engage in the local community, attending a youth club on one of its autism-friendly evenings, tennis, the local gym, swimming, and participating in the local radio station. Students also make friends and are successful in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, with many achieving a gold award. In addition, residential students successfully participate in work experience opportunities with a range of local businesses. Activities on site are creative and developed in response to suggestions made by the students. A full range of gender-neutral activities are on offer to suit all preferences. Overall, activities add to the students' increase in feelings of self-worth and confidence.

Anxieties are addressed through building trusting and honest relationships between students and the staff team. Discussing their anxieties openly, and developing

strategies to manage them, result in students being able to successfully engage in full-time education and social activities.

Mental health and well-being awareness is an area the school has developed over the last year, for both students and staff. The staff are able to identify and address risk such as self-harm or high levels of stress and have the knowledge and skills to respond positively or refer to the most appropriate health professional. The administration of medication procedures is safe and effective, with excellent oversight by senior leaders. The staff team is trained to administer medication safely and provide first aid treatment if needed. Some students who are assessed as competent are encouraged to administer their own medication. Currently, the few residential students who do self-administer are successfully applying the strict procedures of safe medication administration.

Student consultation is another area of strength in the school. A vast array of different focus groups enable all students to raise their views and opinions. This includes the school council, residential forum, suggestion boxes, surveys and questionnaires. 'You say...we did' posters inform residential students of the actions taken by the staff. Examples include: a change from porridge to pancakes at breakfast time, and more interaction with boys from a local school who have autism, such as a meal out and a disco. In addition, an independent person visits every half term, governors regularly visit the residential provision and have tea with the students, and an independent advocate who has autism visits regularly.

Residential students thoroughly enjoy the food provided at the school. The catering team is very much part of the whole-school staff team and provides a wide range of nutritious meals. Each evening, on a rota system, two residential students assist with cooking supper, heavily supported and risk assessed by two competent staff members. This has proven to be highly successful in teaching the students many new skills, and in raising their self-esteem and self-belief. All residential students have completed online food hygiene, a first aid course and a lifesaving programme.

Accommodation is of a very good standard, with an on-going programme of redecoration. The staff are creative in ensuring that the environment is suitable and calming for the students. There are many different areas for students to relax in and have some space. Residential students enjoy staying in the accommodation and being with their friends and the staff team. Allocation of bedrooms is carefully considered for each individual student. Decisions are supported by risk assessments.

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

Arrangements for keeping residential students safe are extremely well organised and effective. The staff's safeguarding practice is strong and students have a strong sense of safety and well-being. All policies and procedures relating to safeguarding are monitored by the school's dedicated safeguarding team and, in addition, audited

by external professionals. An external safeguarding audit that took place since the last inspection commented, 'The school has a thorough, whole-school approach to safeguarding. Staff's dedication to keeping students safe and secure is excellent and central to all their work.' This inspection concurs with the auditors' findings.

Residential students feel safe and very well looked after at the school. They are aware of the different ways they can raise a worry or concern and are confident staff will take them seriously. Information is appropriately placed around the school, informing students who they can speak to, including external contacts. Parents and carers overwhelmingly feel the school keeps the students safe.

The members of the safeguarding team are organised and efficient in communicating with each other to make joint decisions. The sometimes-poor response from the local authority safeguarding agencies does not deter the team. The team will challenge other professionals when necessary. The governing body, when needed, supports senior staff with raising concerns regarding local authority decisions.

The staff undertake regular and thorough safeguarding training, delivered at in service training days, in residential team meetings and supervision. As a result, the staff have very good and up-to-date safeguarding knowledge and feel confident in reporting safeguarding concerns. Staff practice observed during the inspection was clear in protecting the girls at all times. Staff are vigilant and aware of the current issues that can present a risk to students, such as radicalisation and the different forms of exploitation. Parents and carers are invited to workshops so that up-to-date information on autism and related risks can be shared. Workshops have included sessions about online safety and sexual exploitation. These assist students, parents and carers in keeping young people safe when not in school.

Students' behaviour is outstanding. Students respond well to the staff's support and guidance. The staff understand students' complex needs, which results in students developing a real sense of safety and trust. The staff are well aware of student dynamics and address any conflict immediately and effectively; in practice, incidents are few. Strategies are successfully implemented that help students to self-regulate their emotions and manage their anxieties; physical intervention is not used. Creative ways have been developed that help students reduce anxieties, worries and frustrations. These include 'clam boxes', which contain a variety of resources that individual students have decided will help them, and well-being walks.

Residential students reported that they are not aware of any bullying taking place. If it did, they said that they know they can ask an adult for help and that it will be dealt with effectively. Staff follow the recently updated guidance on the promotion of respect, tolerance, socially acceptable behaviour and developing responsible citizens.

Health and safety checks are robust and routinely audited. Regular fire drills take place so students know what action to take if a fire occurs. An area for improvement raised at the last inspection has been addressed: a record of the effectiveness of fire drills is now more detailed, showing the actions taken when needed.

Recruitment procedures are safe. They ensure, as far as possible, that all staff are safe to work at the school. An area for improvement raised at the last inspection has been addressed: all references are now subject to telephone verification.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The school is led by a strong and highly effective headteacher, supported by an experienced team of senior leaders. The leadership team is inspirational, ambitious and influential in changing the lives of the girls it cares for. The management of the residential provision is impressive. The head of residential provision, and her stable and strong staff team, work with passion and commitment. Her management skills are creative, sensitive and supportive. She leads by example, is innovative and generates creative ideas to sustain high-quality care. The residential staff team members work extremely well together and are fully committed to ensuring the best life chances for all students. Overall, students receive an outstanding residential experience. Parents comment overwhelmingly about the positive impact the school has on the students and their families.

Some parents have voiced their concerns about the impact of local authority funding cuts reducing the number of nights students can stay at the residential provision. In response, the school is working hard at developing ways in which it can meet all parent and student residential requirements.

The members of the residential staff team are knowledgeable, positive and caring. They work cohesively and in a happy and professional manner. The residential staff team is the reason the girls enjoy the residential experience so much. Its members have numerous individual skills that are identified by the head of residential provision and utilised to their full potential. For example, each member of the residential staff team is allocated a specialist area such as pathological demand avoidance, attachment, foetal alcohol syndrome and dyscalculia. Staff take responsibility for keeping up to date and for sharing this knowledge with the rest of the team.

The staff continue to look at ways of developing systems, practice and records further. The WACI curriculum and Quality of Life research has shown the increased progress residential students make. In addition, residential placement profiles link activities to students' needs as identified in their education, health and care plans. Placement plan diaries have been developed for student-centred recording of progress and outcomes.

Monitoring and auditing systems have been extended since the last inspection. This can be seen in the external audits undertaken in areas such as safeguarding and medication administration. The head of residential care undertakes her own monitoring and feeds findings into an action plan, an excellent document which clearly defines actions and timescales. This document feeds into the school's appraisal process and is comprehensively overseen by managers. In addition, the

head of residential care works with the residential governor to identify areas for improvement. Oversight of the school's practices is carried out by the governing body, which also provides challenge and high levels of scrutiny. Regular reports from an independent visitor are of a high standard, evaluative and constructive, and also provide a very useful tool for improvement. The extensive monitoring systems ensure that high standards are not only maintained but continually reviewed and developed.

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: SC013885

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Sarah Wild

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Inspector

Liz Driver, social care inspector



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