

Frewen College

Frewen Educational Trust Ltd, Frewen College, Brickwall, Rye Road, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6NL

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Frewen College is an independent day and residential special school for boys and girls aged between seven and 19 years of age. Boarders are able to stay at the school for weekends if they choose. The school provides specialist education for children with dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, sensory integration, and speech and communication difficulties. Boys stay in the main school building and girls in a separate house within the school grounds. The school is a registered charity managed by a governing body. The last inspection of the school's residential provision took place in March 2017. At the time of this inspection there were 30 full-time boarders.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 December 2017

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: 14 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Boarders value their experience, they enjoy the structure, the routine and an array of interesting activities.
- Boarding staff work in partnership with key professionals within the school, such as the occupational therapist, to ensure that boarders continue to enjoy the specialist input within the day school.
- Outcomes for boarders are positive. At the end of the last academic year each boarder leaving the school moved on to a planned programme of education and training.
- Behavioural management is successful and consistent and respected by boarders.
- Safeguarding is strong and key professionals communicate regularly to monitor boarders who are experiencing difficulties.
- The boarding provision benefits from a committed and dedicated staff team which provides a warm, friendly environment.
- Admissions to the boarding house are risk-assessed and appropriate. This ensures a positive atmosphere in the boarding house.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Shortfalls were identified in the supervision of gap-year staff, the effectiveness of the independent visitor, the condition of the senior boys' kitchen and the provision of documents on the school's website.

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

Recommendations

- To assist the parents of prospective boarders, the boarders' handbook should be available on the school's website.
- A more structured supervision programme is required for those employed within the boarding house on gap-year provision.
- The independent visitor requires access to the safeguarding online monitoring system to assist her in evaluating progress.
- The kitchen facilities in the senior boys' kitchen requires updating to promote a more comfortable and safer environment.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

A nurturing atmosphere is evident throughout the boarding house. Many boarders arrive at the school after experiencing considerable difficulties and settle well. For some this is their first experience of feeling accepted and valued within education. Boarders form close bonds, socialise across age-groups and support each other.

Boarding offers structure and routine. Boarders enjoy a rich variety of activities and experiences. A number of international boarders offer a broad range of cultures and additional learning opportunities. Boarders are able to use the school's facilities, such as playing fields, swimming pool or music suites, to support their healthy living and academic study. Staff are inventive and use their initiative to organise activities such as ice-skating and paintballing. A recent 'mocktail and toga' party by the school swimming pool was recently celebrated in the termly boarding newsletter.

Boarding supports improved educational attainment and is integral to the school. The daily routine contains an allocated slot for homework. Case files show boarders' improved attendance and focus on their studies. When boarders struggle, staff seek alternative solutions, such as obtaining audio books to support progress. Older boarders are able to access Sixth Form and Further Education colleges in the local area and work towards important academic and vocational qualifications. Staff promote and celebrate educational attainment. Poetry written by a boarder decorates the boarding house.

Outcomes are positive. Each boarder leaving the school at the end of the last academic year moved on to a planned programme of education. Boarders learn new social skills and an awareness of the needs of others. Each week, staff choose a 'boarder of the week' for exhibiting acts of kindness, such as helping a peer in difficulty. Boarders recently supported a 'music marathon' to raise money for a local children's hospice.

Boarders are proud of their school and speak with fondness of recently celebrating the school's 400th anniversary. Boarders appreciate the uniqueness of their school as opposed to their previous struggles in mainstream provision. Feedback from boarders supports this; one boarder comments, 'It's a lifesaver, the staff really help me with my difficulties and I feel part of a big family.' Feedback from parents supports this. One parent comments, 'pastoral support in the boarding is amazing', and another parent comments that boarding is 'nothing short of excellent'. Parents recognise the benefits of the boarding provision; one comments, 'My child is now so much calmer.'

Despite being in an old historic building, the boarding house is comfortable and boarders are able to personalise their rooms. Staff understand peer dynamics and allocate rooms accordingly. In general, the building is well maintained. However, the senior boys' kitchen area requires updating.

Boarding offers a flexible service. Boarders are free to stay for weekends or specified days of the week, dependent on family circumstance or their academic need. This supports boarders in maintaining strong links with friends and family. Staff support boarders to return home safely by purchasing train tickets in advance and transporting them to the train station.

Boarders report that they are 'always listened to'. House meetings are an important forum for a daily check-in and planning the evening activity or the weekly menu. One boarder fondly recalled his role in assisting the interview process for a new member of staff.

Boarders report that behavioural management is consistent and effective. When peer conflict occurs, staff act quickly to mediate. Sanctioning remains limited and there has been one recorded sanction since the last full inspection. The key strategy of staff is to ask the boarder concerned to explain their behaviour as a precursor to processing the incident. Staff use good humour and informal banter with boarders. Staff skilfully vary their approach, dependent on the age of young people. For example, on request from the boarders, the head of boarding introduced a monthly trip for Sixth Formers to the local pub, escorted by members of staff. Students over 18 are allowed one alcoholic drink.

Staff use their experience to recognise risky behaviours, such as boarders pacing around the room, to recognise when young people are struggling, and intervene quickly and effectively. As a result, the frequency of angry outbursts by boarders reduces.

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

Support is effective and varied. Boarders benefit from additional specialist input from school resources, such as a psychotherapist to help reduce anxiety and most recently to support an induction into the school. The work of the speech and language therapist supports boarders in offering new means of expressing themselves, for example by using picture boards. Recent sessions on 'mindfulness' have helped boarders to regulate themselves via breathing and to relax when they feel anxious.

Interventions are linked to the specific needs of the boarder concerned. Staff offer creative solutions to issues such as helping to reduce feelings of homesickness. For instance, one boarder began using telephone messaging rather than phone calls, which proved comforting as hearing a parent's voice had acted as a trigger. Innovative solutions help boarders manage their routines, such as using smart-phones to alert them to appointments or taking medication.

Boarders say that they feel safe and valued in the boarding house. They develop a strong sense of security and form trusting relationships with the staff team. Staff have a good understanding of the needs and challenges posed by each boarder and prioritise their safety. Boarders are open and transparent with staff and let them

know when things are going wrong or they feel worried. There are no reports of bullying; one boarder comments 'If there is the slightest sign of bullying, staff are on top of it quick.'

There are no reports of missing behaviour. When concerns arise, staff offer individualised support packages. For example, staff have a prearranged meeting point outside of the main boarding house where one boarder can go when feeling upset.

Safeguarding monitoring is effective and supported by strong multi-agency working. Staff communicate with the key professionals in the school, such as therapists. The joint head of boarding is the deputy lead for safeguarding in the school. An online system 'my concern', helps managers track safeguarding concerns and behaviour and coordinate a multi-agency response before concerns escalate. At present the independent visitor does not have access to this system. This limits her ability to scrutinise and evaluate practice effectively. The host local authority provides specialist advice and guidance when required.

Safeguarding information remains limited to key professionals, thereby preserving the privacy and dignity of boarders. The school's matron liaises effectively with key medical professionals to monitor boarders' progress and feed into important professional reviews, such as medication plans.

Advocacy is strong in boarding. Staff consistently challenge external care professionals to ensure that young people receive all of the support they require. Recently staff remained at hospital to ensure that a young person received an urgent health assessment.

Risk assessments are of good quality and offer clear guidance for staff. Assessments incorporate the feedback from young people, such as a favourite colour or flavour to taste when they are feeling angry or upset. Staff review individual placement plans in conjunction with parents and boarders. This helps to ensure that parents are aware of behavioural management strategies and provide consistency at home. Targets are realistic and understood by boarders. For example, boarders see the benefit of taking regular exercise as a means of lessening anxiety and promoting good health. Targets also follow sequentially, for example one target moves from support of others to exploring routes to engaging others within the local community.

Specialist support services aid the development of independence skills. The school's occupational therapist offers exercises to support the improvement of fine motor skills. This supports boarders in undertaking daily tasks, such as tying their shoelaces. Staff also provide basic budgeting skills to boarders during weekly shopping trips. When assessed as appropriate, boarders learn to self-medicate, with full staff support.

Staff prioritise internet safety. Boarders hand in their mobile telephones at night to ensure a good night's sleep and access to social media sites remains restricted until the completion of homework routines.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The boarding house benefits from the strong leadership of a husband and wife management team. They are two highly experienced practitioners with over 11 years of working in boarding. Managers understand the boarding experience and the challenges it can offer boarders, their families and also for themselves. They speak of the achievement and progress with boarders with obvious pride and pleasure. This helps to sustain high levels of care and motivation for boarders. Managers are highly respected by boarders and the staff team. They support boarders in the day school on request.

One member of the management team is due to leave the school in January 2018. Boarders assisted managers in choosing her successor, via the interview process. Her husband is to remain and will commence his management qualification in March 2018. Managers enjoy an extremely supportive and cohesive relationship with the school's senior management team and its trustees.

Managers understand the strengths and weakness of the service and have taken steps to meet the recommendations of the last inspection. This includes improvements to the format of the independent visitor reports and staff training programme. Case files indicate a high level of management oversight and audit. Managers have a close knowledge of the individual needs affecting each boarder and their particular behavioural plans. This informs good decisions on issues such as the allocation of rooms.

Managers have been open and receptive during this inspection and remain committed to implementing its recommendations. When difficulties occur, managers review strategies and policies with lessons learned for future practice. Managers are ambitious and innovative. They are continually seeking new means of improving the boarding provision, such as introducing a new computer system with voice recognition software to support academic progress.

Admissions are a strength and a major contributory factor to the success of the boarding provision. Dyslexia is the primary and universal specialist area; this gives a point of focus and a common sense of purpose within the school. Excellent relationships with boarders help managers to understand peer dynamics, support staff and inform positive admission decisions.

Each boarder is thoroughly assessed on arrival by the extensive professional network within the school. This ensures that boarders are able to progress well and bond together.

The boarding provision benefits from a small, close-knit staff team. Staff report a close bond and good levels of management support and training. Training is sourced from a national organisation for boarding schools and online. It covers a wide range of issues, including the radicalisation of young people. Staff speak with confidence of handling complex situations, such as self-harm or administering emergency medications.

Despite staff receiving close levels of management support, a more structured supervision programme is required for those employed within the boarding house on gap-year provision. Although the gap-year students indicate that they are happy with the level of support they receive, this is their first experience of working in a provision of this nature in this country.

Managers ensure that there are accurate risk assessments and health and safety checks. The school recently received the highest possible rating during a food hygiene inspection.

Parents report that although they understand what the school offers their children, key documentation, such as the boarders' guide, is not available on the school's website.

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: SC049345

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Nick Goodman

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Barnaby Dowell, social care inspector



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