

Chalk Hill

Cats Lane, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2SF

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Chalk Hill is a residential academy for boys aged between eight and 14 who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream school.

The school is in the residential area of Sudbury, Suffolk. There are 17 pupils on roll, of which 12 children can use the residential provision Monday to Thursday. Eight children are currently using the provision one or two nights a week.

The head of the residential provision has been in post since 2015. She has the relevant experience and qualifications to manage the residential provision. The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the secretary of state, we suspended all routine inspections of social care provisions carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021. We last visited this setting on 6 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 March 2022

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 good

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

Date of previous inspection: 6 October 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive individualised care from a dedicated team of staff. The staff know the children well and have an excellent understanding of their strengths and individual vulnerabilities.

Due to the reduced numbers of children currently accessing the residential provision, a decision was made to offer the day pupils one or two nights a week boarding. This has given children the opportunity to spend time with their friends and to have the same experiences as their peers.

Children make good progress academically during their time at the school. The residential children have improved attendance and make good progress. For some children, not having a long journey to school each morning means that they are in a better position to learn.

The residential provision gives children a home-from-home experience. The children spoken to said that they love staying and spending time with staff. Children said they get to do 'really good stuff'.

Parents and professionals spoken to were extremely positive about the staff and praised the effective communication from the staff. A parent said that although her child is not yet staying overnight, the extended days have given him a positive experience and an introduction into being away from home.

The residential provision is spacious, comfortable and welcoming. Children are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms. Children are supported to take part in a range of activities on the school site and in the local community. These activities help the children to develop their social skills, self-confidence and self-esteem.

Staff are ambitious for children. Residential and school staff set achievable targets for children. However, children are not supported with any independent life skills to prepare them for learning basic life skills.

Behaviour is managed well using praise and positive reinforcement. This approach is supported by helping the children to understand their behaviours and develop coping strategies. Staff celebrate children's achievements and positive behaviours. The children proudly showed off their certificates, explaining that if they are awarded five certificates, they can choose a prize. This reinforces children's positive behaviours.

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

Children feel safe at the school. Safeguarding systems are implemented effectively. Concerns are shared appropriately with external agencies and parents. The staff's response to any safeguarding concerns is swift and protects the children.

The staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding. They respond to and report concerns to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). All staff have completed the appropriate safeguarding training. Residential staff discuss safeguarding in team meetings and as part of their supervision meetings. This information-sharing helps to safeguard the children.

The DSL has good links with the youth offending diversion service deferral programme. Together they have successfully worked with children who are on the fringe of criminal activities in the community. The DSL has also developed good links with the local police. This means that other interventions are being used instead of the child gaining a criminal record.

Risk is generally managed well, and good-quality risk assessments are in place. However, these are not always updated immediately after a concern, to ensure that staff are all working consistently to safeguard the child.

Physical interventions are rarely used in residential time. In the school, they are used as a last resort to prevent children from harming themselves or others. Incidents of the use of physical intervention are appropriately recorded. Children complete a thoughts and feelings form with staff after each hold. However, these are not uploaded on to the system. Therefore, any future plans recorded to support the children will not be seen by staff.

Leaders and managers ensure that there is an effective recruitment process. Staff cannot begin to work until all checks are completed and verified. This helps to ensure that unsuitable people are not employed to work with the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The head of care has the relevant experience and qualifications to manage the provision. Since the last inspection, a new deputy head of care has been recruited to support the head of care.

The head of care and the senior leadership team meet regularly to discuss children's progress. The staff discuss the strengths and further developments for the residential provision. There is a constant approach of sharing information between school and residential staff. The staff have high aspirations for children.

The staff access the training they need to work effectively with the children and meet their needs. The residential staff have, or are in the process of working towards, a relevant level 3 qualification. The staff benefit from regular supervision and staff meetings. They say that they find these supportive and an opportunity to talk about children and share good practice. Staff receive an induction, which gives them an understanding of working with the children and provides them with the relevant training.

Residential house meetings have not been taking place, due to the reduced numbers of children. However, the staff have ensured that they speak to children at the beginning of each residential stay. Staff gain children's views about activities, for example what they would like for tea, and they are given the opportunity to talk to staff if they are worried or upset.

Feedback from parents and professionals is good. One parent said that the difference since her son joined the school is remarkable. Professionals said that communication is good, and they are kept updated with children's progress and any concerns.

Senior leaders know the strengths and areas for development of the school and residential provision. Children are clearly at the centre of practice. The staff have a sense of pride when talking about the children and want them to have the best experiences and opportunities to develop socially and emotionally.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children have the opportunity to learn a range of basic independence skills.
- The registered person should ensure that staff record conversations of concern with a child in the correct format so risk assessments can be updated promptly.
- The registered person should ensure that children's thoughts and feelings forms following a restraint are updated on to the system, so that staff are aware of future support to be offered to the child.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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: 2640599

Headteacher: Graham Alcock

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Trish Palmer, Social Care Inspector

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