

# St Nicholas Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Lucy Ansell / Sophie Wood
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	24 September 2008

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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 Nicholas school is a residential special school, providing day and boarding places to boys aged between 11 and 16 years, who have a primary need in relation to their emotional and behavioural difficulties. A number of pupils have additional needs, including language difficulties and health conditions, which may have a minor or major impact upon their learning potential. The school is situated within a residential area and has easy access to nearby shops and community amenities. The weekly boarding provision is situated within a separate area of the main school building. A team of highly motivated residential care staff create a safe, nurturing environment, which focuses upon improving social skills and providing additional and complementary learning opportunities.

### **Summary**

This was a key announced inspection completed by two inspectors over two days. The school has several good and outstanding elements, however, due to the residential provision being inadequate this has impacted on the overall judgement of satisfactory. This in no way reflects on the school or the residential team's overall care and safeguarding of its pupils. The management team, staff and overall school ethos contributed to the outstanding judgement in organisation. The outstanding judgement in enjoy and achieve was due to the individual support and encouragement given to all the students to ensure they are able to succeed in their chosen activity.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Two of the recommendations made at the last inspection have been completed. The personnel files now show clear evidence of telephone verification being made on written references, and the medication policy on admission of all medications has been revised. The two recommendations made around the residential accommodation have not been actioned due to the forthcoming restructuring of the residential unit.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Boarders' health is positively promoted. Good health records are maintained for each boarder. They do not contain information regarding health checks completed at home or key working sessions on specific health issues. Administration staff at the school promptly relay any dietary, medication or health information to boarding and catering staff to ensure that all relevant information is shared. Individual care plans are in place where needed. Parental consent for first aid, emergency treatment and homely remedies was in place.

A considerable number of staff are trained in first aid, and all staff are trained in medication administration and trained to use an epi-pen. Medication administration records were accurate and up-to-date. Medication is securely stored. Boarders receive health care, as necessary, either within the unit or by returning home. Boarders stated they know how to call staff at night, and feel that they are supported in relation to health and personal problems, including homesickness.

Boarders have a good choice of meals both at lunchtime in the canteen and for supper, which is prepared on the unit. Breakfast is served on the unit and is also available before school starts in the canteen. All boarders spoken with felt that the food was adequate in quantity and quality. The boarders have not been given the opportunity to contribute their views about the food to the catering team. Where necessary specific diets are catered for, and staff hold information on all allergies. Catering staff have access to training, both National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in catering and Inset days as appropriate to them. Catering staff are welcoming and friendly, and speak highly of the inclusive nature of the school.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Whilst sound staff practice continues to ensure that the boys' privacy and general safety is protected, this continues to be compromised due to the poor state of the boarding accommodation.

Written records continue to be securely stored and information is sensitively shared. The boarders say they trust the staff and can talk openly with them, resulting in no real use of the formal complaints procedure. This view is also reflected by parents and guardians, who receive regular visits and questionnaires in an attempt to encourage them to openly offer their views about all aspects of the school's provision.

Low level instances of bullying do occur and a designated staff lead actively monitors and reviews all reported instances. Emphasis continues to be placed upon the promotion of awareness and taking a proactive approach. Boarders continue to say they feel well looked after and they enjoy positive relationships with all of the care team. Communication between staff working across both aspects of the school is good and contributes effectively to the welfare of the boys.

Clear prescribed guidance concerning rewards, sanctions and the use of physical restraint is implemented in practice and serves to effectively encourage positive behaviour, whilst maintaining safe and consistent boundaries. This approach has a positive and rewarding impact throughout the school.

Low levels of absence and absconding further demonstrate the boys' desire to be at school, and where such occurrences do happen, they are appropriately managed and dealt with. Sound systems and processes regarding health and safety ensures a safe physical environment is being maintained.

Robust recruitment procedures include careful selection and appropriate vetting processes. However, the information currently held with regards agency staff is insufficient.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Frequent and clear communication systems between teaching and boarding staff promotes educational progress. Staff across both departments and different disciplines work hard to deliver a seamless service within a 24 hour curriculum. A multi-disciplinary approach positively impacts upon educational targets and goals.

The quality and variety of activities and leisure pursuits on offer is outstanding. There is excellent provision both on campus and also by accessing the wider community. As a result, boarders can access individual and group activities, many of which are aimed at promoting independence and personal growth. Day pupils also benefit from the extended day programme, which continues to grow and develop since its introduction last year.

Staff know the boarders well and are explicitly clear about their individual needs. A wealth of experience and relevant professional backgrounds is collectively found across the whole school. Support, such as the nurture group, the partnership social worker role, the inclusion team, and individual key workers and teachers, provides invaluable individual support to all pupils when they need it.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Boarders are actively encouraged to express their views and opinions about the school. They effectively use the forums open to them, albeit there is no formal process in place to seek opinion about the catering provision. Staff are sensitive to the individual support and communication needs of those in their care and work hard to support individuals to express themselves effectively.

Sound systems ensure a structured and planned introduction to joining the school, which gives newcomers every possible chance of enjoying a positive start. Leaving processes are equally sound, with effective and clear planning commencing around Year 9, becoming more formal at the start of Year 11. Much emphasis is placed upon vocational training and work experience placements, in order that on leaving school pupils are better equipped to either commence with employment or further education.

Sound relationships exist between school personnel and the parents and carers of pupils. Regular home visits and telephone contact helps to promote working in partnership, which is of sound importance for the continued well being of the boarders.

Whilst written care plans remain in place and contain some sound information, the care team recognises shortfalls and is actively working to improve these.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is inadequate.

The Local Authority advises that major refurbishment works will commence in 2010 and states planning permission has been granted, with budgets allocated and tenders being sought. At present, boarders are living in accommodation which compromises privacy and presents unacceptable living standards and conditions. Also, it does not meet the prescribed criteria in accordance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The schools statement of purpose produced for parents and stakeholders contains the boarding philosophy and aims. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Reference has been made throughout this report to the inclusive ethos that runs through all aspects of school

life. Boarders were unanimous in their views that the school made every effort to recognise their individual needs, and value their differences.

The Boarders are looked after by staff who are an experienced cohesive team, that are able to meet the boarders needs in a consistently manner. Staff keep a very helpful daily log, which ensures that all important information is passed on from shift to shift, and is passed to the teaching staff. Staff commented that they had very good access to training, including training specific to boarding, and that this was inclusive with all staff seen as valuable and have something to contribute. Regular staff meetings take place, and boarding staff receive supervision on a regular basis. They are provided with detailed policies and procedures, including guidance on meeting the individual needs of all pupils.

The school benefits from the forward thinking headteacher who offers stability, efficiency and clear leadership. The organisation of boarding is very good with regular monitoring of records carried out by the head and deputy head of care. The school's self appraisal and general quality assurance systems are also very good, and include regularly seeking the views of boarders. Any deficits picked up by any member of the staff team are dealt with immediately. The monitoring reports are comprehensive and robust and provide useful guidance to the senior management team. The school has an active governing body who work effectively for the benefit of the school.

## 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 health plan records up to date information on all treatments and key working sessions (NMS 14)
- ensure the catering team are seeking regular feedback from the students with regard to quality and choice in the menus (NMS 15)
- ensure sufficient personnel information is held with regards individual agency staff members (NMS 27)
- ensure the care plans include the boarders views and wishes (NMS 17)
- ensure the physical surroundings for the boarders are adequate to meet their needs (NMS 24)