



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

St Vincents School for the Blind

**Yew Tree Lane
West Derby
Liverpool
Merseyside
L12 9HN**

Lead Inspector
Julia Toller & Nick Veysey

Announced Inspection
6th & 7th February 2006 09:15

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 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

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

| | |
|---|--|
| Name of school | St Vincents School for the Blind |
| Address | Yew Tree Lane West Derby Liverpool Merseyside L12 9HN |
| Telephone number | 0151 228 9968 |
| Fax number | 0151 252 0216 |
| Email address | stephenroberts@stvin.com |
| Provider Web address | |
| Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school | St Vincents School for the Blind and Partially Sighted Children |
| Name of Head | Mr Stephen Roberts |
| Name of Head of Care | Sister Theresa Tighe |
| Age range of residential pupils | 4 to 17 |
| Date of last welfare inspection | 4 th -7 th October 2004 |

Brief Description of the School:

St Vincent's School For Blind and Partially Sighted Children is a registered charity governed by the Board of Trustees of the Catholic Blind Institute. The school offers a specialised curriculum for children with all levels of visual impairment, as well as additional educational needs, from many parts of England.

Currently 54 boys and girls attend the school, including 30 residential pupils. The residential accommodation is divided into three separate groups: Bridgman, Caulfield and Keller. The school is located in the West Derby about four miles from the centre of Liverpool. It is near to bus stops, leisure centres, shops and other schools. More information about the school may be found at www.stvin.org.uk.

The school was inspected by OFSTED in October 2005 and a copy of the report may be obtained from www.ofsted.gov.uk.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection took place over two days in February 2006 and a total of seventeen and a half hours. The inspectors spoke with children staying in the residential accommodation, and school staff including the Principal, the Head of Service (Residential), Head of Service (Individual Learning and Progression), care staff, the child protection coordinator, the health care coordinator, mobility coordinator, a learning support assistant, and a school governor. The inspectors had a look around the school and the residential accommodation. They also examined written records and policies, and read questionnaires filled in by children, parents, placing authorities and staff about their views and experiences of the school.

What the school does well:

St Vincent's is a school where children are happy and well looked after by caring, skilled and competent staff. The school has a warm friendly atmosphere and children feel listened to, valued and safe. Children enjoy attending the school and said:

'I love everything about it. I would recommend it to anyone'.

'The school is a good place to live'.

'It's good in this school. I like it very much and I feel nice'

Children's families also are happy with the school. One parent said 'the school has been a blessing to our children, so much good has come from them being pupils there, we can only say that it is all good'.

Staff have an excellent understanding of children's individual needs and the support they need. Children particularly valued the work staff do in helping them to develop their knowledge, skills and abilities to become more independent, and feel more confident both at school and out in the community. Children are supported to deal with the challenges they face and to play an active part in the community. They are encouraged to try new things and take some risks in a supportive and controlled way.

All parts of the school are very good at sharing information about children's experiences and needs to make sure that they are being cared for properly in a safe and secure environment.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The changes in the organisation of the school means staff have clear roles and responsibilities, and know where they fit in the school. There is effective management and clear leadership and the school is run in a way that delivers good education and childcare practice.

The standard of recording was consistently good and gave a detailed picture of each child's experiences at the school. Individual records for children are well organised, comprehensive and up to date containing relevant information about them. The records show how the school is working to meet children's needs and describe what progress they are making.

The school makes good use of written risk assessments to identify and manage any potential dangers including young people's activities and the building itself.

School governors have clear responsibilities for different aspects of school, and visit regularly playing a more active role in the daily life of the school and the children who study there.

What they could do better:

Children feel able to make their views known and make complaints if they are unhappy about how they have been treated. But the guidance for staff about complaints needs to be developed further and staff would benefit from training in dealing with complaints. This would clarify how best to deal with and respond to complaints about the school from children or people outside the school.

The school's recruitment and selection procedure needs to be reviewed to make sure that all the relevant information about people wishing to work at the school is collected and checked out.

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 or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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Scoring of Outcomes

Recommended Actions identified during the inspection

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

Children welfare is closely monitored and their health needs are well met. The promotion of healthy lifestyles is taken seriously.

EVIDENCE:

Children said that staff give them advice about staying healthy and how to look after themselves.

Children's records clearly described their health needs and who has the responsibility to ensure that good health is maintained. They receive regular health checks at appropriate intervals, and ongoing specialist appointments were being kept. They have the opportunity to see a dentist in school. The outcomes of health appointments and details about treatment are recorded. There were several good examples of staff monitoring closely the health of children with complex medical needs.

Records also show that staff work closely with health professionals and children's families to meet children's health needs. The health care coordinator plays an important role in supporting staff to meet children's health needs and promote healthy lifestyles.

Information about health promotion is available for children including advice on healthy eating, exercise, alcohol, smoking, and drugs. Staff described the efforts they were making to give young people advice and encouragement about healthy living. The inspectors saw children and staff discussing healthy eating and talking about relationships.

The school has excellent facilities such as swimming pool and fitness suite to encourage children to be active.

Medicines given to children were recorded accurately and were safely stored. There are clear arrangements in place to make sure that medication is

managed safely. The medicines were labelled with the name of the child they are prescribed for and the records showed the amounts of medication received into the school and the amounts that go home at the end of the week.

Staff have been trained in First Aid and medication. First aid boxes are provided throughout the school.

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 & 27.

Staff are good at creating an atmosphere where children feel safe and able to raise any concerns and worries confident that they will be listened to and their worries will be dealt with.

EVIDENCE:

Children said they had enough privacy. Staff knock on children's bedroom doors and let children know who they are before entering. The school respects children's rights to privacy and confidentiality. There are clear guidelines for staff on privacy and confidentiality, and searching children's possessions. Information about children is securely stored. Children have access to telephones where they may make private calls.

Children knew about how to make a complaint if they were unhappy about how they were being treated. They described they could raise concerns by talking to staff, in group meetings, through the school council, and by using the complaints box. Records showed that children were able to use the complaints procedure effectively. All complaints were dealt with thoroughly and the outcome was recorded. But it was not clear from the records whether the child was happy with the outcome of their complaint.

The school has guidance for staff about how to deal with a complaint, but this needs to be developed further, and staff need training to make sure they are clear about what they need to do if someone makes a complaint.

Children said that staff gave them good advice about keeping safe. Records showed that staff gave children guidance about keeping safe and telling them if they had any concerns. Staff were knowledgeable about child protection procedures and issues, and described what they do to make sure children are safe. Staff have attended child protection training and work closely with other agencies such as health workers and social services, and children's families to make sure they are safe.

Children said that bullying was not a problem in the school. There are arrangements and assessments in place for dealing with the potential risk of bullying.

Children were aware of the school's expectations for their behaviour, and were clear about what punishments may be used. They felt that punishments were fair, and that 'staff discuss behaviour and punishment with us quite a lot'. Staff are able to set and maintain suitable boundaries for children. They described how they use negotiation and communication techniques to encourage socially acceptable behaviour, such as praising young people for positive behaviour, and discussing why certain behaviour is not acceptable and the consequences of such behaviour. Children's placement plans clearly describe arrangements for managing any challenging behaviours. The minutes from staff meetings show that any behavioural issues are discussed and strategies for dealing with them are agreed. Staff have had training in positive handling.

The school makes good use of written risk assessments to identify and manage any potential dangers including young people's activities and the building itself. Children said they felt safe in the school. One said 'the school building has been built so blind people can find their way around safely'. Another said 'I feel safe. I know where I'm going and people hold the doors for you so you don't get hurt.'

Suitable health and safety checks have been carried out. Fire safety system and equipment are checked at suitable intervals.

Staff files showed that the school collects and verifies relevant information about people wishing to work in the home to make sure children are protected. This includes taking up written references and completing checks with the Criminal Records Bureau. However, not all the staff files contained photographic proof of identity or a full employment history with a written explanation for any gaps. The Principal said that they were currently reviewing the recruitment procedure, and this needs to be done in line with recent guidance from DfES.

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, 22

Children receive individual support when they need it, and have the opportunity to take part in a variety of educational and leisure activities.

EVIDENCE:

Care staff were aware of children's educational needs. There was evidence of excellent communication between education and care staff about children's learning and development. Educational needs are clearly described in young people's placement plans. There were clear arrangements for children doing homework and children were able to get help from their friends, care staff and teachers if they were having difficulties. One child said 'a teacher helps us with homework'.

Children have the chance to take part in a variety of activities suitable to their ages, interests and needs, which help them to develop their skills and knowledge, including going to the school's youth club and fitness suite, cooking, drama, music, and swimming. Staff are good at encouraging young people to take part in activities in the local community. One child said 'I enjoy being able to spend time with my friends in the evening. I enjoy the activities at school when I play music and perform.' One or two children said that they felt there wasn't much variety in the activities, and they do the same things every week. One child said that they would like to have a hopscotch pattern drawn on the playground.

Comments from children and staff, and the records described how children get individual support when they needed it suitable to their needs and wishes and feelings. There were many excellent examples of staff working with pupils to meet their needs and develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Children were getting advice and help with personal problems, identity and cultural issues, and building their self-esteem, confidence and independence. Children said 'the school encourages everyone to practice their religion if they want to'.

Children are encouraged to take more responsibility for themselves appropriate to their age and needs, and to take controlled risks such as using public transport, going to college, and shopping at the supermarket. Children valued the support they get in developing their independence. Their comments included:

'The things that are best about the school are being with friends and independent living skills'.

'The best things are learning to do dishes, use the washing machine so I can do it on my own.'

'The best things are becoming more independent with staff encouraging me and learn new skills and try new activities'.

Children have the opportunity for specialist support with mobility, physiotherapy, speech therapy and music therapy. Staff throughout the school are particularly good at working together and sharing information to enable them to support children, meet their needs, and encourage them to develop their skills and abilities.

Children have access to people independent of the home, such as advocates, who they are able to contact with concerns or worries. They also have information about children's help lines.

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 & 20

Children are encouraged to give their views and to make decision affecting their lives and the running of the school. Placement plans clearly describe young people's needs and how they will be met. Appropriate contact between children and families and friends is encouraged to help them maintain relationships.

EVIDENCE:

Children said that their opinions are listened to and taken seriously. One child said that 'we have a school council and group meetings. Staff consider our suggestions'. Comments from staff and records show that children are encouraged to express their views on all matters affecting them including everyday decisions, and are encouraged to join in developing school policies. Group meetings are arranged and run by the children.

Children and staff get on and treated each other with respect creating a warm and friendly atmosphere in which children felt secure and comfortable. Any disagreements are sorted out to make sure that there are no on-going difficulties. One parent said 'I like the way all the children have a very good relationship with all the staff and how they make them feel at home.'

Children have comprehensive written placement plans outlining their needs and how these will be met. They also include details of any significant risks to their safety and a written risk assessment showing how the risks are managed. Staff have good understanding of children's needs and are knowledgeable about individual placement plans. Children are clear about the plans for their future and said they were in agreement with them.

Children have regular telephone contact with their families and friends to help them maintain relationships, and families are encouraged to visit them at school. Children have asked to be able have access to electronic mail on an evening. The Principal said that they are currently looking into this, and at present children are able to access their email using one of the school's personal computers.

Comments from parents and placing authorities and the written records show that staff work very closely with children's families and are good at letting them know about their children's progress and involving them in decisions affecting their lives. One parent said 'all the staff are lovely, they are helpful, and have a lot of time for you if you need to speak to them.'

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 & 24

The school is very good at helping children to develop their knowledge and skills to become more independent and to prepare to leave school. The school provides suitable accommodation for the needs of the young people.

EVIDENCE:

Children's placement plans describe their needs and what help they need to develop their knowledge and skills to become more independent and get ready to leave school. This includes developing practical living skills, social skills, dealing with people in the community, gaining experience through new social situations, and helping children prepare emotionally to move on. Review meeting minutes show that children are making progress, and the children themselves said they were feeling more confident and independent. Records showed that the school was working closely with parents, placing authorities, colleges and other organisations such as Connexions to make sure that children moved on in a positive way suitable to their needs and that their needs would be met once they leave.

The school has set up an independent unit in Keller to support children about to leave school. Children have the opportunity to take more responsibility for themselves in terms of shopping, preparing their own meal, sorting out their

own washing and housework. Children have found this a positive experience and have enjoyed having the opportunity to take more responsibility for looking after themselves.

The residential accommodation is of a good standard and suitable to meet the needs of the children. The accommodation was homely, clean and tidy, and decorated to a high standard. Children had personalised their rooms and have had some choice in how they were decorated. There was enough space for them to store their belongings and clothes, and for them to do their homework. There are rooms available where children are able to meet visitors in private and space for activities.

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):

18, 28, 29, 30,31, 32 & 33

The school is well managed and efficiently run providing a safe and stable environment for the children studying and living there. Caring, experienced and competent staff look after the children.

EVIDENCE:

Since the last inspection the organisation of the school has changed and this has led to some positive developments. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities, and know where they fit in the school. Communication between different parts of the school is excellent. The Principal and the Heads of Service provide effective management and clear leadership. The school is run in a way that delivers good education and childcare practice.

The standard of recording was consistently good and gave a detailed picture of each child's experiences at the school. Individual records for children are well organised, comprehensive and up to date containing relevant information about them. The records show how the school is working to meet children's needs and describe what progress they are making. Staff produce detailed reports about young people's experiences and progress in relation to their specific needs for children's reviews. The outcome of review meetings are clearly recorded, highlight achievements and progress.

There are clear staffing arrangements. Staffing levels are satisfactory and there is sufficient staff to meet the needs of the children staying at the school. Staff are caring, competent and experienced, and said they enjoy working in the school. Also, they said they were well supported on a daily basis and by regular supervision. They are clear about their role and responsibilities, the structure of the school and whom they are accountable to. Staff and seniors meetings take place regularly and are recorded. The staff said they supported each other and worked in a consistent way, and are good at sharing information about the children's education and care.

Staff have received training appropriate to their role and the specific needs of children who come to the school. There is continuing training programme throughout the year. There is a commitment to staff gaining relevant qualifications and to working towards making sure staff have at least NVQ Level 3 in caring for children and young people or an equivalent qualification.

There are management systems in place for monitoring the running of the school and the quality of care provided. Records show that the school was reviewing its practice and looking at ways to improve the services it provides. School governors have clear responsibilities for different aspects of school, and visit regularly playing a more active role in the daily life of the school and the children who study there.

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> |
| 14 | 4 |
| 15 | X |

| STAYING SAFE | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i> | <i>Score</i> |
| 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 2 |
| 5 | 4 |
| 6 | 4 |
| 7 | X |
| 8 | X |
| 10 | 4 |
| 26 | 3 |
| 27 | 2 |

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

| MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i> | <i>Score</i> |
| 2 | 4 |
| 9 | 4 |
| 11 | X |
| 17 | 4 |
| 20 | 3 |

| ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i> | <i>Score</i> |
| 16 | X |
| 21 | 4 |
| 23 | X |
| 24 | 3 |
| 25 | X |

| MANAGEMENT | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| <i>Standard No</i> | <i>Score</i> |
| 1 | X |
| 18 | 4 |
| 19 | X |
| 28 | 3 |
| 29 | 3 |
| 30 | 2 |
| 31 | 2 |
| 32 | 3 |
| 33 | 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 | RS4 | <p>The Principal should make sure that the complaints policy is developed further to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement that precludes any person who is subject of a formal complaint from taking any responsibility for the consideration or response to that complaint. • A statement that expressly forbids any reprisals against children or others making the complaint. • Arrangements for handling complaints against the Principal. • Arrangements for dealing with complaints from external people such as local people or the police. • A statement that the school needs to let the Commission know about any serious complaint about the school or school staff. | |
| 2 | RS4 | The Principal should make sure that the complaint's record includes the complainant's views of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint. | |
| 3 | RS4 | The Principal should make sure that children and parents know how to make a complaint directly to the Commission. | |
| 4 | RS4 | The Principal should make sure that staff have training in dealing with complaints. | |

| | | | |
|---|------|---|--|
| 5 | RS27 | The Principal should review the school's recruitment and selection procedure in line with NMS 27.2 and guidance from DfES. | |
| 6 | RS30 | The Principal should make sure that all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised annually by their line manager, and a record of the appraisal is kept on the member of staff's personnel file. | |
| 7 | RS31 | The Principal should make sure that a minimum of 80% of all care staff has completed NVQ3 in caring for children and young people or an equivalent qualification. | |

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Liverpool Satellite Office
3rd Floor Campbell Square
10 Duke Street
Liverpool
L1 5AS

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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