

St Francis

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Mick Walklin
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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 Francis Residential Special School provides planned residential care within a 24-hour curriculum for young people up to the age of 19 years with medical and or physical disabilities. The school provides a full curriculum for Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Post 16 pupils. Boarding is available from Monday afternoon to Friday morning during school term time. Accommodation for up to 18 young people can be provided each night. Five young people access the residential wing as part of their Statement of Educational Need. The remaining residential places are open to young people on a rotational basis to enable them to experience living away from home. All accommodation is on one level and there are three separate living areas. Each of these areas has a lounge with adjoining bedrooms and bathrooms. Young people can access school facilities throughout the evening. This includes the large post 16 area with computer and food preparation facilities, the school hall, swimming pool, outside areas and design and technology classrooms. The school is situated on a residential estate in Lincoln and transport is available for boarders in the evenings to enable access to the community.

Summary

This announced annual inspection was conducted as part of the planned inspection programme. All National Minimum Standards were inspected. The residential wing provides an environment where young people are encouraged to gain independence, confidence and self-esteem. Learning is made a positive and enjoyable experience as part of a 24-hour curriculum. Young people benefit from excellent support from a well-trained staff group. There are excellent relationships between young people and staff. Young people enjoy staying in the residential wing and feel safe during their stays. They have a busy leisure and activity programme. There are excellent arrangements to meet the needs of young people with complex health needs, mobility problems and communication problems. Young people are fully consulted about the running of the school and the residential wing. The environment is comfortable and homely. Regular safety audits are conducted but some hazardous materials are not securely stored.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations from the previous inspection conducted by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in November 2006.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements in place to ensure that their health needs are met whilst at school. Many young people have complex health needs so are not routinely sent home if they become unwell. A team of four nurses are employed to provide cover for the school and residential wing. Physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy are also available on a sessional basis. Parents and guardians maintain overall responsibility for healthcare arrangements but there are arrangements with a local surgery to provide emergency cover if required. Nurses are involved in young people's health assessments and care planning and present sessions on personal development, sex education and living a healthy lifestyle. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award. Nurses are primarily responsible for medication

administration although care staff also completed training, including the administration of complex and invasive medication. There are good systems for the receipt and disposal of medication and storage arrangements are satisfactory. Meals are freshly prepared in the main kitchen, and a newly refurbished kitchen on the residential wing enables groups of young people to prepare meals and snacks independently. This kitchen is fully accessible to young people that use wheelchairs. Young people say that the quality of food served is good, although they complained about the lack of salt, and vegetarian options available. Whilst they understand the reason for restrictions on salt, they have requested that a low salt alternative be provided. Young people confirm that they have free access to healthy snacks, fruit and drinks when boarding. Menus are compiled by catering staff taking young people's needs and preferences into account. Although there is only a choice of one main course and pudding provided, individual requests can be catered for. Some young people require pureed food and catering staff ensure that this is attractively presented. Young people are encouraged and enabled to eat independently using an excellent range of aids and adaptations when required. Young people have a good knowledge of healthy eating and adequate fluid intake is promoted by staff.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Some young people require a high level of personal care and staff ensure that this is delivered in a way that maintains privacy and dignity. Staff have written guidelines about privacy and confidentiality and are aware of their responsibilities. Young people confirm that staff respect their personal space. Intercoms are fitted in each bedroom to monitor young people at night. These are only used with the consent of parents and young people. The school has security cameras to monitor the exterior of the building and there is no monitoring of residential areas. Young people are protected by good procedures for dealing with complaints, bullying, child protection and unauthorised absences. The complaints procedure is explained to young people when they start boarding and written information is available. The Independent Visitor and the Residential Governor visit the school regularly and are available if young people wish to discuss concerns. No complaints have been recorded since the last inspection and young people confirm that they have confidence in staff to deal with any issues raised. Young people say that there is no problem with bullying within the school and all interviewed said that they feel safe whilst staying. Staff receive regular child protection training and have a good knowledge of the procedure to follow if they have concerns. There have been no incidents of unauthorised absences with young people. Staff are aware of their responsibility to notify the appropriate authorities of significant events and have followed this procedure when necessary. Good behaviour is effectively promoted and staff respond positively if young people's behaviour is considered unacceptable. Young people are actively encouraged to be polite and courteous and staff recognise the importance of being good role models. Young people confirm that sanctions and physical interventions are not used, but they are 'told off' if their behaviour is considered unacceptable. There are good systems in place to ensure the safety of young people. The school has two site managers who are responsible for aspects of health and safety. Fire checks and evacuations are conducted regularly and health and safety audits are being introduced in accordance with local authority procedures. All electrical appliances brought in by young people are checked for safety, and the hot water temperature is regulated in areas accessible to young people. However, some hazardous disinfecting tablets were found unlocked in one of the bathrooms. Records relating to fixed electrical wiring and gas safety were not available for inspection as they are kept at a separate office. Staff and visitors to the school

are thoroughly vetted and the one new member of staff on the residential wing has had the appropriate checks conducted prior to employment. Volunteers and work placement students are also thoroughly vetted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential wing provides a valuable resource to enhance the educational opportunities of young people. There is a strong philosophy of providing a 24-hour curriculum in an environment where young people are encouraged to gain independence, confidence and self-esteem. Learning is made a positive and enjoyable experience and achievements are celebrated in assemblies and special events. There is an effective house system within the school offering house points to motivate and reward young people. Staff provide excellent support for young people with homework whilst boarding, with a homework club and evening educational activities. Young people study towards an accredited qualification in independent living whilst staying on the residential wing. They have use of good library and computer facilities in the evening. There is good communication between the teaching and residential staff with some staff working across both settings. Young people say that they really enjoy boarding and comments included 'We have lots to do', and 'The best thing about boarding is that we have fun'. Young people have the opportunity to attend a club every evening. Each evening has a different theme, with a youth club and clubs for art, science, drama and sports held during the week. Young people can also choose to pursue their own interests and hobbies in the evening. Staff use every opportunity to promote the development of skills and social interaction during activities and ensure that young people with communication or mobility difficulties are fully involved in group activities. Regular outings are organised and some young people participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Young people praise the level of support they receive from staff. Support for young people is provided in a sensitive and understanding way in line with their wishes and preferences. They are able to discuss personal issues with people independent of the school. The school also fosters an environment where young people support each other and where young people are understanding of each other's needs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are good systems for ensuring that young people are fully consulted within the school. Young people from each year are elected to the school council. This enables young people to have a voice and contribute to decision making. Young people praise the achievements of the council. One young person attends school governors meetings. A suggestions box is situated at the entrance to the residential wing and young people say that staff have responded to suggestions about a new stereo, supper choices and outings. There is an excellent relationship between staff and young people. Staff are respectful in their interactions with young people and maintain safe and consistent boundaries. The atmosphere on the residential wing is relaxed and friendly. Young people say that the staff are fun to be with. Requests for boarding will usually come from a review meeting or be identified as part of the young person's Statement of Educational Need. A care plan meeting will be co-ordinated with the Head of Care, teaching staff and health professionals prior to a young person accessing the service, to ensure that their needs can be met. Placement plans contain sufficient detail to identify support needs. They are reviewed regularly and contain details of preferred routines, leisure needs and diet. Young people or their parents complete an 'All About Me' booklet which identifies their

preferences in all areas of daily life. There are good moving and handling plans which contain photographs and diagrams for clarity. Young people confirm that they are fully involved in their reviews. There is no key worker identified for each young person for individual guidance and support. Young people are able to maintain contact with families and friends during their stays. A payphone is available and young people can also use a wireless telephone for privacy. Some young people have their own mobile phones. The school maintains regular contact with parents and home school diaries are used extensively.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people bring their own clothing, pocket money and personal requisites when they are staying, but the school also holds some supplies for emergencies. School uniform is not compulsory and there is a relaxed policy relating to clothing and jewellery because pupils have sufficient restrictions in other aspects of their lives. Transition planning commences when young people reach the age of 14. Young people are provided with the opportunity to practice and develop independent living skills in preparation for adult life. They are supported to explore career and further education options. Comments from young people included, 'Boarding helps us organise ourselves', and 'It helps us develop skills'. The residential wing provides a comfortable and well-decorated environment for young people to enjoy. Young people say that the accommodation is nice. They have been involved in choosing the décor and furnishings to provide homely accommodation in three distinct areas. Areas are fully equipped to meet the needs of young people with mobility difficulties with specialist bathing facilities, beds and moving and handling aids. Residential accommodation is exclusively for the use of boarders and after school activities are held in another part of the school. Young people confirm that their privacy is respected.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose is produced in booklet, audio and visual formats. It contains a good range of information for parents and placing authorities. Young people are given a welcome booklet which outlines the services and facilities available and includes photographs of the accommodation. The school website also provides valuable information. Each young person has a permanent and secure record of their progress and the school maintains clear and accurate records for staff and young people. Young people confirm that staffing levels are satisfactory to provide good levels of support. The residential wing is only open from Monday afternoon to Friday morning and staff work split shifts to provide morning, evening and night cover. Minimum staffing levels are stated in risk assessments. In addition to rostered staff, the Head of Care and the Senior Residential Care Officer are supernumerary. Staff are well trained. The head of care co-ordinates training and annual appraisals. Staff have designated training days to cover mandatory subjects, and most staff have attained a National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 or above. Although staff receive regular informal supervision, formal one to one supervision is not occurring every half term. The school is well managed and organised to deliver high standards of care to young people. The Head of Care is suitably qualified and experienced to fulfil the role. Records are monitored periodically by the Head and Head of Care. The Residential Governor and the Independent Visitor undertake regular monitoring visits and provide written reports of their findings.

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 that hazardous substances are securely stored (NMS 26)
- enable young people to receive individual guidance and support through key workers (NMS 17)
- provide a choice of main course at each main meal (NMS 15)
- ensure that staff receive one to one supervision six times a year (NMS 30).

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.