

St John's School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Kevin Whatley
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Date of last inspection	07/12/2009

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

The school caters predominantly for pupils between the ages of seven and 16 years who have a learning disability. A small sixth form has recently been opened for young people with similar needs. Sixth formers normally reside at the organisation's college site. The school is co-educational and provides a service to both day and boarding pupils. Boarding is available during term times including weekends. There is one boarding house which is situated in a residential area in the local community.

The college is based in Brighton for older pupils and is the subject of a separate inspection. The head of care and the senior management team oversee the management of care on both sites.

Seven young people were being accommodated at the time of this inspection. Five young people completed inspection questionnaires, while two young people spoke directly with the inspector during the visit.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This key inspection was announced and took place over the course of two days during the school week. The inspection reviewed the four recommendations made at the previous inspection and all the key national minimum standards for residential special schools.

A holistic approach ensures the health care needs of young people are met to an excellent standard with a clear focus on addressing individual needs. Healthy eating is promoted with mealtimes seen as an important aspect of group living. A stock record of all medication is required. A culture of safety and well-being proliferates with staff working very hard to keep young people as safe as can be expected.

Outstanding behaviour management planning and intervention programmes ensure young people are encouraged to learn positive and acceptable levels of behaviour. Staff provide young people with excellent levels of support, guidance and care with individual needs and wishes being the paramount concern. Attendance and engagement in education is extremely high with open communication maintained between school and residential care staff at all times. Young people are fully supported to express their views, opinions and thoughts with consultation forming a key aspect of each young person's placement. Information gained is used to inform specific care planning, behaviour management strategies and decisions concerning day to day living within the home. The living environment provides young people with an outstanding standard of accommodation which is spacious, child-centred and

homely. Staff benefit from receiving excellent levels of leadership, support and guidance, while they themselves provide a very high standard of committed and skilled care.

Improvements since the last inspection

Four recommendations were made at the last inspection. Two recommendations identified the need for child protection referrals to be notified to Ofsted and for records of such matters to contain sufficient detail. No child protection events involving young people resident at the school have occurred since the last inspection. Records seen confirm an improved standard of recording and matters associated with child protection were found to be accurate and up-to-date. The approach towards child protection indicates that a thorough and comprehensive process is in place. A further recommendation noted the need for the school to have in place an appropriate person to act in the role of independent visitor. Since the last inspection a total of five people, external to the school, have been identified to fulfil this role with their pictures and details displayed around the school and residential setting. The final recommendation focused on the school needing to engage a suitable person to undertake half termly monitoring visits. A suitably qualified practitioner was appointed last year and has undertaken visits as required. The subsequent reports are of an excellent standard providing a comprehensive and objective review of care provision.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The approach in addressing the health care needs of young people is excellent. Comprehensive health care plans assess, plan and review all aspects of the individual medical, physical, emotional and social care needs of each young person. Health care plans are holistic in nature and include assessments and expert advice and guidance from a range of health care professionals including registered nurses, speech and language therapists and counsellors. The emotional health needs of young people are particularly addressed in a child-centred way. Young people with specific health issues receive specialist input, with care staff being provided with specific training when required. Staff are trained in first aid and consents are in place to enable such treatment to be given and for medication to be administered. Communication between school and residential staff is excellent which ensures a focused and knowledgeable response to meeting health care issues.

The storage and administration of medication is appropriate with all medicines kept securely in the staff office. Medication is only given out by those staff who have received suitable training. Records of medicines administered are well maintained and stock checked regularly by a member of the nursing team based at the school. A robust process is in place for the giving of controlled medicines which is followed in practice. No actual stock record was in place for prescribed medicines which had not been provided in blister packs, although they were carefully monitored. A process for such recording had been implemented before the inspection ended.

Young people benefit from receiving a nutritious and varied diet. Young people eat lunch at the school during the week, with a good quality hot and cold meals on offer each day. Breakfast and evening meals are provided in the residential setting as are weekend meals. Menus show a good variety of meals on offer with vegetables and salads included most days. Young people are asked regularly for their meals choices with a creative approach encouraging young people to try new and exciting foods. For instance last term a theme of around the world was used, this term meals are being chosen following letters of the alphabet. Where young people may have issues with their diets their food intake is closely monitored with details reviewed regularly by the nursing team and updated to the health care plans. Mealtimes are clearly an important part of group living and staff work hard to ensure the experience is a pleasant one.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have their privacy respected, while information concerning them is stored securely and handled in a confidential fashion. The levels of staff supervision is good with young people having individual time and space when they need it.

A robust complaints process is in place with young people provided with a number of options to raise concerns or complaints. Details of how to complain are provided in a number of formats to ensure young people with communication or comprehension problems can understand them easily. When complaints are made they are suitably responded to with records clearly evidencing their outcomes. No complaints have been received by Ofsted since the last inspection.

The safety and well-being of young people is of paramount importance with excellent child protection procedures in place. Young people have their welfare promoted across the school and residential setting with staff working very hard to keep them as safe as can be expected. Staff receive safeguarding training and are mindful of their responsibilities in regard to child protection issues. The school has very clear lines of responsibility should any child protection matter arise and these comply with local safeguarding protocols and procedures. When matters arise swift action is taken to ensure all relevant parties are informed and engaged in strategies to reduce any known risks. Since the last inspection the recording of safeguarding issues has improved with clear chronologies kept of any actions taken and their outcome.

The school has in place very clear policies and procedures in relation to bullying behaviours. On occasion some young people may behave negatively toward their peers which could be construed as bullying or intimidating behaviour. Because of the nature of their comprehension, it is unlikely that many of the young people fully understand the concepts or subtleties of bullying. Nevertheless, staff are very mindful of such behaviour and intervene when necessary and where possible support young people to learn that such behaviours are inappropriate and will not be tolerated. Good levels of staff supervision reduce the risks of such behaviour

occurring. Information regarding bullying and what young people can do if they are worried about this is displayed in the residential setting and school.

A robust procedure is in place to respond to situations should young people leave the school or residential setting without permission. Excellent missing persons files are compiled for each young person which includes essential information, photographic identification, risk assessments, medical conditions and highlights their particular vulnerabilities. Young people are made fully aware of potential risks and understand where the school and residential setting boundaries are situated. Incidents of this nature are extremely rare with none recorded since the last inspection.

Expectations of behaviour are clear and appropriate with young people given every opportunity to consider their inappropriate actions in a thoughtful and responsive manner. All young people have behaviour management plans based around their known risky or challenging behaviours, individual comprehension and communication needs, with clear guidance for staff as to the most appropriate way to intervene. When young people display particularly difficult or dangerous behaviour, reviews are held involving both care and education staff to identify strategies and to implement consistent practices and approaches. The school culture places an emphasis of focusing on rewarding positive behaviours, attitudes and effort and allowing young people to learn from experience. Staff were seen to uphold boundaries in a firm yet fair manner, with young people provided with considerable support to behave appropriately.

The health and safety of young people and staff alike is taken seriously. All aspects of health and safety, including fire risks, are addressed in a robust manner. Routine checks and tests are carried out including fire fighting equipment, gas and electrical appliances. Comprehensive assessments are completed which highlight environmental risks and how these can be safely managed. The health and safety policy of the school is reviewed annually.

The school has a robust recruitment policy which ensures staff do not work with young people unless all the required checks and references have been confirmed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent support and guidance to enable them to engage fully in their education. The culture of the school places high regard to those young people who are accommodated there. Communication across the school is open and comprehensive with information passing easily between education and care staff. Links between the residential provision and the educational goals of each placement are clearly integrated. Attendance levels at school are excellent with young people given every opportunity to engage in their education.

Young people enjoy access to a range of activities and pursuits. Activities are seen as a vibrant and important aspect of the school day with a good balance between

learning, enjoyment and exercise. Young people engage in after-school activities including skiing, swimming, dance and arts and craft. Individual choices are facilitated including dance classes in the community and more residential setting based pursuits such as cooking and interactive computer games. Young people can also choose to relax with their peers or spend time at the residential setting making things, listening to music or watching television.

Young people receive outstanding levels of individual support, guidance and care. Care staff are experienced and skilled and clearly understand the needs of the young people in their care. Each young person has a key-worker with regular one-to-one time being scheduled to allow relationships to build and flourish. Young people clearly benefit from being looked after by staff who place their individual needs first. Observation of staff interacting with young people confirmed the existence of an open, inclusive and positive culture. As noted previously a wide range of expert advice and guidance is readily available which allows for all areas of need to be considered as part of each young person's placement. Professional input includes speech and language and occupational therapy and counselling. Close working practices culminate in holistic programmes of care linked to individual education plans.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are encouraged and supported to express their views, opinions and wishes irrespective of any communication difficulties they may have. Young people are readily consulted about issues which affect their stay at the school including participating in placement planning. A school council exists which also takes into account the needs of those young people living at the school. House meetings occur very regularly where young people are asked about their views on the day-to-day running of the residential setting. Minutes are taken and all matters raised are considered with any actions or outcomes being reported back swiftly. Issues raised which have led to changes have included meal choices and activity planning. The atmosphere is open with staff and young people sharing positive relationships with staff clearly being in tune with the manner in which young people communicate their needs.

Since the last inspection the number of independent listeners has been increased, with contact details and photographs displayed in the school and residential setting. Listeners also visit the school and the residential setting in person to allow young people the opportunity to get to know them and express their views directly to them.

Excellent policies and procedures ensure the needs of young people are fully assessed and considered prior to the point of admission. A significant focus of each placement is linked to educational and learning needs. Although, each young person has all their needs assessed including their pastoral requirements. Individual plans highlight what issues young people may have and how they should be met. The approach by the school is holistic taking into account methods of communication,

learning difficulty and self-esteem. Formats for care planning are comprehensive and include expert assessment and guidance providing staff with a clear programme of care and learning. Routine reviews take place involving all parties including the young people themselves.

The majority of young people maintain very regular contact with their parents or carers. Most young people stay during the week and go home at weekends. Telephone and email connections are available for young people to contact home. Key-workers keep regular contact with parents and carers and inform them of each young persons progress during the week.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people live in a residency which offers them an outstanding standard of accommodation. The residential setting is situated just over a mile or so from the school site in a residential area. The building comprises a detached property set over three floors. Bedrooms are found on each floor with boys and girls being appropriately separated. Bedrooms provide young people with an excellent amount of space with personal touches and décor being encouraged to make the rooms individual in look and feel. A substantial amount of communal space allows young people to chose between relaxing in one of two lounges or a separate 'calm room'. Furnishings are domestic in style with pictures and art work adding to the homely atmosphere. The house is surrounded by a garden and driveway which is often used for outdoor play during good weather and indeed, during the recent snowfall.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

A good level of information is provided to young people and others regarding the school and the services it offers, including staying residentially. The Statement of Purpose clearly explains the placement, care and education tasks. Regular newsletters allow young people, parents and carers to keep abreast of events, diary dates and positive stories of school and residential life.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people are not held back by any learning disability, on the contrary they are encouraged to play an active part in life throughout school, the residential setting and the wider community. Risk assessments focus on awareness and not avoidance and therefore do restrict young people from experiencing life to the full. The atmosphere in the school and residential setting clearly promotes respect and dignity, with young people being valued for their thoughts, positive actions and individuality.

Young people benefit from being cared for by an excellent care staff team. Staff are experienced, committed and clearly understand the individual needs of the young people in their care. The routines and structures of the whole school day assist

young people to be cared for in a consistent fashion. Communication between staff is excellent and ensures a joined up approach across the school. Staff benefit from receiving excellent levels of supervision and training which are relevant to their roles and responsibilities and the overall needs of the young people in their care. Staff feel they are guided and supported 'brilliantly' and clearly feel empowered and are a very important part of each young person's placement.

The school is managed extremely well with staff and young people benefiting from committed and purposeful leadership and management. Since the last inspection there have been changes within the management team with a new care manager and chief executive of the school. The chief executive clearly promotes the residential aspect of the school as a fundamental and important aspect of school life.

The care manager has been at the school for a considerable period of time and for the past two years in a deputy care manager's capacity. It is clear the care manager places the needs of young people first while supporting and encouraging staff to work to the best of their abilities. All aspects of care provision are routinely monitored by the care manager and her deputies. Without question staff had nothing but praise for the standard of leadership and management.

Since the last inspection the task of completing the routine monitoring of care provision has been taken on by a suitably qualified and experienced person appointed by the governing body. The standard of reports are excellent and confirm a rigorous approach to reviewing care provision.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- implement a stock record for prescribed medicines not provided in blister packs. (NMS 14.17)