

Pencalenick Residential Special School

Pencalenick School, St Clement, Truro, Cornwall TR1 1TE

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This school provides education for up to 202 children aged from 11 to 16 years and residential care for up to 13 children per night. It specialises in providing education and care to children with complex communication and interaction difficulties, autism and learning difficulties. The school is part of the Special Partnership Trust.

At the time of this inspection, 21 children were staying at the school across three nights. Children may stay for up to four nights a week. The school is situated in a large country estate with extensive grounds and is open from Monday to Friday.

The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 February 2025

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: 27 June 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children said that they enjoy their residential experience and have a lot of fun with the adults. They enjoy the activities that are offered to them and spending time with their friends. Children said that they like the food that is prepared for them, and they also like their bedrooms. During the three days of the inspection, children went to the park and the beach. Two children enjoyed a visit to a coffee shop, and one child preferred to stay behind with an adult to play games. Children also enjoy other activities, such as jigsaws, arts and crafts, building toys and some children have completed an annual hiking challenge.

The children are provided with good care from a stable team of staff who have supported them consistently. Children have positive routines and boundaries in place. When considering activities, the adults listen to the children and support them in making choices about the things they want to do. When one child struggled to make choices about what they would like to do, a series of pictures were used to support them with this.

Children are supported well to make progress with their independence and to learn new skills. They are involved in going shopping with the adults and learning how to manage their own money. Staff encourage children to be active and to make healthy choices around food. When staff are worried about children, there are open conversations with children about being safe. Children are supported to make safe choices around using their mobile phones and being safe in their local community.

The residential areas are clean, spacious and well maintained. They have a homely feel that enables children to feel relaxed and at ease. There are comfortable sofas in the lounge and spacious social areas so that children can relax and have fun with staff. The children enjoy snack and mealtimes in the school canteen, where they can sit with other children and staff. Children can make choices about who they sit with. If they do not like the main food options, alternative choices are available to them.

Children's outcomes have improved since they came to stay in the residential provision. They make progress because their health, education, well-being and independence skills are prioritised by the adults who care for them. However, children's paper records do not always show this or do not always contain current and relevant information about each child. There are gaps in the information that is included, and there is not enough information about some children's health needs, culture or identity. For one child, the paper file did not have important relevant information about the current risks to their safety.

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

Children said that they feel safe in the residential provision and can talk openly to adults who care for them. Each child has a trusted key adult who they can talk to

and who helps to ensure their safety. Staff work hard to understand the difficulties that children are experiencing and to support children to be safe. This important level of support helps children to feel safe and reinforces the message that they are loved and cared about.

When safeguarding concerns are identified, they are managed well. There have not been any episodes of children going missing, and there has been no need for any restraints. Medication is administered appropriately. Staff promptly take action when they have any concerns to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children

Social workers describe the school and residential staff as 'absolutely brilliant'. The communication with staff is good, and they go above and beyond to offer support to the child. When a concern was identified in relation to the child's mobile phone, this was promptly followed up, and appropriate action was taken.

When children move into the residential provision, clear plans are identified to help them manage this change successfully. The staff work together with families, social workers and other professionals to plan for the needs of each child carefully. Children's time in the residential provision is increased gradually and at their pace, so they can feel confident and happy about the plans that are in place.

As children grow up, they are supported effectively with their independence skills to ensure that they are well prepared for their next steps as they move on to college or other settings. Staying in the residential provision has enabled children to be more prepared for greater levels of independence so that they can function better as young adults. One child is a skilled athlete and staying in the residential provision has meant that they are well prepared and more confident around the next steps in their life.

Communication with education staff, families, social workers and other professionals is timely and effective in helping to keep children safe and promoting their welfare. When children move between the residential setting and the school, the arrangements are effective in providing children with a strong level of consistent support. This arrangement means that each child has a team of individuals around them who all work together to help keep them safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The senior leadership team has made improvements to the residential provision, so experiences for children have greatly improved. They have developed clear plans for improving the care that children receive. There is a positive level of reflection and learning taking place, which helps managers and staff to develop their skills and practice. The leadership team has a good understanding of what is working well in the residential provision and of the areas that need to be improved.

The members of the leadership team are active in sharing their knowledge, skills and practice with other professionals. There have been strong links made with staff from

another residential school who have visited this school, and staff from both settings have been able to learn from each other's practice. Monitoring and review systems are in place, which includes regular input from school governors and independent visitors.

Staff said that they feel valued and well supported by their managers. They are motivated and enthusiastic about providing children with the best levels of care. The staff have shown a strong level of commitment to the children in the current climate where the future of the residential provision remains uncertain.

Leaders and managers have developed plans for improving the care that children receive, but this is not always reflected in children's documentation. Children's paper records lack the detail that is needed, and there are significant gaps identified in terms of information about their identity and additional needs.

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:

- Each child's file includes the information in Appendix B (individual records). (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 5.2)
- There is a written plan in place for each child resident in the school setting out how their day-to-day needs will be met, known as the placement plan. The plan is thorough and specific to the child and is agreed, as far as is practicable, with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child. Children have an opportunity to contribute to their plans. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet, assesses any risks 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 education, health and care plan (EHC plan) and reflects any changes to the EHC plan. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 7.1)

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure that children have access to a children's guide to help prepare them for their residential experiences.
- School leaders should develop an open culture in the residential provision so that parents and professionals are invited to visit regularly and can be involved in the positive experiences that children have.
- Staff should explore with children their views on important issues, such as healthy relationships, culture and identity. Children's records should fully capture what happens for children during their residential stays.

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: SC041223

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Pam Ridgwell

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Inspector

Sarah Sheffield, Social Care Inspector

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