

St Mary's School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Angela Gunning
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Date of last inspection	30 October 2006

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

St Mary's School is a Residential Special School maintained by East Sussex County Council. It is currently providing education, care and accommodation for boys, with an educational statement for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, between the ages of 10 and 16. The school appointed an acting Headteacher from April 2007 who has overall management, with the support of the Head of Care and two team leaders. The school and residential accommodation is on one site situated in grounds between Heathfield and Horam. There are currently two boarding facilities, the senior boys accommodation is located on the upper floor of the school building and the junior boys accommodation is in a house within the grounds. The school is a weekly boarding establishment, with a flexible boarding arrangement.

Summary

This was a short notice key inspection and included a two day visit to St Mary's School. This inspection looked at outcomes for the National Key Standards for children and young people receiving education and care in Residential Special Schools. This inspection found improvements in the residential provision at St Mary's School and an encouraging and progressive vision for further improvement.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school was asked to ensure that all of the boarding areas are kept clean and hygienic at all times. Since the previous inspection all the residential accommodation has been deep cleaned and the Site Manager regularly monitors the state of maintenance and hygiene in these areas. Since the last inspection the quality and quantity of food provided in the residential houses has improved. Young people's views are actively sought when preparing the weekly menus. Staggered lunchtimes and improved canteen facilities have enhanced the eating experience for the young people. A second team leader has been in post since September, providing support and assistance and a clearer staffing structure for the care staff team. There has been some improvement to the provision of outdoor lighting. Although this should be further improved at night time. The sharing of information between education and care staff has improved to assist in providing young people with the practical and emotional support they need. The school ensures that young people have access to information about support groups, should they need them, such as NSPCC. A new peer mentoring scheme to assist in the young people's social and emotional development has been introduced. The boarding process is clearer and systems of monitoring which young people are staying overnight have improved. Although recording is not consistent or fully robust. The behaviour management and reward system in the boarding provision is clearer and more consistent, assisting in the promotion of positive and acceptable behaviour.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people are provided with a healthy balanced diet that meets their needs and choices. They say that the 'food is good'. Young people are encouraged and supported to make healthy food choices and to plan and prepare food. Mealtimes during the day and evening are relaxed

and sociable occasions. There is good liaison between various healthcare professionals to support the school in meeting the young people's healthcare needs. However, there is not a healthcare plan in place for each young person and not all young people have had their health care needs adequately identified or addressed. For example, where a young person has asthma there is no strategic plan as to how staff are to assist in its management. The school is reviewing its medication policy and procedures to ensure they are fully robust to meet the young people's medication needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The school has a complaints procedure but it is not consistently made available to all the young people. The recording of complaints does not provide a clear audit trail to monitor that complaints have been addressed satisfactorily. The school has clear and up to date procedures for responding to child protection concerns. Staff receive training and have a good awareness and understanding to ensure the young people are protected from abuse. St Mary's has an effective absconding procedures to protect young people's safety. Records indicate bullying is monitored and the young people confirm the school deals with bullying appropriately. The school is reviewing its behaviour management system to provide a more consistent and holistic approach across the whole school. However, some young people's perception is that there is no consistency or fairness in the school's behaviour management system. Individual behaviour development plans are being developed and have been implemented for some young people to assist in promoting appropriate, positive and acceptable behaviour. The use of restraint in the management of behaviour is monitored by the senior management team. However, the recording of such incidents does not include all the required information. Records indicate that recruitment procedures are satisfactory, although the same procedures need to be followed for all contract/sessional staff. The school has good health and safety checks to ensure the safety of the young people and staff. There are regular fire safety checks and a full fire risk assessment of the premise has been carried out. The boarding process is clearer and systems of monitoring which young people are staying overnight have improved. Although recording is not consistent or fully robust.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The residential contribution to the educational achievement of the young people has improved. There is more organised sharing of information between education and care staff to assist in providing young people with the practical and emotional support they need to reach their educational potential. Records indicate the young people have an Individual Education Plan and staff are aware of these. Education targets are regularly discussed and reviewed with the young person. The school seeks advice and assistance from specialist external services to ensure the young people's needs are met. The young people confirm they are given help and support to follow their interest and hobbies, such as football, swimming, biking and music in the radio shack. The school does not offer the young people an independent visitor who they can talk to if they have problems or concerns at the school. However, the young people have access to information about support groups, should they need them, such as NSPCC.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people's views and opinions have been sought in various aspects of decision making in the school, such as the new school uniform and logo, the planned refurbishment of the residential accommodation and menu choices. The young people are able to communicate their views through the school council, annual questionnaires, tutorial and residential meetings. Although some young people feel the school council is not an effective forum for being listened to. Staff demonstrate they know the young people well and are aware of their needs, although these are not currently documented adequately. The care planning system is being developed and at present does not adequately record individual needs and how staff are to assist in meeting these needs.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The school is in the initial stages of redesigning and refurbishing the residential accommodation. The young people are being consulted with during this process. There has been improvement in the decoration and maintenance of the junior boys' boarding accommodation to provide a more homely environment. However, the senior boys' accommodation is not homely and some young people said 'it is bare'. The plans to improve the senior boys' residential accommodation takes this issue into consideration.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The senior management team ensure effective management of the school. The acting Headteacher has overall management, with the support of the Head of Care and two team leaders. Staff confirm that the senior management team are taking the school in the right direction. The school has some internal quality monitoring systems, such as the Headteachers report to the Governors, but lacks sufficient external monitoring. The Statement of Purpose does not describe the care and facilities the school will provide. It has not been produced in a format which can be easily understood by the young people or their families. Staffing arrangements across the school have improved to provide a more holistic approach to the education and care provided at St Mary's. A second team leader has been in post since September, providing support and assistance and a clearer staffing structure for the care staff team. Records indicate that staff are provided with a range of training to ensure they can meet the needs of the young people.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure all young people have a healthcare plan.

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- provide a clear recorded audit trail of each complaint to ensure complaints are monitored and addressed satisfactorily.
 - ensure complaints forms are made readily to the young people should they wish to log a complaint.
 - identify a person independent of the school who the young people can contact about problems/concerns at the school.
 - ensure the recording of incidents involving physical intervention includes all the required information.
 - consider ways of improving the young people's perception of the consistency and fairness of the school's behaviour management system.
 - carry out the same recruitment procedures for all contract/sessional staff.
 - improve the provision of outdoor lighting at night time.
 - ensure each young person has a care plan that records individual needs and how staff are to assist in meeting these needs.
 - consider ways of making the young people feel the school council is an effective forum for being listened to.
 - consider ways of making the senior boys boarding house more personalised and homely.
 - produce a Statement of Purpose that describes the care and facilities the school will provide and make this available to the young people and their family/representatives.
 - carry out sufficient external monitoring as part of the school quality assurance procedures.
 - ensure the system of monitoring which young people are staying overnight is consistent and fully robust.

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.