

St Mary's School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Angela Gunning / Liz Daniels
Type of Inspection	Key

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Head / Principal	
Date of last inspection	10 October 2007

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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

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

St Mary's School has been proactive in addressing most of the shortfalls that were identified during the previous inspection in 2007. Physical interventions are now recorded appropriately and the young people feel that their behaviour is managed fairly by the staff. The complaints and anti-bullying procedures are now effective. A Statement of Purpose has been implemented and there have been improvements to the outdoor lighting. A more consistent and robust system to monitor which young people are staying overnight has been implemented. The school council is now an effective forum which ensures the young people feel listened to. Progress is being made in care planning, external monitoring and the availability of an independent visitor for the young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The residential provision at St Mary's School is satisfactory and all the key National Minimum Standards are met. St Mary's School has been proactive in addressing most of the shortfalls that were identified during the previous inspection in October 2007. As a result, physical interventions are now recorded appropriately and the young people feel that their behaviour is managed fairly by staff. The complaints and anti-bullying procedures are now effective and the school council has become a helpful forum that ensures the young people feel listened to. A more consistent and robust system to monitor which young people are staying overnight has been implemented. A Statement of Purpose has been developed and there have been improvements to the outdoor lighting. In addition, progress is being made in care planning, external monitoring and the availability of an independent visitor for the young people.

The young people enjoy a healthy balanced diet that meets their needs and choices. There is good liaison between various healthcare professionals to support the staff in meeting the young people's healthcare needs. First Aid is well managed and healthcare plans have been introduced. However, these do not outline the specific care required to meet the young people's health needs or the health monitoring required by staff. Also the arrangements in place for the young people to receive medical treatment when residing at the school are unclear. Medication procedures are in place, although these are currently not adequately monitored or robust. However, staff are being proactive in reviewing and developing the medication procedures.

There are robust procedures in place so that information about the young people is handled confidentially and they believe their privacy is respected. The young people are aware of the complaints procedure; they feel able to raise their concerns and are confident that they will be listened to. They are also helped with their emotional and behavioural development through good behaviour management strategies. Physical interventions are recorded appropriately, although the record is not always signed by a senior staff member to demonstrate that each incident is being monitored. Appropriate recruitment procedures are in place and good child protection, anti-bullying and unauthorised absence procedures also ensure the young people are safeguarded. Positive steps are taken to manage health, safety and security; however, fire safety procedures are not robust, for example not all care staff have had fire safety training and fire drills have not been undertaken within the residential provision since the refurbishment.

The promotion of equality and diversity at St Mary's School is good. All the young people are given individual support and the care staff know the young people well. Excellent mechanisms are in place to support the young people; the staff access specialist external services when required and advocacy services are available. The school is embracing a 24 hour curriculum whereby the care staff support each young person's individual learning needs and encourage their personal, social and educational development. One parent explained that their son 'really enjoys staying over night at the school' and considers that 'he is learning more than he ever has'.

There are good procedures to ensure young people are admitted and leave in a sensitive and planned manner. Each young person has a care plan which reflects the targets they are working towards and in some cases give the details of the steps they need to take to achieve them. However, the progress the young people are making is not clearly recorded. There are many opportunities for the young people to express their views and their opinions are valued by staff. All of the young people are flexi-boarders and stay at the school for part of the week and whilst boarding, there are good contact arrangements with family and friends. The contact and communication between care staff and parents about the young people's progress is good.

One young person's representative said 'communication is excellent; the people here take us very seriously and feed back a lot about what is happening'.

The refurbishment of the residential provision in the main building, where the younger pupils board, is excellent. The house which is situated within the school grounds provides good accommodation and offers the young people the opportunity to develop independent living skills.

The Statement of Purpose is now in place and adequate information is given to the children and their relatives about the services and facilities that St Mary's provide. However, it does not contain the correct information regarding the inspectorate of the residential provision. Staffing arrangements are satisfactory and training opportunities are available, although 80% of care staff are not trained in the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3. There are good quality assurance processes to monitor the school's services and facilities and the governing body play an active role in supporting the school leadership. However, their termly monitoring of the residential provision is not yet being undertaken and appropriately recorded.

Recommendations:

1. ensure all young people have a healthcare plan that outlines their specific healthcare needs, the health monitoring required of staff and the arrangements for medical treatment whilst they reside at the school (National Minimum Standard 14).
2. implement a robust system for the storage, administration, disposal and recording of medication (National Minimum Standard 14)
3. ensure the record of physical interventions is signed by a senior staff member to demonstrate that each incident is being monitored (National Minimum Standard 10).
4. ensure the staff and young people know the emergency evacuation procedures, including those for use at night in the event of a fire and confirm that they have regularly practised such evacuation through organised fire drills (National Minimum Standard 26)
5. ensure all staff have had fire training as recommended by the local fire authority during their inspection of the school in October 2008 (National Minimum Standard 26)
6. undertake a termly monitoring visit of the residential provision and complete a written report on the conduct of the school (National Minimum Standard 33)
7. update the Statement of Purpose to reflect the change of inspectorate from the National Care Standard Commission to Ofsted (National Minimum Standard 1 and National Minimum Standard 4)
8. ensure 80% of care staff are trained in the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3 (National Minimum Standard 31).

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 that outlines their specific healthcare needs, the health monitoring required of staff and the arrangements for medical treatment whilst they reside at the school (NMS 14).
- implement a robust system for the storage, administration, disposal and recording of medication (NMS14)
- ensure the record of physical interventions is signed by a senior staff member to demonstrate that each incident is being monitored (NMS 10).
- ensure the staff and young people know the emergency evacuation procedures, including those for use at night in the event of a fire and confirm that they have regularly practised such evacuation through organised fire drills (NMS 26)
- ensure all staff have had fire training as recommended by the local fire authority during their inspection of the school in October 2008 (NMS 26)
- undertake a termly monitoring visit of the residential provision and complete a written report on the conduct of the school (NMS 33)
- update the Statement of Purpose to reflect the change of inspectorate from the National Care Standard Commission to Ofsted (NMS 1 and NMS 4)
- ensure 80% of care staff are trained in the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3 (National Minimum Standard 31).