

St. Andrew's School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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Date of last inspection	27/04/2010

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

St Andrew's School is a local authority co-educational residential special school for students aged between 11 and 19 years old. The aim of the residential provision is to provide opportunities for students with severe learning difficulties and/or autism to develop further independence skills based on the 24-hour curriculum. The residential service operates from Monday to Friday and students can access this on a full-time or a part-time basis dependent upon their identified needs.

The school is set in a suburb of Derby and has good transport links. There is a school minibus available for students to use when it is not possible to walk or use public transport to access community facilities.

The residential provision consists of three areas in the main building and a three bedroom bungalow. All areas have their own communal dining and living space, toilets and bathing facilities. All bedrooms are single occupancy.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an announced full inspection, which concentrated on the key residential special schools national minimum standards under the Every Child Matters outcome groups. All outcome groups were inspected.

St Andrew's is an outstanding school. Young people and families receive an excellent service from committed, energetic and experienced staff. Young people are safe as a result of the effective and thorough safeguarding systems. The service works closely with parents and involved professionals and greatly values the wishes and feelings of the young people using the service. Young people receive a high degree of individualised support and value their relationships with staff. They enjoy developing new skills and grow in self confidence as they are empowered try new activities and to make personal choices. There is an exceptional sense of achievement and pride throughout the school

There is a consistent focus on service development, improvement and promoting positive outcomes for children. The quality of care provided is monitored closely by the management team and also by external managers who visit the home.

No actions or recommendations are set as a result of this inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The service was asked to consider prioritising the refurbishment of the bungalow and plans to extend and redevelop this accommodation are currently awaiting implementation.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

There is an excellent and inter-connected approach to attending to young people's medical needs and promoting their health. An outstanding feature is the inclusion of parents, carers and particularly young people in the processes. Treatment and health monitoring is something that is carried out with young people rather than done to them. Young people are empowered to understand their health and therefore able to develop a greater awareness and involvement in managing and promoting their own well-being. Parents are confident in and complimentary about the joined up approach between the school, residential and nursing staff.

Young people are supported by staff who have an excellent understanding of the complex medical needs presented by some young people. Young people benefit and enjoy their stay at the residential setting because their health requirements and preferred support strategies are implemented on a day-to-day basis. These details are set out in comprehensive healthcare plans that are developed in consultation with parents and carers and supported by health professionals. Young people are sensitively cared for because understanding each young person's learning disability and their communication processes are integral to the implementation of the health care plans.

Young people are protected with safe and robust medication procedures and systems. The school nurse co-ordinates and closely monitors medical and medication procedures. Medication is stored securely and is administered as directed. Staff training is regularly updated to ensure effective practice.

There is also an excellent and proactive commitment to educating and promoting good health with the young people. The school nurse, residential and school staff work together to create and explore the most meaningful way to communicate with and enable young people to understand their bodies, adolescence and healthy life styles. Sessions are fun and interactive for young people and there are further plans for staff to develop practice in health education for young people with disabilities. This focus on improvement and the meaningful involvement of young people and their families is exemplified by the significant improvements in their health. These improvements range from managing complex medical needs to young people having improved personal hygiene skills and understanding healthy eating and exercise.

Young people enjoy and benefit from excellent catering arrangements provided by dedicated staff. There is consistent and effective communication between the cook, care staff, young people, parents and carers. Young people have meals that are

balanced, multi-cultural, include their preferences and compatible with their medical needs. The kitchen is well organised and the cook works consistently with staff to develop an in-depth understanding of how best to encourage and support young people to enjoy their food, try new and different meals and eat healthily. Some young people are very proud of how they manage to shop for and cook their own meals. Parents are extremely pleased with how well their children eat and the significant improvements in behaviour and social skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are protected by excellently planned and effectively implemented safeguarding arrangements. There are robust staff recruitment procedures and young people are kept safe by staff who are well trained in safeguarding children, first aid, behaviour management and health and safety. While there have been no incidents of young people going missing from the service there are clear procedures in place.

Young people say they feel safe and are not concerned about bullying. Parents are unanimous in their confidence in the service keeping their children safe. There are clear and accountable processes for recognising and responding to concerns. Communication is key to the positive outcomes for young people; parents say they feel confident in contacting the service with any concern, no matter how small. Staff, parents and carers understand the complexities of young people's disabilities, behaviours and communication processes. Relationships are open and transparent and encourage interagency liaison. Staff clearly grasp the importance of the smaller picture and how concerns must be reported as these could contribute to a much larger safeguarding picture. There are proactive and effective working relationships between the management, staff, parents, carers, social workers and the local safeguarding children team.

Young people are cared for in a safe environment. Health and safety is effectively managed. There are excellent checking and monitoring systems in place to promote safety. Security is thorough and well monitored. Young people know what to do should there be a fire and understand about keeping themselves safe.

Risk assessment and management is excellently managed. Risks are identified and then proactively and positively managed. Concerns and challenges are clearly identified. Strategies to manage these concerns focus on safety but also ensure all young people have opportunities to reach their potential and achieve. Consequently risk management plans are implemented to ensure young people are enabled to do as much as they can rather than limit their opportunities. One parent commented 'there are no boundaries – if so then they will find a way of getting around it'. Young people, parents, carers and staff are very proud of the opportunities and experiences that have been achieved. Parents say their children have tried things that they never thought they would either due to challenging behaviour, high levels of anxiety or fears for safety. They identify significant improvements because strategies are

pragmatic, practical and meaningful to the individual young person. Staff look at what needs to be put in place so that young people can safely achieve and feel confident as opposed to looking at what is taken away to keep young people safe.

Young people experience exceptional improvement in their behaviour and relationships with others. Relationships are forged on respect and an effective understanding of learning disability and exploring meaningful communication with young people. Young people thrive and grow in confidence in an environment where there are clear boundaries and expectations. Behaviour management is subtle, measured and meaningful for young people because staff are patient, committed and proactive in finding ways to encourage positive behaviour and decrease anxious moments for young people. The use of physical intervention or sanctions is very infrequent; records are monitored regularly and used to look at trends and alternative strategies and approaches. Young people are enabled to express their individuality and develop social skills. They are supported by staff who are immensely positive and proud about the progress and confidence developed by the young people who use this service.

Young people's privacy is highly respected and reinforced with clear information about how young people prefer to be supported with personal care. There is a countering bullying policy. High staffing levels and clear expectations ensure behaviour is well managed with no concerns about bullying. One young person commented he likes the school because everyone is polite and it is good to be polite.

Young people's views and those of the parents are valued. There is an accessible and responsive complaints' processes in place. Information about how to express views, discuss concerns or make a complaint is made known to young people and families when they are first linked to the service and also reinforced by information displayed throughout the service. Young people have complex communication needs. Staff have an excellent awareness of how young people may display expressions of dissatisfaction and provide a variety of ways to facilitate young people's communication, including symbols, sign language and photographs. Young people also understand that they can represent their views at residential meetings and via the school's council. Records show that there have been no serious concerns about the service. Young people and parents say the head and staff are very easy to talk to and would just talk them if something was wrong.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Arrangements for young people to enjoy and achieve are outstanding. Young people stay in a vibrant and enabling environment. They are looked after by staff who seek out and celebrate the individuality of all the young people and look for ways to enable and reassure them to try new opportunities. Young people are encouraged to develop confidence in their personal identities, social relationships and understand and celebrate diversity. This includes identifying young people's individual cultural needs, celebration of different festivals, meeting new friends and a variety of trips

out in the community.

Young people receive outstanding support that ensures their individual needs are identified and met. Key workers in the residential service have a clear and effective role in co-ordinating young people's placements. All staff are knowledgeable about the individual support and communication processes for each young person. They effectively communicate with young people, parents, carers, social workers, school, colleges, employment and health agencies to ensure the development, enjoyment and achievements of young people are facilitated and developed.

Each young person's education plan works in conjunction with care and behaviour management plans. There is a wide range of activities available to young people both as part of school and in the residential provision. Young people say they enjoy playing in the steel band, singing, dance, doing outward bound activities, going shopping and football training. Their education and social development is closely monitored to encourage and ensure progress. Relationships between school, home and residential services are integrated, joined up and consistent. Developing young people's confidence and self esteem is integral and there is a culture of pride throughout the school. Young people are given meaningful, practical and challenging programmes to help them achieve both educationally, behaviourally and socially. They say they have developed lots of new skills since using the residential service. One young person is particularly proud of improving his mobility and says "I can now make my bed, cook my supper and I have learned a lot more knowledge while at the school".

The staff are proactive and committed to ensuring young people's plans and experiences at the service take into account each young person's current needs, as well as their potential. Inclusion and integration is achieved because young people's learning disability and autism is seen as an integral part of their personalities and individuality. Young people are enabled to develop socially appropriate behaviour and skills and are also very proud and confident to be themselves and have their voices heard in their local communities. Older students are able to use the further education facilities at the school. They attend college, use the residential service for younger adults and do work experience. The Connexions officer and transition social worker are very positive about how staff contribute preparing and equipping young people for future education and employment opportunities. Parents are unanimous regarding their child's development, achievements and enjoyment at the school. Parent's comments included 'his development has improved considerably making him a more confident and empowered young man'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are outstanding arrangements to support young people to make a positive contribution to their placements and the school. A key strength of the service is the positive and respectful relationships between staff and young people and the inclusion of parents. Young people and parents are well prepared for coming to the

school and to use the residential provision. At the point of referral, a visit is made to the family home by key members of staff. There is comprehensive written information about the service. The clear and practical admissions procedure is tailored to each young person, their families and carers. Parents said; 'We received a succession of home visits, we were able to talk about our concerns and the needs of our child, everything was taken at our pace.' Parents are also very positive about how their children have been prepared to leave the service saying there is 'excellent preparation' for young people to move on. Young people develop practical domestic and social skills but most importantly confidence and can therefore accept change. Parents say the staff make sure the leaving process is 'not upsetting but make it a positive experience'.

Young people and parents are fully involved in the care planning and review process. Needs are excellently identified and met with day-to-day support strategies which are comprehensively and practically detailed in care plans and risk assessment documentation. Contact arrangements are fully detailed. Plans are regularly discussed, reviewed and appropriately adjusted. Review processes, including child centre reviews and self assessment by young people show they make significant contribution about their placements. Parents' comments include 'respect for children is fantastic'.

Young people's views are valued and seen as integral to the running of the school. They are empowered to express their views. Parents' comments include 'the provision has given our child confidence and he has developed a sense of compassion for others'. Meaningful themes of communication are promoted at all times and enabled with high staffing levels, displays using symbols, photographs and signs, communication with parents, access to advocates, sign language, home diaries and an in-depth understanding of young people's behaviour. One parent commented 'the head is a brilliant advocate for young people'. Student mentoring, child centred review meetings, residential meetings for young people and the school council are all vehicles for young people to express their views on their placement and the running of the service. Student motivated improvements at the school have included new beds, ensuring exclusive use of the residential service and plans for the refurbishment of the further education residential accommodation.

Young people's surveys confirm they are able to make their own decisions and their comments about the service include 'great', 'brilliant' and one young person who helped with the inspection said, 'it is the most fantastic day of my life'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people stay in the residential provision which is a purpose built part of the school. The environment is well decorated and furnished to a good standard with every effort to make the units and young people's bedrooms homely and comfortable. Levels of cleanliness and hygiene are excellent. Bathrooms are appropriately adapted for young people who require help with personal care.

Resources for young people to play and spend leisure time are very good, there is a large play room, a sensory room, extensive outdoor play equipment and school facilities, which include art, music, computing and sport, used by the residential service. The bungalow used by older students is currently awaiting refurbishment.

There are excellent, proactive and varied opportunities and programmes for young people to develop independence, grow in confidence and look forward to their transition into young adulthood. Developing self care, domestic and social skills is an integral part of all young people's education and residential placements. Young people of all needs, ages and abilities are encouraged to take on as much responsibility as possible for their own personal care, make choices, try new things and meet new friends.

This ethos provides an excellent foundation to the further education and independence development programmes that are in place for older students at the school. There is a bungalow where older students stay and develop domestic skills such as cooking their own meals and taking domestic responsibility for the house. They are also involved in programmes that enable them to use public transport, engage in college and work experience courses, go shopping and take up leisure and social interests independently. There is a holistic approach to developing young people's independence with a key focus on emotional maturity, self confidence and keeping safe, in addition to practical skills. Staff, in conjunction with the Connexions officer and transitional social worker, are very proactive in liaising with local colleges, work experience opportunities and developing opportunities to prepare young people for adult living. Young people are encouraged to explore, aspire and believe they can reach their full potential. They were keen and enthusiastic in talking about careers, going to college, getting a job and living in their own accommodation.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Young people are excellently cared for by an experienced, dedicated and extremely competent staff team in a service that has clear and sound leadership and management. The service's comprehensive and useful Statement of Purpose helps young people and parents understand what they can expect to receive. Parents comments about the service include 'proactive, superb, brilliant and forward looking' and 'residential provides excellent care for our child and excellent support for ourselves'.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people are cared for by staff who have sensitive insight into the diverse needs of the young people. There is a strong commitment to inclusion of all young people balanced with a respect for and celebration of each young person's individuality and background. The service provides young people with opportunities to try new experiences, develop friendships with other young people and integrate into the local and wider community.

Staffing arrangements are excellently managed. The school's culture of respect and

individuality permeates throughout the staff team. There is an ethos that anyone, young people and staff, are able to achieve anything. There is excellent team work and staff communication. Daily briefings and regular staff meetings contribute to the effective and consistent running of the service. Staff performance is developed and monitored with regular staff supervision, training and annual appraisal. There is an effective and varied training programme provided for all staff, including ancillary staff. Core mandatory refresher training is well organised to ensure staff keep up to date, with additional training and development opportunities which are proactive and productive in improving outcomes for young people. The staff have exceptional levels of confidence and clarity about providing and constantly improving the service to young people and parents.

Procedurally the service is very sound. Records are clear and accountable. Monitoring, both internally and externally is thorough and focused on assuring quality to young people and their parents and striving for further improvement.