

# inspection report

# RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

St John's School

Firle Road Seaford East Sussex BN25 2HU

Lead Inspector
Corrie McKeown

Announced Inspection 27th September 2005 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

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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 <a href="https://www.dh.gov.uk">www.dh.gov.uk</a> or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: <a href="https://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop">www.tso.co.uk/bookshop</a>

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 John's School

**Address** Firle Road

Seaford East Sussex BN25 2HU

**Telephone number** 01323 872940

**Fax number** 01323 872958

**Email address** 

**Provider Web address** 

Name of Governing body, St John's School

Person or Authority responsible for the

school

Name of Head Mr Don Kent

Name of Head of Care Mr Chris Thompson

Age range of residential

pupils

9 to 15

**Date of last welfare** 

inspection

4<sup>th</sup> October 2004

## **Brief Description of the School:**

St John's is a non-maintained special school and college on two sites. The College is based in Brighton and provides day and residential facilities for students aged between 16 and 19 years. The School is located in Seaford and caters for students between 9 and 15 years with a range of learning difficulties including autism. Girls and boys, day pupils and boarders attend the School. Most of the facilities are provided in a large 3-storey building with extensive grounds and smaller self-contained buildings on the same site. Accommodation for the boarders is located on the first and second floor of the main building and divided into living areas named after the planets Jupiter, Orion, Saturn, Neptune and Apollo. Education and administration facilities are on the ground floor. The youth club, swimming pool and individual therapeutic facilities are housed in separate buildings close to the main house.

The Principal manages both school sites in Brighton and Seaford and the School has a dedicated Head of School and Head of Care.

## **SUMMARY**

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

The inspection was announced and carried out by two inspectors over a three-day period. Members of the management team, care and education staff and 15 of the 24 pupils currently boarding were interviewed; records were read and children were observed in the care setting throughout the day and evening. Questionnaires were sent to all parents and placing authorities of boarding pupils and a pleasing response was received. Other professional bodies were also consulted as part of the process.

## What the school does well:

The health of the pupils is promoted and their individual health needs are met by a professional team of nurses, care staff and therapists. Pupils have good access to a complaints system and there are clear strategies in place to protect them from harm. Support is offered to pupils from staff who continue to show an enthusiastic and caring approach to their work, enhanced by a regular programme of training. Their work is highly valued by parents who comment 'They do a fantastic job' and 'Staff are very good at working with parents'. The operation of the school is inclusive and encourages input and feedback from everyone involved. The admissions process is well managed and a detailed record is maintained at the school of pupils' progress and involvement. The school is well run with good co-operation between departments and a comprehensive monitoring system is in place to ensure all aspects of the pupils' care are effectively managed.

## What has improved since the last inspection?

The dining room has been further upgraded to provide a very relaxed eating environment. The monitoring of behaviour in the home is now more detailed and applied to every individual child. The implementation of the 24-hour curriculum has progressed well since the last inspection with much closer links now in place between the education and care staff in the areas of pupils' communication needs, independent living and behaviour management. Continuity of staffing has contributed to improvements in a number of areas and care plans contain more detailed descriptions and strategies.

## What they could do better:

All staff, including heads of department should receive regular, individual supervision and appraisal. Care plans are of a good standard but information on how the identified needs will be met was not always included. Guidance regarding physical contact with pupils should be made available to all staff in their induction; this has not been identified as a problem in the school, but noted as a matter of good practice.

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

The report of this inspection is available from <a href="mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk">enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk</a> or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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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 children's health is promoted and their individual health and dietary needs are identified and met.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

Members of the care, teaching and nursing staff at the school, hold responsibility for recording and meeting the health needs of each pupil. Communication between them is facilitated by daily handover sessions and appears to be good with no gaps in provision identified. The nurses take the lead in this area, although the care staff also draw up a plan for each pupil. Some of these plans lacked detail and it may be better if only one combined health care plan is devised. An issue was raised during the inspection regarding a particular pupil and although the outcome was that her needs were being met, it highlighted the fact that co-ordination between the care and nursing departments could be improved.

Health promotion is managed jointly, which offers the pupils a variety of different ways of learning how to lead a healthy life. This includes formal lessons, informal discussions and the opportunity to approach any member of staff with questions. A healthy lifestyle is promoted through an active and balanced day, with staff observing all the needs of the pupils in a 24-hour curriculum promoted at the school. This approach was especially evident at meal times, where staff from all departments assisted pupils to choose and eat appropriate meals.

Therapists that work at the school, together with outside professionals meet a range of specialist needs. The school has managed to enable the pupils to access orthodontic treatment locally, during the school term which parents appreciate. Personal hygiene issues are handled sensitively and the pupils said in every case that the staff help to keep them healthy.

The nursing team handles medication, illnesses and accidents, although they are not available at weekends or after 8.00pm during the week; in those situations senior staff take over responsibility and are suitably trained in first aid and the handling of prescription drugs. The school are looking to further

improve the cover provided by the nursing team. The system for sending medication home at the weekends has changed to reduce the number of transfers made.

Meals are served at the school in pleasant surroundings, the result of a number of improvements made over the past two years. There are now three sittings and a calm and sociable atmosphere was enjoyed, whilst eating with the pupils. They said they enjoyed their lunches, but were not so unanimous in their comments about the evening meal. Some of their choices have been incorporated into a new 4-week menu. The two independent living groups eat separately at breakfast and suppertime and take a much greater role in the preparation and clearing up of their meals; they really enjoy doing this, especially the shopping and say it will help them when they are older. The various units provide snacks for the pupils in the evening; in one unit they were making pancakes. Overall the meals served were healthy, varied and in good quantities and where necessary any special dietary needs were met.

## **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):

3,4,5,6,7,8,10,26 and 27

Information about the pupils is handled appropriately and their privacy is observed wherever possible. Complaints information is widely distributed and the pupils have good access to the system. There are clear safeguards in place to protect them from harm, within and outside the school and the appropriate authorities are notified when necessary. Bullying and absconding are not common in the school with good preventative strategies in place. The standard of behaviour is high, with consistent management techniques practiced throughout the school staff team. The building is kept free from hazards and the staff are only appointed following a rigorous vetting procedure.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

The staff interviewed showed a good awareness of how to manage sensitive information and were clear about how child protection issues should be handled. A real effort is made to encourage the pupils to be as independent as possible and to develop trusting relationships with the staff. Consequently there is very little intrusion with respect for their privacy, unless a safety issue is raised. Phone calls can be made privately in their rooms or downstairs, everyone was observed knocking before entering a pupil's room and parents confirmed they were able to meet their children in private when visiting. Complaints information is sent to parents with the school prospectus and at the beginning of every school year, although some feedback indicated that it hadn't been received by a few. It is displayed around the school in ways that the majority of the pupils can understand and certainly those spoken with knew how to go about making a complaint and named several people to whom they could go, including the Independent Person. The complaints box has not been used for some time and the staff listen well to the pupils, therefore it seems there was little need for formal complaints; two however had been made to the Independent Person and were swiftly resolved.

The pupils' welfare is clearly everyone's priority, as observed during the inspection and confirmed by the very positive feedback received from parents. Situations that may pose a risk are raised in daily staff meetings and checked out by the Head of Care; risk assessments are completed for outings and activities, as well as for individual pupils. Guidelines exist for working one-to-one with pupils but it was not clear what guidance staff had been given regarding physical contact. Incidents of absconding and bullying are very low in number and the latter is a subject kept very much to the fore by all departments. It is talked about regularly at house meetings and in the youth club and parents reported that 'the policy is promoted' and the 'buddy system works'; this is an older pupil appointed to keep an eye on anyone who is being bullied.

High standards of behaviour and sensitive handling by the staff of potentially difficult situations were observed at the school. Individual care plans give detailed guidance on the likely problems pupils may experience in this area and advice on the best way to manage them, including agreed sanctions. At the regular handover meetings held twice a day, when the pupils transfer to and from school, staff discuss those experiencing problems so that the approach to their management is consistent. The overall ethos is of positive reinforcement of good behaviour, supported by a merit point system. According to monitoring systems the number of incidents has reduced over the past year and all sanctions are reviewed to assess their effectiveness. The school is looking to improve the recording of incidents and discussions were held about a possible way forward. The Team Teach method of handling

difficult behaviour is practised throughout the school, with regular training sessions provided for staff.

The building was visited by the fire department during the inspection and given a clean bill of health and all other safety checks and procedures were up to date. Staff appointed at the school are subject to a series of checks that meet the National Minimum Standards in this area and the school is in contact with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) when any queries arise.

## **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 education and care departments work well together to support the children's learning. There are plenty of opportunities to take part in a choice of activities in school and in the community. There is plenty of individual support offered to the children.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

The school successfully operates a 24-hour curriculum and everyone consulted said that this was working effectively, with close day-to-day links between the various departments and good outcomes for the children. The care staff are aware of the children's preferred form of communication and around the units widget symbols are widely used to impart information, alongside the written word. The staff responsible for the independent living programme work together in planning their programmes and consult each other for ideas. Much of the work around managing behaviour is shared across the codes in order not to confuse the children with conflicting approaches and the care staff discuss with the children their successes at school. The provision of activities continues to be a strength at the school, with more individual and small group interaction with the local community. Individual requests as well as overall choices have been met, which particularly pleased one parent and the activities include work to help others such as the 'Love in a box' venture. The children all like the activities on offer, including the evenings in, which are enjoyed by the girls.

The high staffing ratio at the school, good communication and clear, detailed care plans all enable the children to receive a great deal of individual support. The care staff clearly know the children well and can anticipate when they may need more support and how best to offer that. The training programme offered to staff enables that support to be well directed and skilful in nature, so

that those children with particular difficulties receive help from qualified and informed care staff as well as specialist teachers, nurse and therapists.			

## **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):

2,9,11,17 and 20

Pupils' choices and opinions are widely sought together with those of their parents and placing authorities. Very good relationships exist between the pupils and their carers and the school manage an efficient and friendly admissions programme. Most pupils continue their education by moving to St John's College at 16, this is also a well-planned and smooth transition. Care plans describe the pupils' needs in detail and include guidance on how they will be met. Pupils' contact with parents and families is supported and facilitated well by the school.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

The pupils are able to give their opinions on how their school lives are organised in a number of ways. Informally they are cared for by staff who listen carefully, the pupils say they like the staff and other evidence indicates they are happy to approach them with concerns and ideas. In their living units meetings are held daily to discuss their everyday choices and worries. On a more formal level, the school council has been revitalised and judging by the minutes, this is a forum used by the pupils to put forward their ideas and make their views known, such as matters concerning school uniform, mobile phones, amenities and meals. There is good feedback given on past issues and the minutes are available and discussed in all the units; pupils spoken with knew of the council, their representatives and its working procedure. Parent

questionnaires were very complimentary about the amount of involvement they have in their children's school lives. Certainly the efforts made to improve the communication skills of the staff have enhanced their ability to involve the pupils.

Warm and helpful relationships were observed between the pupils and those caring for them; poor behaviour was managed consistently throughout the whole staff team, helped by regular meetings as mentioned earlier in the report. Continuity of staffing has improved and clearly helps the pupils feel at ease with their carers and looking after each other was a strong theme at the school. Parents report a warm atmosphere and a friendly, personal welcome when they visit.

Admissions to the school are managed sensitively and the pupils say they were helped to settle in and 'it wasn't too scary'. The school carries out it own survey of parents on this particular issue and they received excellent feedback again this year. Most of the pupils move on to St John's College in Brighton, at the age of 16. This is a well-practiced transition process involving introductions to staff, visits to the site and discussions about what it will be like and how they will be supported. In the past pupils have said they were helped a lot with this move.

The care plans produced to cover welfare issues for pupils at the school are constantly improving. They address all the required areas and clearly describe the pupils' needs for the staff working with them. Earlier in the report it was mentioned that a single health plan might be better and in a few areas a clearer indication of how the needs will be met by staff would be helpful. Strong support is offered to both pupils and parents to facilitate contact by telephone and visits. Private spaces in which to meet are made available and parents commented often on how well this is facilitated.

## **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):

16,23,24 and 25

Pupils are able to wear casual clothes after school and are helped by staff to secure personal items and manage their pocket money. The school buildings are suitable for their use, well furnished and maintained with all safety checks in place.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

The pupils change into casual clothes after school and all appeared well dressed. They said that staff are happy to help them with their choices, when it comes to purchasing personal items, but most managed this with the help of their parents. Pocket money is appropriately managed at the school, with pupils taking a level of responsibility according to their ability and again staff were observed supporting them in their efforts. More pupils joining clubs and activities in small numbers, as well as larger groups enjoying local amenities and events have strengthened links with the local community.

The school's location and design are in keeping with the Statement of Purpose. A recent disability and discrimination access audit was carried out to ensure that wherever possible all pupils and staff were properly accommodated and are able to live as normal a life as possible. The furnishings and decoration of the living areas at the school have steadily improved over the past few years,

resulting in a homely, organised and stimulating environment; the pupils all liked their rooms and were able to personalise them with items that made them feel relaxed and at home. As mentioned earlier in the report their privacy is respected at all times.

A maintenance team carries out the on-going task of upkeep to the buildings and the staff contribute some decorating work.

Safety and security are a priority at the school. Most of the facilities are located in the main building and keypad entry locks are attached to any entrances not locked at night. All visitors are asked to log in and out and their presence is monitored in the building. The fire service visited during the inspection and found no work to be done, regarding equipment or facilities to prevent and fight fires and there are no outstanding requirements from the Environmental Health Department.

## **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):

1,18,28,29,30,31,32 and 33

The school publishes a variety of documents outlining the care principles and practice for boarding, that all interested parties can access. Recording in the school shows clearly the progress made by each pupil. The ability of the staff to meet the needs of the pupils continues to improve; the care team is a skilful, enthusiastic and well-supported unit. The governors and team managers monitor the boarding provision and overall the school is well run.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

The school prospectus, information pack for residents and other documents issued from time-to-time, provide a clear picture of boarding provision, principles and practice at the school; comments from parents received by the school and CSCI support this statement. Documents for pupils are produced in Widget and written formats to enable them all to have a ready reference,

although most say they prefer to ask the staff, if they are not sure about anything.

There is comprehensive recording of pupils' progress, linked to needs and targets identified in their care plans. These reports are written monthly and drawn together annually, where all areas of their life at the school are reviewed. The pupils are also encouraged to keep their own portfolio of photographs and comments, to remember some of their outings and exploits. The standard of care offered by staff at the school continues to improve, with evidence of more informed interventions and greater consistency across departments. A number of changes at the school have resulted in a reduced turnover of staff and consequently training programmes have concentrated less on basic skills and more on the specific needs of the client group. Staff are involved and able to contribute their ideas to managers, resulting in some important individual touches that significantly add to the quality of individual pupil's lives. When talking to them it is clear they are keen to take part in the training offered and have a greater insight and interest in the needs of the pupils in their care. Many of them have an attained NVO Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People and some have gone on to become assessors.

The care staff spoke of good supervision and appraisal from their line managers and felt the whole team was tight knit and very supportive; however, individual supervision for the nurses, therapists, Nursing Coordinator and Head of Care needs to be increased. A counselling service is now available to staff and their partners if they feel they need support. The organisation and monitoring processes within the care department are very good and there is a drive to improve standards further; however a number of small concerns were raised, indicating that systems for ordering minor items of equipment need to be revisited, in order for staff to fully understand the procedure and at the same time have the ability to respond to the needs and ideas of pupils promptly. Monitoring by the governing body focuses on the whole school and consists of reports received from the Principal and visits made to the establishment.

Overall the school was well run with close co-operation between the education and care departments, resulting in a smooth-running and interesting day for the pupils.

# **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		
Standard No	Score	
14	3	
15	3	

STAYING SAFE		
Standard No	Score	
3	3	
4	3	
5	3	
6	4	
7	4	
8	4	
10	4	
26	3	
27	3	

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING		
Standard No Score		
12	4	
13	4	
22	4	

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION			
Standard No Score			
2	4		
9	4		
11	4		
17	3		
20	4		

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING		
Standard No	Score	
16	3	
21	X	
23	3	
24	4	
25	3	

MANAGEMENT		
Standard No	Score	
1	3	
18	3	
19	Х	
28	4	
29	3	
30	2	
31	3	
32	2	
33	3	

## **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	RS14	That only one health care plan is in place.	01/02/06
2	RS14	That information regarding health concerns is	01/11/05
		shared between the care, nursing and education	
		departments.	
3	RS5	That written guidance is given to staff regarding	01/11/05
		physical contact with children in their care.	
4	RS17	That every identified need in the care plan is	01/02/06
		supported by a proposed strategy or plan of	
		action.	
5	RS30	That all staff receive regular individual	01/11/05
		supervision.	
6	RS32	That the system for ordering minor items of	01/02/06
		equipment for activities is revisited.	

# **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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