

Muntham House School

Barns Green, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 0NJ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Muntham House School is a special school that provides boarding and day provision for boys aged 5 to 18 years. There are currently 142 students on the school roll. There were 21 students boarding at the time of the inspection.

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

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 January 2026

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 **good**

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: 21 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make exceptional progress from their individual starting points. They are consistently encouraged to be the best they can be, which builds confidence, resilience and a strong sense of self-worth. Staff place a high value on recognising and celebrating every success, no matter how small. This highly positive and aspirational culture ensures that children feel valued, supported and proud of their achievements, which contributes to their overall progress.

Children's experiences of residential care are exceptionally positive. They receive highly individualised care that is carefully planned around their needs, strengths and personal goals. Children develop secure, trusting relationships with staff and peers and speak confidently about feeling safe, settled and well cared for. They value the welcoming environment, the friendships they form and the opportunities to make choices about their daily lives. Behaviour support is calm, fair and proportionate. Children said that staff are consistently available to support them at any time, which further strengthens their sense of security and wellbeing.

Children benefit from taking part in a wide range of age-appropriate experiences both within the school and in the wider community. These significantly enhance their enjoyment and broaden their aspirations. Children are actively involved in making choices in their daily lives, including in relation to activities, routines and food choices. Their views, wishes and feelings are consistently sought, valued and acted upon. Staff demonstrate an exceptional understanding of individual needs and provide sensitive, respectful support that promotes dignity and positive relationships. As a result, children experience a stable, nurturing environment where they feel listened to, respected and able to participate fully in all aspects of daily life.

Children benefit from a highly effective, fully integrated model of education, care and therapy. Staff work cohesively to meet each child's individual needs. Children make exceptional progress in their education while also developing strong social, emotional and communication skills. Access to a multidisciplinary therapeutic department ensures that support is tailored, meaningful and effective. This integrated practice strengthens children's emotional wellbeing, supports regulation and enables them to communicate anxieties more confidently.

Children are supported to achieve appropriate qualifications through needs-led approaches when formal classroom-based education does not meet their individual needs. Where appropriate, children follow alternative pathways, including work experience opportunities and apprenticeships linked to their vocational interests. This helps children remain motivated and develop practical skills that prepare them for future independence.

Children and their families benefit from effective outreach support, including assistance with reintegration into education. Transitions are carefully planned, and families feel well supported throughout the process.

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

Safeguarding leadership and oversight are robust and well established. Designated safeguarding leads are knowledgeable and experienced and provide consistent oversight of safeguarding practice. They maintain professional relationships with families and a wide range of external agencies. This means that concerns are promptly recorded, rigorously managed and subject to regular review. Leaders closely monitor children's progress. They take decisive action when responses from partner agencies are delayed, unclear or insufficiently focused on children's best interests. They provide robust and persistent challenge to prevent drift and delay. As a result, children receive timely, appropriate and effective protection and support.

Children's safety and welfare are at the heart of practice, underpinned by a highly effective safeguarding culture. Staff demonstrate an exceptional understanding of individual children's risks and vulnerabilities. Staff work proactively and confidently with children to help them recognise risk and develop practical strategies to keep themselves safe. This child-centred approach results in highly coordinated and timely interventions that significantly reduce risk and promote children's safety.

Children's medication is stored and administered by staff, ensuring that health needs are met and that medication is managed safely. While this promotes children's wellbeing, the approach is applied uniformly to all children, without consideration of age or individual capability. As a result, opportunities for those who are ready to develop independence in managing their own medication are limited. Staff recognise that adopting a more flexible approach would better support children to contribute positively to their longer-term health outcomes and preparation for adulthood.

Health and safety arrangements across the site are well managed. The estates team maintains the environment effectively, and staff are vigilant in identifying and responding promptly to health and safety concerns. Fire evacuation drills are undertaken; however, leadership oversight and centralised record-keeping mean that documentation does not consistently evidence timely completion within residential provision. In addition, personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) were not fully formalised for a small number of children whose individual needs may increase risk during evacuation. Leaders recognised these as issues of recording and oversight rather than practice and took immediate action to strengthen documentation and implement PEEPs.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leadership at the school is strong and demonstrates a clear commitment to inclusion. The head of care, supported by the principal and department heads, places significant emphasis on listening to children, staff and parents. This has created a culture in which children are central to daily practice. Staff feel valued and motivated, and parents are confident that their children are safe, supported and well cared for.

Staff report feeling well supported by the leadership team, particularly the head of care. They benefit from good-quality annual performance reviews that identify individual strengths and agree tailored learning opportunities that align closely with children's needs. Training is bespoke and relevant, enabling staff to develop their skills and knowledge. This helps them to respond effectively to children's behaviours, communication needs and emotional wellbeing. For example, one member of staff was supported to gain a swimming instructor qualification, resulting in children now accessing individual one-to-one swimming lessons.

Staff also benefit from regular reflective and supportive sessions with the head of care and the therapy team. These discussions provide ongoing guidance, reassurance and opportunities to reflect on practice. Although these interactions are not currently formalised as scheduled supervision sessions, staff feel well supported and able to access leadership oversight as needed.

Safer recruitment practice is understood and applied by leaders. However, the recording and collation of evidence does not consistently reflect the full extent of this practice. Recruitment interview records do not always capture the depth of professional exploration undertaken to assess candidates' suitability to work with children. Reference checks are completed; however, second professional references are not always clearly recorded or detailed on file. These shortfalls relate to the quality of recording rather than the effectiveness of safer recruitment practice.

CCTV systems are used within residential areas, including communal rooms and corridors. Leaders and managers have ensured that data protection requirements are met, including registration with the Information Commissioner's Office. Leaders recognise the importance of balancing safeguarding with children's rights to privacy, dignity and a homely living environment. Consequently, they have identified the need to review the purpose, placement and use of CCTV within residential areas to ensure its continued use remains proportionate and sensitive to children's wellbeing.

Governors are committed to their role and receive regular information about the residential provision through reports and meetings. However, their oversight would be strengthened through more direct engagement with the residential provision. Leaders recognise this and are well placed to further develop governance

arrangements to enhance assurance and oversight of the quality of residential care.

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

Points for improvement

- School leaders should review the purpose, placement and use of CCTV to ensure that its continued use remains proportionate and does not impact on children's right to privacy and dignity.
- School leaders should ensure that records of all fire evacuations that take place in residential time are maintained. PEEPs should be introduced for a small number of children whose individual needs may increase risk during evacuation.
- School leaders should consider how children can be supported to manage their own medication.
- School leaders should ensure that staff receive formal and reflective supervision once a term and that records of these discussions are maintained.

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: SC014636

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Harry Anderson

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Sharron Escott, Social Care Inspector

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