

# Centre Academy East Anglia

Centre Academy East Anglia, Church Road, Brettenham, IPSWICH, IP7 7QR

<b>Inspection dates</b>	20/11/2013 to 22/11/2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>3</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Adequate	3

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is adequate because

- The school has transferred to residential special school status from being a boarding school at the time of the last inspection. Leaders and managers are still coming to terms with the differences in the applicable standards and this has led to three national minimum standards for residential special schools not being met at this inspection.
- The school has made huge progress in terms of safeguarding boarders since the last inspection. All issues related to fire safety have been addressed; new fire doors have been fitted, an extended fire alarm system is in place and additional emergency lighting has been put in place. Policies have been strengthened and relate well, in the main, to appropriate legislation. All boarders and their parents report that pupils are kept safe at this school.
- Boarders enjoy the experience of staying in the school and many ask to increase the number of nights they stay. There is an attitude of mutual respect among boarders and between boarders and staff. Pupils are polite, understanding of individual differences and develop positive self-esteem and a high level of self-confidence through their boarding experience. A good quality of care is provided by a small but dedicated and very committed residential staff team.
- The boarding provision has made considerable progress since the last inspection. Leadership of the provision is clear, the Head of Care has a good overview of the service and she has plans in place to further develop the provision. Boarders are very aware of daily routines and feel safe, secure and confident as a result.
- Boarders are very positive about their school, the vast majority of parent's views are unfailingly positive and staff talk passionately about the service they provide. This ensures boarders receive a high level of service and that all interested parties are happy with the quality of care provided.

## **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The details are listed in the full report.

## Information about this inspection

This inspection took place within three hours of initial contact being made with the school. Inspection activity included discussions with groups of young people, residential staff, the headteacher and Principal and parents of boarders.

A full tour of the premises was undertaken with young people, meals were taken with the residential group and after school activities were observed.

Documents checked included risk assessments, personal education plans, sanction and restraint records, missing from care records and policies and procedures in place within the school.

## Inspection team

Stephen Halliley

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

This is a co-educational day and boarding school for children aged 4 to 19 years facing learning challenges. 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 housed in two buildings on the school site. Boarding is provided five nights per week during term time for pupils aged from 9 years to 19 years. There are 43 pupils on roll with 25 boarders.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the verbal verification of references is clearly recorded for new staff.
- Ensure all policies are updated to meet RSS national minimum standards and are signed and dated by the author.
- Develop a system whereby staff sign and date risk assessments and policies to show they have read and understood them and how they impact on their working practice.
- **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**
  - The school's procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the Head of Care follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority. (NMS 15.7)
  - 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. (NMS 19.2)
  - Written reports of all monitoring visits are provided to the Headteacher (or school equivalent) and where applicable the governing body, organisation, or partnership. Reports are also provided to each member of that body (or the appropriate committee of that body), within two weeks and as written by the visitor without amendment or summary. (NMS 20.3)

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

**Good**

Outcomes for boarders are good.

Boarders' social interactions and social development have improved significantly since arriving at this school. Boarders enjoy relaxed, mutually respectful relationships with staff and are very confident to speak their mind and raise their concerns with the staff who work with them. Relationships between boarders are extremely good and they are supportive of each other and accepting of individual traits and behaviours. Positive behaviour is a clear expectation within the school and this is appropriately modelled by staff and pupils at all times. This ensures new boarders are able to settle into routines and unacceptable behaviours are challenged and addressed.

Boarders have appropriate levels of self-esteem, self-confidence and high aspirations for their futures. Staff have high expectations of pupils in terms of their capabilities and their involvement within the houses. This results in pupils being actively involved in the residential community and feeling safe to express themselves. Boarding pupils also have high levels of aspirations themselves with many planning to attend further education and looking ahead to possible careers they may wish to follow. Social skills are highly developed and further supported by community activities involving participating in a range of different social situations such as the gym, shopping or outdoor pursuits. Emotional resilience, stability and maturity are evident in the open way visitors are welcomed into the residential setting and positively engaged by pupils.

All boarders state they are happy in the school and that they enjoy the boarding experience. They are able to participate in a wide range of challenging and stimulating activities including karate club, drama club, swimming, bowling or trips to nature and adventure parks. Many pupils actively engage in fire crew which involves working with the local fire service to develop an understanding of the risk of fire and what is involved in fighting that fire. This allows them to develop new skills and self-confidence and is an excellent link with the local community.

Boarders are consistently invited to be involved in the day-to-day running of the boarding provision. This includes regular house meetings, sessions with keyworkers and day-to-day discussion. They are involved in decorating their bedrooms, choosing furnishings for communal areas and developing menus which reflect a balance of all food groups showing an awareness of the need to eat a healthy diet. Boarders' physical health is overseen by parents/carers as they board up to a maximum of five nights a week during term time only. Good plans and agreements are in place for boarding staff to support all health needs during time in the school. By implementing individual health plans staff ensure boarders' physical health and well-being are well supported at all times. Numerous therapies are available within the school through a range of counsellors employed by the organisation. External services such as child and adolescent mental health services are also available if required. The availability and appropriate referral to the correct therapeutic approach to meet individual need ensures boarders' emotional and psychological health needs are also well met.

Boarders are supported to prepare for further education and the transition to adult life throughout their time in the school. While a good focus is given to preparing meals, carrying out daily household tasks and being able to do their own laundry, there is scope for improvement in this area. Older boarders prepare a meal for the group once a week which allows them to develop cooking and catering skills and to learn how to meet the differing tastes of their peers. However, staff are aware that through being given a budget and being involved in the shopping for their meals they would experience the whole planning element of this activity which could potentially increase their life skills portfolio for when they move on.

## Quality of residential provision and care

**Good**

The quality of the residential provision is good.

The residential provision and care provided to pupils are of a good standard. Staff employed in the school place the well-being and needs of pupils at the core of their practice. New pupils are sensitively introduced to the boarding provision through a well-managed induction process which includes visits and obtaining as much information as possible about new pupils prior to them moving to the school. There is a good level of awareness of how change may impact on the already established group and this is given clear consideration when new pupils are referred to the school. There are clear links between boarding and educational staff supported by a cross-over of roles throughout the day. This ensures all relevant information is shared and that young people receive a consistent approach to their needs.

Individual health plans, behaviour management plans and risk assessments are all current and regularly reviewed and updated. These, together with a high level of staff understanding and awareness of all boarders, ensure that pupils' individual needs, unique characteristics and targets are well known by all staff.

Residential pupils are happy and relaxed in the main. Younger pupils are aware that sometimes they may say things which upset others but are clear bullying is not an issue. The boarding accommodation is well-decorated and well-maintained. Sleeping accommodation is in dormitory or shared rooms but all boarders spoken to said they are happy with this arrangement and have ample room for storage and for private study. Communal areas are spacious and airy and have been decorated sensitively with some input from boarders. Bedrooms have been individualised to young people's tastes and all have lockable cabinets where pupils can keep valuables. This ensures that personal possessions can be kept safe while at school.

Younger boarders eat all main meals in the dining hall though the older boarders have breakfast and one evening meal each week in their own house. The kitchen is well-appointed and has a high level of hygiene and cleanliness. Food is plentiful and varied and any special diets are well catered for. Boarders are actively involved in putting their suggestions to the chef and these ideas are incorporated into a well-planned, nutritionally balanced menu.

Pupils' health needs are given a high priority and procedures for the administration and recording of medication are very strong. The head of care has clear procedures and policies in place and all residential staff, and some academic staff, are trained in the administration of medication. An extremely wide range of purposeful activities is offered to boarding pupils in the evenings. These include gym, swimming, trips to town, cycling, fire crew, drama club and film nights. In the houses a range of board games and lots of books are available. Off-site activities promote a sense of community awareness and belonging while games promote an understanding of teamwork, develop coordination and support young people to learn to accept losing.

## Residential pupils' safety

**Good**

The boarding pupils' safety is good.

The school has worked extremely hard to improve the standards of pupil safety since the last inspection. A much improved fire alarm system, emergency lighting and new fire doors have been fitted to ensure adequate systems are in place to protect against the outbreak of fire. This is supported by all necessary paperwork and certification. Health and safety policies have been reviewed and strengthened to ensure they fully comply with current legislation. Safeguarding

policies and procedures are clear and the lead designated child protection officer is very aware of her responsibilities in this area. This includes when referrals need to be made to outside agencies such as children's services and she follows these issues through to conclusion. There have been no investigations or allegations of harm or abuse against staff or visitors to the school since the last inspection but procedures in place help ensure pupils are suitably safeguarded.

A range of risk assessments are in place for all young people and for all activities undertaken by the school. These look at known behaviours and risk factors for individual pupils. They also suggest strategies which allow for the reduction of the risk while allowing boarders to participate fully in a range of age appropriate activities.

All boarders say that they feel safe in the school and this is further substantiated by parents. This allows boarders to concentrate on their education and ever improving social skills without being distracted by the threats of bullying or harassment.

There have been no restraints since the last inspection and very few sanctions have been given to pupils. This demonstrates that young people are settled in the school, that positive behaviour is very much the norm and that young people are self-regulating their behaviours well.

There have been no instances of boarders being absent without authority since the last inspection. Should this arise there is a policy in place which informs staff of their roles and responsibilities in order to assure a consistent and prompt response and to facilitate a quick return to school. This policy has not, however, been updated to include reference to the local runaway and missing from home and care protocols applicable to the area in which the school is situated.

Senior managers have clear guidance in place for staff recruitment and adhere to safer recruiting protocols. Records show that several references are taken up and that overseas applicants have appropriate additional checks carried out. References do not have the fact they have been verbally verified recorded in writing in all cases.

The physical environment of the school and its rural location support staff in keeping boarders safe. A minimum of four staff sleep in at the school each night and this ensures any overnight issues can be appropriately addressed. An example of this was noted during this inspection visit when an ambulance was required in the early hours of the morning to assist a boarder. This was dealt with calmly and ensured the boarder was able to settle back in to his routines as much as possible the following morning.

### **Leadership and management of the residential provision Adequate**

Leadership and management of the boarding provision is adequate. The school has made the transition from boarding school to residential special school since the last inspection. There are some areas where this transition has been slower than would have been liked and this has resulted in the shortfalls identified in this report. These shortfalls against national minimum standards do not have a detrimental impact on boarders safety and well-being.

The boarding provision is an integral part of the service offered by the school and 50% of pupils board for some part or all of the school week. The aims of boarding as set out in the schools boarding handbook are well met. Routines, structures and boundaries are well known to all boarders. This ensures the boarding provision operates smoothly and efficiently, boarders feel safe and secure and benefit fully from accessing boarding.

There are a suitable number of staff on duty at all times to supervise boarders and meet the needs of individuals and the boarding group as fully as possible. The head of care supervises the

boarding staff and is in turn supervised by the Headteacher. Staff who have been in post for a year or more undertook a review of their boarding practice in July which reviewed progress and set targets for the coming year. New staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Councils induction standards within a week of appointment. However, more experienced staff have not all gained a level 3 qualification relevant to their role. Staff work across both pastoral and educational remits which enhances their knowledge and understanding of boarders throughout the school day. This also ensures staff promote equality and diversity by treating each boarder as an individual and having a good understanding and awareness of their individual needs.

The head of care undertook a thorough review of the boarding provision in early November and has highlighted areas for further improvement. Some of these have already been implemented with plans to look at ways of improving the amount of privacy boarders are able to have, reviewing tea and supper menus and putting up a suggestion box for boarders. This will ensure boarders are able to make suggestions they may not feel able to make in front of their peers allowing for a full spectrum of suggestions to be made and responded to by staff.

Many policies have been updated and senior managers are in the process of ensuring all policies are compliant with national minimum standards for residential special schools. There is no written evidence confirming when staff have read and understood these policy updates, and similarly no record of staff reading risk assessments. The quality of care provided is regularly monitored using internal processes and this feeds into the review carried out by the head of care. The proprietor of the school also visits and monitors progress on a regular basis. However, he has failed to provide written reports of these visits, instead communicating with the Principal via e-mail. This has not allowed for a substantial review of care, covering all the areas required to be evidenced to this point.

A formal complaints procedure is in place though pupils say they have not had reason to make a formal complaint. They do raise issues with staff and are clear that the response and feedback they receive is prompt and sufficient.

The school has acted on all the shortfalls identified at the previous inspection. These include complying fully with the Regulatory Reform (fire safety) Order 2005, strengthening arrangements for safeguarding, setting up a supervision system, ensuring clear leadership of the boarding provision and ensuring boarders have a named individual they can talk to outside of the school and boarding staff teams.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124890
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC024588
<b>DfE registration number</b>	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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Non-affiliated Independent
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	25
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	9 to 19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kim Salthouse
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	19/03/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01449 736404
<b>Email address</b>	admin@centreacademy.net

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