

St Edward's School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Roy Bega
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Date of last inspection	9 December 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 Edwards School is an independent residential special school that provides care and education for boys aged between 10 and 16-plus who experience specific learning difficulties associated with behavioural problems. The school is a non-profit-making charitable trust and is owned and managed by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton. It is located in a large country house with extensive grounds, workshops, and a horticultural area and provides a range of sport and leisure opportunities. The school has a governing body that meets regularly and plays an active part in the school's operation. Boys attend the school during term time only, there are regular closed weekends and all boys are weekly boarders with the flexibility of day attendance, to meet the needs of individual pupils. Boys are referred to the school from a variety of placing authorities across the country.

Summary

This is an announced key inspection carried out over two days by one inspector. No recommendations are raised resulting from this inspection.

St Edwards School is efficiently run by an experienced senior management team that is led by an enthusiastic head teacher. The overall standard of care for the young people at the school is outstanding. Young people are cared for by a committed and highly motivated integrated team. There is excellent provision for consulting with pupils, and for celebrating their achievements. Management has a strong commitment to professional development. Staff are constantly engaged in training that enables them to reflect and update their practice, skills and knowledge, required for working with young people within a therapeutic community. The staff team demonstrate an informed awareness of their responsibilities in safeguarding and fully are aware of the vulnerability of the young people they care for. Parents, carers and significant others comment positively on the emphasis that the school places on ensuring young people are safe at all times. Young people are encouraged to help and consider others and to reflect on the impact their behaviour has on all members of the community. Young people express their confidence in the staff that listen to them and help sort out their issues and concerns.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

No recommendations were raised resulting from the previous inspection visit.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school provides an excellent level of support for young people's health care needs in liaison with parents and placing authorities. On admission, medical consents are obtained from parents and young people are registered with a local General Practice where they undertake a health assessment. All medical and health care needs are rigorously overseen and monitored by the school's matron and care managers. This helps to ensure consistency in meeting the needs of young people during their stay.

The school takes good measures to ensure young people's medical welfare is safeguarded. There is a clear policy regarding prescribed and non-prescription medicines. All of the care staff are given training from the school matron on the administration of medicines. Guidance is also provided regarding young people who have specific medical needs including epilepsy, asthma and diabetes. There are established systems for recording the dispensing of medication and for the amount of medication held in stock.

There is an excellent relationship with the local surgery which provides medical advice and support. The surgery also carries out regular medical checks and immunisations programmes as required. Minor levels of sickness are managed well by the school in house, but more significant illnesses require young people to return home. There are very good levels of staff training in first aid at both advanced and basic levels, which ensure there are always properly trained staff on hand at all times of day. Accident records indicate these are responded to promptly and appropriately.

Excellent arrangements are in place for health promotion. Topics related to health are covered as part of the citizenship programme which are fully supported by all staff. Colourful and age appropriate information regarding health related issues is displayed around the school.

The concept of healthy living is well promoted throughout the school. Young people are encouraged to eat wisely and take regular exercise. The catering provision is an outstanding aspect of the school which clearly demonstrates the importance placed on providing young people with healthy nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. The staff responsible for the provision and preparation of food have a good understanding of what makes a good balanced diet, take into consideration advice on nutrition and put it into practice. Menus are varied and are provided over a rolling programme. Choice is accommodated as well as special dietary requirements. Young people are fully aware of the school's emphasis on healthy eating and all of them offer positive comments about this and the standard of food. The most recent inspection completed by the environmental health agency in July 2008 awarded catering 'excellent', for menu choice and nutrition.

Young people are encouraged to try different types of food which is supported by popular theme days. Fresh fruit and drinking water is always available. A varied selection of foods including a daily salad bar are available, with yogurt and fresh fruit offered at every meal. The school council have an active and responsive input as to what is included on the menu. This is enhanced by the catering manager having an open door policy. Young people are able to approach her personally with their preferences and needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are accommodated in three residential units, lower, middle and upper school, each with their own distinct character. Within these communal settings, young people are provided with a high degree of privacy. While the majority of young people have their own rooms, there is provision for those in the younger groups to share. Young people's rooms are designated as their space and they are encouraged to personalise them with posters and pictures. Staff and young people respect each other's privacy and will only enter each other's rooms if invited to do so. Staff respect young people's right to confidentiality and keep information relating to each young person in appropriate locked facilities.

The school has a clear written complaints policy and procedure. One-to-one key worker sessions, house meetings and the student council prove successful forums at identifying concerns before they develop. Young people confirm that they have no difficulty in lodging their complaints or concerns with staff. If a complaint is made it is logged, investigated and the actions taken by the head of care and head teacher noted. Young people and staff feel the present system works well and is an effective way of resolving issues of concern.

There is excellent provision at the school for protecting young people from harm. Four senior staff are the

nominated child safeguarding liaison officers who have received training specific to the role. Staff receive relevant child safeguarding training and display a sound awareness and understanding of the school's reporting procedures which are revised annually. Staff also have easy access to supporting policy and procedures documents. Records of child safeguarding issues are maintained appropriately showing that the school acts in accordance with procedures. The school has very good links with external agencies, including the police and local children's services department.

Young people feel safe at the school and do not consider bullying to be a problem. There is an appropriate anti-bullying policy in place and relevant written information is provided for pupils and their parents. Incidents of bullying do occur but young people report them to be dealt with effectively by staff. There is extremely good information and advice provided for all pupils on the subjects of anti-bullying and staying safe via the school's Personal, Social, Health Education and Citizenship programme. In addition, the subject of bullying is covered as part of the matron's monthly health promotion action plan which includes posters being displayed within the school.

Young people benefit from staff who are appropriately trained and skilled in managing their behaviour. There are clear expectations of behaviour and clearly defined boundaries that young people are made aware of and which staff apply consistently in a positive manner. The approach used by staff is based upon the principles of reality therapy and encourages the development of positive behaviours. Young people are able to earn rewards for positive behaviour. Discussions and numerous photographic displays around the campus show the school is extremely good at celebrating pupils' achievements.

There is excellent provision within the school for supporting individual young people with anger management programmes. A dedicated and suitably qualified staff team work with individual young people who are able to self refer and take part on a voluntary basis. A recent additional resource is a designated art and play therapy suite.

Young people feel the school rules to be fair and to be fairly applied by staff. The use of sanctions is appropriately recorded and includes pupils' signatures. Discussions and records show sanctions used are in line with the school's policy. Staff are appropriately trained in the management of challenging behaviour including the use of approved physical intervention techniques. Records of physical interventions are appropriately maintained. The majority of such incidents when they occur, are of short duration. Routinely, young people are consulted for their views on how incidents have been managed. The overall standard of young people's behaviour is extremely good.

There is very good provision at the school for ensuring young people enjoy a safe and secure environment. Staff are made aware of their individual responsibility in relation to health and safety and any reported hazards are dealt with appropriately. Annual audits of health and safety across the school are carried out by an external specialist company and action is taken to address any recommendations made. Effective systems are in place for managing risk, including those associated with activities undertaken by young people, both on and off-site, and including trips overseas. The checking and testing of fire safety equipment is carried out and recorded as required. Young people know the fire evacuation procedures and regular fire drills are held. An up to date fire risk assessment is in place and the fire safety arrangements have been deemed satisfactory by the fire authority.

There are appropriate arrangements in place for the security of the building both day and night, and visitors are required to sign in upon entering the building. The school has a comprehensive crisis contingency plan in place which is reviewed annually. The school's recruitment procedures are in accord with the National Minimum Standards and provide appropriate safeguards for the welfare of children. Records seen and discussions show staff are being recruited in line with the procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school's care staff provide excellent support for young people in relation to their education. There is exceptional communication and collaboration between care and education staff which benefit young people.

This is enhanced by some staff working in both settings. Statements of special educational need, individual education plans and annual review reports are routinely accessible to care staff who provide social reports as part of the process. All annual reviews are used as a means of celebrating young people's achievements. Where appropriate care staff assist young people with their home work and provide effective support regarding behavioural related incidents during the school day.

Young people benefit from very good levels of individual support within the school's residential provision. All young people have allocated key workers and clear and concise care plans to address identified need. Psychologists provide very good support for individuals which includes home visits where required. An excellent outreach provision ensures young people who are excluded or on a reduced attendance programmes receive necessary support. An excellent developing anger management team provides young people with an additional and alternative one to one recourse. Positive relationships between young people and staff enhances the opportunities for young people to approach staff with any concerns they may have. Young people also have very good access to the school's independent person who visits regularly and is known by name. Their picture and contact number is posted in all the boarding settings and around the school.

The school places a strong emphasis on pupils investing in the school and work hard to achieve this. The sense of community at the school is fostered successfully by 'Rainbow Days'. These are events which take place three times annually. They involve groups of children from the local area who have disabilities, visiting the school with their carers. The young people assist in the planning and execution of the events and support the children to take part in a wide

range of activities. Young people who are interested in horticulture are supported to grow and sell produce for charity and fund raising. More recently, several young people are now involved with the school's living history road show. They visit local primary schools with staff and participate in providing a presentation about the two world wars. The group are considering an approach from a local university to present the road show to student teachers.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. They are integral to decision making and there is a wealth of evidence to show how young people's views make a difference. The importance of consultation with young people runs through the school. For example, integrated treatment plans that include a section for young people; consultation with key workers; the school council to which young people are elected by peers and has brought about changes; regular daily and weekly house and community meetings and consultation for internal and statutory reviews.

The school has an excellent admissions process that is effective at identifying each individual's educational, health and social needs. From the information obtained, staff develop placement plans that contain key information and guidance for staff on how each individual's specific needs can best be met. Placement plans also identify any specific cultural or religious needs a young person might have. All placement plans contain risk assessments relating to all aspects of the young person's life in the school. Placement plans are updated in line with changing circumstances and the progress each young person is making. Placement plans examined contain recent and relevant information presented in clear concise language.

Young people maintain regular contact with their parents or guardians via telephone and e-mail. While many young people have their own mobile phones, they still have access to phones in each of the residential units. Parents confirm staff are good at keeping them informed about activities within the school and appreciate the regular progress reports they receive.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Boarding accommodation is provided within the main house. The catering department, main kitchen and dining areas are also located in this building. All boarding areas are suitably restricted and protected. A number of bedrooms are shared and others are single occupancy. All are furnished, maintained and cleaned to a very high standard. Young people are able to personalise their rooms and bring in their own possessions. Communal living areas are spacious, well maintained, equipped and cleaned to a very high standard. Toilets and bathrooms are communal whilst affording good privacy and are also maintained and clean to a very high standard. All three of the boarding settings have well equipped kitchens. Young people are able to wear their own clothes outside of school time. They are encouraged to look after their own personal possessions and have pocket money they bring in from home. Senior boarders are suitably supported in the units to prepare for leaving school. The school continues to work hard to access appropriate and meaningful work experience placements.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school provides a range of excellent information for young people, parents and placing authorities prior to their arrival. The aims and objectives of the school are clearly documented in a Statement of Purpose that is regularly updated to reflect changes and developments. The Statement of Purpose is made available to parents or guardians and officers from placing authorities. Young people have been involved in the presentation and layout of a new improved colourful handbook ready to go to print.

The school operates with a group of experienced and well motivated residential staff. There have been no new appointments since the last inspection. Staff are provided with job descriptions that details their role and responsibilities. All new staff are subject to a comprehensive induction procedure that provides them with the opportunity to spend time with each of the school's departments. The school has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that are accessible to all staff. There is a culture of training and development within the staff team and an expectation that individuals will regularly update their knowledge and skills. All care staff are accredited with the National vocational Qualification Level 3 in caring for children and young people. Training opportunities are provided throughout the year. Residential staff receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal, and the matron benefits from independent clinical supervision. There are regular staff meetings and minutes taken. The views of staff are regularly sought about proposed changes and developments. Residential staff meet both within their own units and as a whole team. Staff confirm they are well-supported by senior staff.

Staffing levels are determined by the needs of the young people in each boarding setting. The head of each setting manages the composition of staff on each shift. There are suitable arrangements in place to cover staff illness. Three night supervisors provide cover for sleeping hours with support from a duty senior. Night and day shifts overlap so that staff can hand-over key information. All external activities are subject to a risk assessment process to ensure appropriate staffing levels.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good and staff advocate strongly on the part of young people to ensure they are not discriminated against because of their varying needs. Young people are introduced to other cultures via different foods, festivals and social activities.

The school is efficiently run by an experienced senior management team that is led by an enthusiastic head teacher. The management team is supported by an active governing body who monitor all aspects of the school. The Chair of the Governing Body visits the school regularly on a weekly basis and is known by name by the young people. A designated governor undertakes unannounced monthly monitoring visits of the residential units. Well established recording and accounting systems are in place. Discussions with staff confirm there are sufficient resources available to effectively meet the needs of young people. The school has a high profile in the area and has established good relations with neighbours and members of the local community.

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

There are no recommendations.