

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 assessed. This is an outstanding service in most respects. Young people's welfare is promoted by a dedicated staff group that have an excellent relationship with young people. Young people's behaviour is exemplary and there is a strong ethos of good manners and courteous behaviour throughout the school. The school's residential provision actively supports young people's educational progress by enabling young people to develop social and independence skills and giving them the opportunity to experience living away from their parents or carers. The school is outstanding at addressing equality and diversity issues. An atmosphere of tolerance, understanding and equal opportunities is effectively promoted throughout all areas of school life. A major strength of the school is that young people develop self-confidence that empowers them to take the initiative and work constructively and collaboratively with others. The school benefits from a strong management team that provides good leadership. Staff are well trained and supported. Comments from young people included, 'It's my favourite place to be'. 'I enjoy it here'. A parent said, 'St Francis is a diamond in the busy and hectic life of our child'.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection it was recommended that the provider ensure that all hazardous substances are stored securely. it was also recommended that a key worker system be introduced, a choice of main meals be provided and that staff receive regular supervision. Action has been taken to address all these recommendations.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people stay in a healthy environment and their health and care needs are identified and promoted. A team of qualified nurses provide 24 hour cover for the school and residential area. Young people with complex health needs are exceptionally well cared for and there are

arrangements with a local surgery for emergency medical cover. Residential staff receive training in specialist procedures to ensure that all young people's health needs can be met. Physiotherapy and occupational therapy are available on a sessional basis, although there are concerns that the restructuring of physiotherapy input by the NHS Trust will have a negative impact on the wellbeing of young people. Health care plans are of a high standard and shared notes ensure excellent communication between nurses and residential staff. Young people benefit from a regular programme of health promotion sessions and health promotion literature is also available. Nurses offer a drop-in service to enable young people to discuss personal issues. Nurses are responsible for the administration of medication with excellent procedures to ensure that medication is administered and stored safely. Young people are provided with healthy and nutritious meals that meet their dietary requirements. The introduction of a salad bar has improved menu variety. Healthy eating has a high priority in the school and young people have an excellent knowledge of healthy diets and what foods to avoid. Meals are freshly prepared in the main kitchen. There is a kitchen in the residential area which is fully accessible to wheelchair users, enabling young people to prepare meals and snacks. Individual dietary needs are clearly identified in care plans. Pureed foods are attractively presented and staff are sensitive to young people's needs when assisting them with eating. Young people are supported to eat independently using a range of special equipment where appropriate. Young people confirmed that the standard of food is good with comments such as, 'I love the food', and 'The food is lovely and we try new things'. The school participates in the Healthy Schools initiative and achieved a five-star rating at the last environmental health inspection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. Staff ensure that personal dignity is maintained whilst carrying out personal or intimate care. Portable screens are used in shared bedrooms to maintain privacy. Young people say that staff always knock on bedroom doors before entering. There are clear procedures for the use of intercoms which are used in bedrooms at night to monitor and safeguard young people. These are only used with the consent of parents and young people where appropriate. Young people's records are securely stored to maintain confidentiality and staff have a good awareness of their responsibilities in this area. Young people have confidence in approaching staff if they have complaints or concerns. The procedure is explained when they commence boarding and there is good written information available. There have been no complaints recorded over the past 12 months. The welfare of young people is promoted, and there are good procedures to protect young people from bullying. Young people feel safe and protected at the school and bullying is not identified as a problem by young people or staff. Staff have a thorough knowledge of child protection procedures and receive annual training updates. Although no young people have been absent without authority, there are procedures in place should this occur. Parents and carers are reassured that the school is a safe environment and appreciate the work that is done to raise awareness of personal safety. There are systems in place to ensure that significant events are notified to the appropriate authorities. The school is outstanding at promoting acceptable behaviour by the use of praise and rewards. Unacceptable behaviour is quickly and skilfully managed by staff who act as good role models for young people. The school has a non-punitive approach to behaviour management evidenced by the fact that no physical interventions or sanctions have been used for a considerable period. Young people's behaviour is exemplary and there is a strong ethos of good manners and courteous behaviour throughout the school. Young people feel that school rules are fair and parents and carers value the support

that the school offers to young people to manage their behaviours. Young people stay in an environment that provides physical safety and security. Robust systems and checks are in place to ensure that the environment is safe. Staff and visitors are fully vetted and visitors are monitored whilst on the premises. A recent issue relating to the laundry door being left unlocked has been addressed to ensure the safety of young people. Physical measures such as security gates, CCTV and locked doors ensure that the building is safe at night. Young people receive fire awareness training and have an excellent knowledge of fire evacuation procedures and fire assembly points.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school's residential provision actively supports young people's educational progress. It enhances the opportunities available to young people by providing a 24 hour curriculum. This enables young people to develop social and independence skills and gives them the opportunity to experience living away from their parents or carers. Young people achieve their full potential in academic, creative, personal, physical, moral and spiritual development. A 'can do' culture enables pupils to feel valued and builds self-esteem. The Ofsted education inspection in March 2008 found the school to be 'outstanding in every respect' and having a 'well established reputation locally as a centre of excellence'. There is an excellent relationship between the main school and the residential area with excellent communication. Young people receive good support with homework and evening activities enhance the educational curriculum. Young people benefit from a wide ranging and enjoyable activity programme outside school hours. Clubs are organised in the evenings and young people say that they enjoy being with their friends. Young people enjoy the leisure opportunities offered although some said that they would appreciate more 'chill-out' time. Staff use activities to develop young people's skills and social interactions. Those with mobility and communication problems receive excellent support to enable them to participate, ensuring that they are not excluded. Young people receive excellent levels of individual support. The school is outstanding at addressing equality and diversity issues. An atmosphere of tolerance, understanding and equal opportunities is effectively promoted throughout all areas of school life. Young people are respectful to each other and aware and supportive of each others needs. For example, they will assist others without prompts and have good awareness of safety issues when assisting wheelchair users. Young people with mobility or communication difficulties are actively involved in groups and activities with other young people. Communication aids are extensively used and speech and language therapists hold regular sessions at the school. A wide range of mobility aids such as walking frames and powered wheelchairs are used to enable independence. Young people also have access to special beds, seating and moving and handling equipment. Young people's gender preferences for staff carrying out personal care are identified in 'All About Me' books. Cultural theme days are held to raise young people's awareness of differing cultures. The independent visitor is skilled and experienced in helping young people with bereavement issues.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are well supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. The widespread use of communication aids ensures that all young people are able to contribute their views. A suggestions box is situated in the entrance to the residential area and young people are consulted regularly both formally and informally. Staff engender

self-esteem in young people to express their views confidently whilst listening to the views of others. A number of changes have been made following consultation with young people including extended bedtimes, full length mirrors being installed and improvements to décor and furnishings. A school council with representatives from each year enables young people to have a voice in the operation of the school. The Residential Governor and the Independent Visitor visit the school periodically to consult young people. Young people have a warm and friendly relationship with staff based on respect. There is a friendly and relaxed atmosphere between staff and young people whilst maintaining and reinforcing safe and consistent boundaries. Young people describe the staff as 'nice'. A parent commented, 'Staff genuinely care about the young people and want to help them succeed'. New admissions to the residential area are sensitively handled to ensure that young people's needs and wishes are taken into account. Young people receive excellent support to prepare them for leaving the school when the time comes. Clear information is available to parents or carers and young people about the criteria for boarding. Parents are welcome to visit the residential area to view the accommodation and discuss care issues. Young people have their needs fully assessed with good written plans in place to address those needs. Care plans are much improved to give more concise information, and are based on an 'All About Me' book. This gives a thorough picture of young people's care needs, and enables parents and carers to provide direct information about young people's routines and preferences for all activities of daily living. Moving and handling plans are of a good standard, providing clear descriptions about the equipment to be used and photographs to aid clarity. A key worker system has now been introduced which young people have responded to positively. Young people are supported to maintain contact with parents, carers and friends if they wish whilst staying in the residential area. Young people have use of a payphone or bring their own mobile phones with them. Parents and carers praised the 'excellent' communication diaries and the 'positive links' with parents. One commented, 'Boarding is a positive experience and staff are excellent at allaying fears and concerns'. Parents and carers wishes for contact during residential stays is well documented.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people bring their own clothing and personal requisites with them when staying in the residential area, but the school also holds some supplies for emergencies. Young people have lockable drawers to store valuables. An optional school uniform consisting of a polo shirt and sweatshirt is available. There is a relaxed policy towards clothing and jewellery because the school has the philosophy that young people's disabilities already place sufficient restrictions in other areas of their lives. Young people are well prepared for their transition into adulthood and receive good support to explore further education or employment opportunities. Transitional reviews are held from 14 years of age. There is a strong emphasis on young people being as independent as they are able and gaining further skills in this area. A major strength of the school is that young people develop self-confidence that empowers them to take the initiative and work constructively and collaboratively with others. They learn how to deal with change and how to be creative in their thinking, bold enough to take well judged risks and rational in their decision making. There are good links with colleges and careers advice is available to young people and their parents or carers. Parents and carers praised the progress that young people make towards independence. A parent commented, 'The school sends me regular reports on my daughter's progress and plans for future life are discussed at reviews'. Another parent said, '(The school) provides a safe place where our child can be encouraged to develop and gain independence'. Young people stay in accommodation which is well maintained and

decorated. Despite the layout of the building, staff have been creative in ensuring that the accommodation is comfortable and homely. Young people like the accommodation and wheelchair users said that the accommodation is suitable for them. Accommodation is arranged in three distinct areas and the accommodation is solely for the use of boarders. Toilet and bathing facilities are suitable and are adapted for the needs of young people with mobility difficulties.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Young people and their parents or carers have access to good information about the residential area which describes the facilities available. The Statement of Purpose is available in written, audio and PowerPoint formats and a young person's guide to the residential area is produced. Information is also available through the school website. Young people's needs, development and progress is well recorded. The school keeps clear and accurate records of both the staff group and young people. Good staffing levels reflect the care needs of young people. Young people receive good continuity of care with a very low staff turnover with no new staff having been employed over the past 12 months. Staff are well trained and supported. New staff receive a thorough induction to prepare them for their role. The school has a strong commitment to staff training with staff receiving regular updates to enable them to carry out their role effectively. Residential staff have obtained or are studying towards a National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 or above. Staff have an annual appraisal and formal supervision is now occurring at the recommended intervals. There are clear lines of accountability and communication is described as good although some night staff commented that they were not always consulted or informed of everyday changes. The school benefits from a strong management team that provides excellent leadership. They effectively monitor the operation of the school and the welfare of young people. The Residential Governor and Independent Visitor undertake regular monitoring visits and provide written reports of their findings. The Head provides a detailed report for the governors every term relating to the progress of the school which includes an update on the residential area.

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):

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.