



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

## RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

**St Mary`s School**

**Horam  
Heathfield  
East Sussex  
TN21 0BT**

*Lead Inspector*  
**Paul Taylor**

*Announced Inspection*  
**17th January 2006      10:00**

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

Reader Information	
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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Residential Special Schools*. They can be found at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk) or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

*Every Child Matters*, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life.

Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

# SERVICE INFORMATION

<b>Name of school</b>	St Mary`s School
<b>Address</b>	Horam Heathfield East Sussex TN21 0BT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01435 812278
<b>Fax number</b>	01435 813019
<b>Email address</b>	
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school</b>	St Mary`s School
<b>Name of Head</b>	Mr RickTracey
<b>Name of Head of Care</b>	Diana Berwick
<b>Age range of residential pupils</b>	<b>10 to 17 years of age.</b>
<b>Date of last welfare inspection</b>	17 and 18 November 2004.

**Brief Description of the School:**

St. Mary's School is a residential special school run by East Sussex County Council Education Department. The school accepts pupils with learning difficulties and a large number of these pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The vast majority of the young people who board are from East Sussex. Pupils can board up to four nights a week and the school offers weekend boarding eight times a year in order for the pupils to partake in activities such as the Duke Of Edinburgh Award and sporting events. Boarding is set out over two areas. The boys' boarding provision is set in the main school building and the girls' is in a house in the grounds. There are plans for the school to cater for young people who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

# **SUMMARY**

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

Two Inspectors from The Commission for Social Care Inspection carried out the inspection of the boarding provision of the school over two days commencing on 17 January 2006 and finishing on 18 January 2006. A number of different records were examined and the Inspectors met with young people, members of the teaching and care staff, the Head of Care, Head teacher, Deputy Head Teacher and the Vice Chair of Governors.

The school continues to develop positively and levels of support to the young people are well thought out with input from across all levels of expertise in the school.

There are plans to establish the school as one that caters for young people with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. This will mean that some members of staff will need support and training in working with essentially a new client group.

The school has experienced change of key members of staff over the past two years. The morale and team work in the school continues to develop.

## **What the school does well:**

The senior management team works well together to ensure that the ethos of rewarding positive behaviour is embedded in the school. There are good levels of support in place for the young people and individual plans are drawn up to enable young people to attend school and experience some levels of achievement. The care staff are committed to the well being of the young people and there was very good feedback with regards to the approachability of the staff team as a whole. There are a good variety of activities offered to the young people and boarding is seen as a positive experience.

The care staff are a committed team and provide consistency and good levels of care to young people who are both vulnerable and at times volatile.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The health room has been refurbished and is now a well-used and useful resource. Healthy eating is recognised as a theme in the school and the young people provide feedback on food and their preferences. Appraisals are now taking place for members of staff. Individual plans of support are now being developed and this feeds into the ethos of the school whereby positive behaviour is enforced, rewarded and celebrated.

### **What they could do better:**

The recruitment files for members of staff still need to contain the information required in Standard 27. The recording of some restraints could be more detailed. The programme for fitting window restrictors in the boys' boarding area should be completed as soon as possible.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

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# 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)

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

14 and 15.

The health needs of the young people are monitored and met. Advice is available from specialists such educational psychologists if needed. The member of staff who is responsible for the administration of medication and the running of the health suite is conscientious and gives sensitive support to young people who need it. There was good feedback with regards to the food that the young people eat and the importance of healthy eating is acknowledged and pursued by the school with the active input of the young people.

## EVIDENCE:

The school has one particular member of the care staff team who is responsible for the monitoring and administering of medication. The record of administration of medication was examined and found to comply with the policy of the local education authority. The member of staff also liaises with parents with regards to medical issues and also arranges appointments with specialist services such as educational psychologists when the need to involve them is identified.

Young people can bring in homely medication with written permission from parents but the school will not prescribe or provide this medication in line with local authority instructions and policy.

There is a newly refurbished health suite and this is used for medical appointments and for young people to use for other appointments.

Young people also use this space to meet with the member of staff who can provide emotional support and advice; these conversations are recorded as 'key worker' sessions. The member of staff concerned has undertaken training in counselling and is in the process of completing her diploma in counselling. Seven members of staff have current up to date First Aid Certificates.

Feedback from the young people who met with the Inspectors was very positive with regards to the food that they eat at the school. One young person told an Inspector 'The food is good and we get enough.' Healthy Eating has been identified as a theme in the school and the young people have been

involved in formulating menus as part of the process. Once a week they are involved in buying food for the evening meal having already drawn up a budget and menu. The menu also follows theme nights if there is an occasion in that week of cultural interest, such as Chinese New Year, Burns Night, Diwali. The school is in the process of achieving the Silver Healthy Eating Award.

# 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 by others.(NMS 6)
- All significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified by the Head of the school or designated person to the appropriate authorities.(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, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers.(NMS 27)

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

3,4,5,6,10,26 and 27.

The staff team are sensitive to young people's privacy and the need for confidential storage of information. There is awareness of child protection issues and how to report anything of concern. The young people are confident in using the complaints procedure. Bullying is addressed in different forums across the curriculum. Whilst there are comprehensive risk assessments in place with regards to activities, there is a need to ensure that the programme for placing window restrictors in the boys' boarding area is completed. Staff files need to have all the information in place.

## EVIDENCE:

Confidential information is stored in a locked cabinet in a locked office. Members of staff who met with Inspectors were aware of the need for

sensitivity with regards to self-care issues and privacy for the young people but at the same time ensuring that personal hygiene and cleanliness is maintained. Staff were observed to knock on bedroom doors before entering. The school has a complaints system which is easily accessed by the young people. Members of staff will help young people complete a complaint form if they need assistance to do so. The Inspector examined a record of complaints made by young people. The complaints were primarily about behaviour between pupils. There was a record of how the complaints had been addressed and the complainants had signed the forms when they were happy that the issues had been resolved.

There was a record of child protection training attended by members of staff. The school has a child protection policy and guidance in place and members of staff have access to local area child protection committee procedures. All members of staff who met with the Inspectors were aware of what to do in the event that they had concerns for a young person's welfare.

Prior to the inspection, the Lead Inspector received a letter from the local child protection team which confirmed that there had been one child protection issue in the school in the last year and this had been dealt with appropriately.

There was a high level of staffing noted throughout the inspection this was achieving good standards of supervision for the young people. All the young people who met with the Inspectors knew what to do in the event that they had concerns about bullying and they were confident that it is dealt with when it occurs. Any incidents of bullying were recorded together with the staff response. Bullying is discussed as part of the PSHE programme as well as being discussed in special assemblies and unit meetings.

There is a comprehensive behaviour management policy in place. The ethos of behaviour management in the school is to reward and celebrate positive behaviour. At the end of school every day there is an assembly to publicly acknowledge good behaviour that has been displayed by young people throughout the day.

There are individual packages of support in place for young people who are experiencing periods of unsettled behaviour. These strategies are negotiated and agreed with the young people and the information then disseminated to the members of staff. The school records when there has been liaison with a young person's home and any information that may affect a young person's demeanour is recorded and passed on to the staff group.

The majority of staff who met with the Inspectors said that communication and consistency in approach with regards to behaviour management is good.

Records of incidents and restraints were examined. The recording of some restraints needs to give more details and give clearer reasons why the restraint was necessary.

The Inspector was informed that occasionally the main door to the boys' boarding area is locked to prevent one particular young person from leaving the area without permission and causing disruption elsewhere in the school. When this occurs it should be recorded, as it is a control measure. The Head of Care stressed that this is a rare occurrence and that the fire exits are still available as a means of leaving the building.

Records of restraint are monitored and discussed by the Senior Leadership Team.

The programme for installing window restrictors in the boys' boarding area needs to be completed.

Most of the recommendations made following a visit by the Fire Brigade in November 2005 have been complied with. There are two recommendations about which the Head of Care is contacting the Fire Brigade for advice.

The Inspector saw a sample of risk assessments pertaining to the school site and activities and outings which the young people attend. The risk assessments were thorough and had been endorsed by the Head Teacher, member of staff responsible for the outing and Risk Assessment Officer for the local education authority, when this was appropriate.

Fire drills are recorded and the Head of Care has carried out an audit to record which young people are aware of the fire evacuation procedure and which young people need to be reminded about what to do.

Visitors to the school are given badges and sign in and out of the premises.

A sample of six staff files was examined. Not all of them contained the information required under Standard 27. For example, two only had one written reference in place, and one member of staff had started work in the school prior to a Criminal Records Bureau check being completed. A checklist in the staff files would be of assistance in ensuring that all the correct information is in place prior to members of staff commencing work in the school.

# 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 both within the school and in the local community.(NMS 13)
- Children receive individual support when they need it.(NMS 22)

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

12,13 and 22.

The school performs very well in the standards that were assessed. The care staff are actively involved in ensuring that the residential provision supports the educational progress in the school. Individual support for the young people combined with flexibility and creativity in this issue is very good. There are a variety of activities made available to the young people and staff commitment to provide these is good.

## EVIDENCE:

Planning for the young people's education is detailed and individually tailored. The care staff are actively involved in formulating strategies and are aware of the young people's educational goals. The Inspector saw evidence and met with members of staff who have been supporting young people in placements at mainstream schools and colleges. The Head of Care shares information closely with the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher. Feedback from members of staff was that the teaching staff and care staff work together more closely now than they have in the past.

Feedback from the young people was very positive about the variety of activities that they are offered. The school operates an extended day so that young people not boarding can partake in activities after school. The school is open for occasional weekends during the year for particular events such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and sports events. Additionally some of the care staff are trained in delivering outdoor pursuits such as mountain biking and sailing.

The Curriculum Enrichment Workshop gives care staff the opportunity to provide activities such as art, angling, swimming, basketball and football. The young people boarding gave very positive feedback to the Inspectors with regards to the amount of support they receive from the staff in the school. There are individual plans in place for young people who need specific

behavioural support. The Inspectors saw examples where pupil timetables had been altered so that they were given the space they needed for issues such as anger management.

Young people can identify particular members of staff to whom they can approach for mentoring and support additionally to their allocated key workers. There are regular meetings to discuss individual pupil's needs and behaviour strategies.

# 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 living away from home at school.(NMS 20)

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

2,9,17 and 20.

The young people have their views listened to, they were very positive about the staff fairness. Young people's needs are assessed and they are involved in the development of goals and targets. The young people achieve contact with home and loved ones.

## EVIDENCE:

Minutes of meetings and reviews were examined and these recorded that the young people had been present. Young people confirmed to the Inspector that they are encouraged to attend any meetings which involve them.

The School Council meets once a term and a representative from each year group attends. Minutes of these meetings are sent to the teachers who in turn ensure that the issues that were discussed at the School Council are passed on to the young people. Extended use of the school grounds during the summer months was an example of an issue brought up by the School Council and subsequently agreed to by the Senior Management Team. Feedback from the young people is sought with regards to meals that they eat and their preferences noted and responded to.

Quotes from young people with regards to how they feel listened to and respected included 'They listen to both sides' and 'They helped me with my anger' and 'They are the best 'cos they always listen to me'.



Interactions between young people and staff were observed and were seen to be warm, good humoured and sensitive.

Young peoples' needs are assessed prior to admission to the school.

Additionally their progress is monitored on an annual basis or more often if needed in times of crisis. Documents examined by the Inspectors were Statements of Educational Need, Individual Education Plans, Annual reviews and Key Worker reports. Targets are then put in place and progress is monitored. The young people are involved in formulating their targets. The Deputy Head informed the Inspectors that the pupil records are being developed into individual Education and Care Plans so that all the information is centralised.

All the young people go home at weekends. During the week they are able to contact their parents or guardians via their own mobile telephones or by using the school telephone.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## 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, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.(NMS 23)
- 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)

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

21.

The staff team are aware of the vulnerabilities of the young people in their care and therefore plan any transition for them carefully. They also acknowledge that young people can become dependant on the school and therefore reduce their boarding time gradually as their independence skills increase.

## EVIDENCE:

Written evidence was examined and conversations with members of staff confirmed that there is ongoing work with young people to plan and support transition into the community via work experience and college placements. Members of staff will go with young people on a 1:1 basis to support them in their placements if that is needed.

As part of their progress in the residential life of the school the young people are given advice on self care issues and are given assistance to plan, budget and cook meals.

Advice and guidance is given to young people with regards to keeping safe, relationships and substance misuse. These subjects are discussed both in the school and residential settings as part of the twenty-four hour curriculum.

As a young person begins to prepare for moving on the periods of boarding are gradually decreased to lessen dependence on the school and to nurture the young person into the outside world.



# Management

## 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 is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.(NMS 18)
- There are adequate records of both 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)

## JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

30,32 and 33.

Training is ongoing for the staff team. Whilst there are forums available for the care staff to discuss issues, these need to be uninterrupted. The Senior Management Team work well together to encourage a positive ethos in the school whereby good behaviour is acknowledged and rewarded. There is careful planning in place to establish the school as one that caters for young people who have emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Some members of staff who have been at the school for a long time and who went to work at St.Mary's when it catered for young people with moderate and mild learning difficulties, will need support and time to adjust to working with a different type of young person.

## EVIDENCE:

Verbal feedback from all members of staff who met with the Inspectors was very positive with regards to how the team works together and the levels of support from senior members of staff.

Members of staff are subject to yearly appraisals and copies of these were seen. There was a written record of training attended by members of staff. The Head of Care reported to the Inspectors that the format for supervision was being revisited.

Every two weeks the care staff meet to discuss team and care issues.

Feedback to the Inspectors was that this meeting is sometimes interrupted for operational reasons and that members of staff have to leave it to support colleagues in the school. The team meeting where the needs of the young people are discussed in depth was reported as not being long enough.

The Senior Management Team continues to work towards ensuring that the approach whereby positive behaviour is encouraged and rewarded is consolidated. There have been a number of new staff appointed to key positions in the school over the past two years; these include an Acting Head of Care, Head teacher and deputy Head Teacher.

There are plans to establish St. Mary's as a school that caters for young people who have emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. This includes restructuring the care staff into two different teams, refurbishing the school and accommodation and increasing pupil numbers to eighty.

The Lead Inspector examined a record of Governors meetings and saw a report compiled after a governor's visit. He also met with the Vice Chair of the Governing body. The Vice chair was very positive about the school's direction and development.

# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

**4** Standard Exceeded (Commendable)      **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)  
**2** Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)      **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>14</b>	3
<b>15</b>	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	3
<b>4</b>	3
<b>5</b>	3
<b>6</b>	3
<b>7</b>	N/A
<b>8</b>	N/A
<b>10</b>	2
<b>26</b>	2
<b>27</b>	1

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>12</b>	4
<b>13</b>	4
<b>22</b>	3

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>2</b>	3
<b>9</b>	3
<b>11</b>	N/A
<b>17</b>	3
<b>20</b>	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>16</b>	N/A
<b>21</b>	3
<b>23</b>	N/A
<b>24</b>	N/A
<b>25</b>	N/A

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>1</b>	N/A
<b>18</b>	N/A
<b>19</b>	N/A
<b>28</b>	N/A
<b>29</b>	N/A
<b>30</b>	3
<b>31</b>	N/A
<b>32</b>	3
<b>33</b>	3

Yes

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)
1	RS10	That records of all restraints are detailed and record the reason why the use of restraint was appropriate in all cases.	19/01/06
2	RS10	That the times the boys boarding area is locked as a control measure are recorded.	19/01/06
3	RS26	That the programme to install window restrictors is completed.	19/01/06
4	RS27	That all the checks required in this standard are completed on members of staff before they commence work in the school. (This is a recommendation from the last inspection.)	19/01/06

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

East Sussex Area Office

Ivy House

3 Ivy Terrace

Eastbourne

East Sussex

BN21 4QT

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk)

Web: [www.csci.org.uk](http://www.csci.org.uk)

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