

# St. Andrew's School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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**Unique reference number for social care** SC053344  
**Unique reference number for education** 113048  
**Inspection dates** 05/11/2012 to 07/11/2012  
**Inspector** Elaine Cray

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## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

St Andrew's School is a Derby City local authority co-educational residential special school. There 86 pupils on roll, whose ages range from 11 to 19. The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage with some pupils from ethnic minority groups. All have statements of special educational need for Autism and severe learning disabilities.

The residential service operates from Monday to Thursday and 22 pupils reside at the school during the week. The residential accommodation is provided in an annex attached to the main school and a bungalow for older pupils in the school grounds.

The school is situated in a suburb of Derby city. The residential provision was last inspected May 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- This service is judged outstanding overall with outstanding judgements across all areas of the service. All National Minimum Standards are met. There are an exceptional number of strengths throughout the service. This results in outstanding progress and outcomes for residential pupils.
- Residential pupils' safety is at the very heart of the school and the school is proactive in implementing and sustaining excellent practice. This outstanding practice, in safeguarding and child protection, makes the school stand out from others, and is worthy of wider dissemination.
- Residential pupils make exceptional progress in terms of their physical, emotional and mental health. The work carried out by the nurse and residential team has been identified as excellent practice by other health agencies. A parent comments that the school is, 'Pioneering' in working with young people and other agencies.
- Residential pupils enjoy outstanding outcomes as a result being able to extend their use of a combination of communication processes. They are empowered to express their views, extend their friendships and access a variety of opportunities. This improves the quality of residential pupils' lives and increases their positive self-esteem.
- Residential pupils develop confidence and have strong identities because staff have excellent insight into the diverse backgrounds of young people and their families. A proactive and sensitive approach ensures all residential pupils have the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential while boarding at the school.
- The proactive and innovative strategies used to support residential pupils results

in high levels of progress and confidence. The high emphasis placed on life skills means pupils understand and look forward to transition, including, the next stage in education, moving to employment and preparation for life once they leave the school.

- The school has an accurate and insightful evaluation of its performance. Staff have a comprehensive programme of professional development. They are up-to-date with all developments in legislation and practice. There is a constant drive for improvement. Forward planning is detailed and thorough, including targets which are achievable and can be sustained.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. They thrive and develop because they stay in a vibrant and enabling environment. Residential pupils are recognised and valued as young people with diverse individual needs. Their individuality is explored, respected and celebrated. They make exceptional progress because there are proactive and creative strategies to support pupils of all abilities. The comments of residential pupils are exceptionally and consistently positive including, 'We love it. It is cool. We love it here.'

Residential pupils grow in confidence and enthusiastically embrace new opportunities, learn new skills and grow in independence. They are empowered because they have individualised communication strategies and tailor-made plans. They are more self-assured because they can give meaning to and communicate about their daily care, education and experiences. Residential pupils feel empowered and are keen to have a say about their care and future plans.

Residential pupils grow in confidence and self-worth. They thrive on the recognition and celebration of their efforts and achievements. Staff say they, 'Are so proud' of the residential pupils.

The residential experience enables and encourages pupils to benefit from meaningful, secure and stable relationships with staff and other pupils. The meaningful friendships and the pupils' concern shown for each other, are of outstanding quality, a credit to the pupils and a key outcome for the pupils. Parents report that these improvements significantly and positively impact on the quality of their family and social lives.

Residential pupils have a strong sense of their own safety and well-being. They benefit from significantly improved behaviour. They are less anxious and therefore able to express their needs. They engage in education, enjoy learning and some older students look forward to going to college. Some residential pupils have successfully moved on to further education placements. Residential pupils explore and enjoy a range of new experiences, including yoga, holding sparklers on bonfire night, using public transport and attending health appointments. These

improvements in behaviour are greatly valued by pupils, staff and parents.

The breadth of achievement and progress significantly impacts on pupils preparing for their future and reaching their potential. Residential pupils proudly and skilfully demonstrated their knowledge and skills during this inspection. They carried out a tour of the accommodation and explained about health and safety. Their contributions to the service include helping with domestic tasks, planting window boxes, giving ideas about activities, answering the house phone and passing on messages. Residential pupils say they watch and talk about the news. Some students reported that President Obama had won the presidential election and were able to explain and plan for the weather forecast for each day during the inspection.

Residential pupils' health is significantly improved and they have a growing awareness of their own health and medical needs. They routinely take part in essential health regimes, checks and screening processes as a result of staying at the service. Keeping fit and healthy is one of the pupils' favourite aspects of the residential experience. They are enthusiastic and active participants in choosing healthy meals and taking part in sport and other physical activities.

Residential pupils look forward to and take an active part in a wide range of activities. They enjoy playing in the steel band, singing and dancing. Football and circuit training is a keen favourite. Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy events, including having sparklers for bonfire night and a Halloween party. Some pupils explained they are looking forward a trip to the circus.

Residential pupils have a better quality of life as a result of attending the school. Parents' comments include, 'My child has only been to residential four times and I can already see the difference' and, 'Fantastic steps forward we would not have had if not for this setting'. Parents are unanimous regarding their child's developmental, achievements and enjoyment at the school. Their comments include, 'Life changing,' 'I have seen my child develop from a boy to a young man'; 'More mature, more aware' and 'Huge steps towards an independence.'

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. The service provides an energetic yet nurturing environment to promote pupils' educational and social development.

Residential pupils excel and thrive as a result of the effective links between the residential and education staff. All staff place the pupils' welfare and potential at the centre of their practice. This is exemplified in staff comments, such as: 'Seeing them happy; giving them a voice; just seeing the smiles on their faces; you cannot beat it.'

Staff have an excellent understanding of the socio-economic and diverse backgrounds of the families and local communities who use the school and

residential service. This knowledge is integral to the assessment of residential pupils' needs and maintaining effective working relationships with families. The care framework includes tailor-made packages and strategies to promote the inclusion of pupils and families. An outstanding strength of the care framework is the emphasis on inclusive communication processes. A combination of verbal, written, symbol and signing systems enable residential pupils to contribute their ideas and views.

The effective transition process to the residential setting ensures pupils settle and do well. Young people and their parents are meaningfully involved and consulted. They understand and value the service because of home visits, sensitive and effective discussion and joint care planning. Parents say, 'We share approaches' and the process, 'Was really good and at our pace.'

Care plans have a highly beneficial impact on outcomes for residential pupils because they are focused, detailed and systematically implemented. Targets and strategies are intrinsically linked between residential, education and home; therefore maximising the impact on residential pupils' progress.

There is a strong ethos of placing young people and parents at the centre of the service. Residential pupils and parents are positively enabled and encouraged to attend and contribute to review meetings. The meeting room has display boards so pupils, families, staff and other professionals can use symbols, pictures and writing to contribute to the meeting.

Managers and leaders of the service ensure the young person is at the centre of the review. This is achieved by ensuring the chair is skilled at directing and facilitating the individuals in the meetings. Managers state that this process is essential in, 'Getting the best for and out of everyone' and is, 'Important to empower young people and their families.' Contributions on the display boards are photographed and included in the final review minutes. This excellent process values and gives meaning to the contributions and decisions made by everyone included in the meeting.

The safe and effective management of medication significantly impacts on residential pupils' health and well-being. The school nurse and residential staff work together to engage residential pupils in their health and medical care. The staff are innovative and pragmatic. Tailor-made healthcare strategies enable residential pupils to participate in and develop awareness of their health needs and routines. Staff comments include, 'We will always find new ways of looking at and supporting individual children.'

Residential pupils enjoy the food because they are given choice and educated about healthy eating. They are provided with varied, balanced and nutritious meals. The school catering arrangements are excellently managed. Parents and pupils are consulted and enjoy 'taster evenings' so they are knowledgeable and reassured about their child's diet. The catering manager and cook are pragmatic and responsive to the needs and preferences of the pupils. Menus and meals reflect the religious,

cultural and health needs of all pupils.

Residential pupils extend and develop their personal identities, confidence and social skills. Staff are innovative and proactive in providing a range of activities. The staff are outward-looking and constantly seek new and enjoyable challenges and opportunities for the young people. Staff have good external links and ensure residential pupils extend their experiences in the community. Staff comments include, 'We have to remember it easier do it all here in a safe environment; the key is to be able to achieve these things outside of the school community.'

The residential accommodation is a purpose-built part of the school. Facilities are of a good standard and are safe and very well-maintained. Residential pupils can relax and feel warm and comfortable. Resources for young people to play and spend leisure time are extensive. There is a large play room, a sensory room, extensive outdoor play equipment and school facilities, which include art, music, computing and sport. The recently refurbished bungalow used by older students is an excellent resource. The accommodation and facilities strongly support the learning and personal development of residential pupils.

Comments from parents and professionals about the quality of care and staff include, 'The planning, attention and care received is superb and second to none'; staff are, 'Always on hand to listen and show that they care;' and, 'The service is pragmatic and needs-led.'

## **Residential pupils' safety**

The safety of residential pupils is outstanding. Residential pupils are protected by robust and effectively implemented safeguarding arrangements. Their well-being is promoted because safeguarding is at the heart of the service. Parents are unanimous and confident that the service keeps their children safe.

Residential pupils say they are safe and they present as very secure in the residential setting. Residential pupils are protected from bullying because staff are vigilant and proactive. There is a clear and robust culture of anti-bullying. Residential pupils have an admirable tolerance and understanding of each other's needs and behaviour.

Residential pupils experience exceptional improvement in their behaviour and relationships with others. This is as a result of staff understanding young people's presenting behaviour in terms of learning disability, communication, understanding and sensory challenges.

Clear boundaries and expectations ensure residential pupils thrive and grow in confidence. Behaviour management is subtle, measured and meaningful. Residential pupils benefit because staff are patient, committed and proactive. They consistently explore ways to encourage positive behaviour and decrease anxious moments for young people.



The use of physical intervention or sanctions is rare due to the excellent early interventions and de-escalation strategies used by staff.

Residential pupils' safety is robustly safeguarded with thorough recruitment and vetting procedures. They are looked after by staff who are extensively trained in safeguarding children, first aid, behaviour management and health and safety. Policies and procedures are robust and consistently implemented to a high standard. While there have been no incidents of young people going missing from the service there are clear procedures in place should this occur.

There are clear and accountable processes for recognising and alerting concerns to parents, managers and other safeguarding agencies. 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. A member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board reports the head of care is a, 'Key player' and, 'Champions listening systems for children with learning disabilities in every aspect of developing safeguarding policies and procedures.'

Risk assessment and management is excellently 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.

Residential pupils are cared for in a safe environment. Health and safety is effectively managed. Excellent checking and monitoring systems are in place to promote safety. Security is thorough and well-monitored. Residential pupils know what to do should there be a fire. They also have a meaningful and practical understanding about keeping themselves safe, both in school and in the community.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The service benefits from knowledgeable and motivational leadership and management. Residential pupils are excellently cared for by an experienced, dedicated and extremely competent staff team.

The service's Statement of Purpose is comprehensive. The school is procedurally strong, endorsing the excellent staff practice and outcomes for pupils. As an example of on-going improvement, the majority of policies and procedures have recently been audited and updated. Information to pupils, parents and staff is now available in handy and easy-to-use guides. Pupils and parents are kept up-to-date about the service and what they can expect to receive.

Routines and procedures are clear and operate to provide a safe and motivating environment for the residential pupils. There is excellent commitment and a strong child-centred focus to all practice. The explicit and permeating emphasis on

maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships between staff, residential pupils and families is an exceptional feature. This results in high levels of self-esteem and a sense of achievement for both pupils and staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. 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.

The service is excellently and effectively staffed. Well-trained and experienced staff value each other and the leadership of the management team. The service to residential pupils is strong and effective as a result of excellent team work. Staff say, 'It's not about who works well, it's about who can get the best out of young people' and, 'It's a whole school thing, we work where we have the greatest impact.'

The leaders, managers and staff place the views and communication of students at the centre of the service. The views and ideas of residential pupils are actively sought and valued. Pupils feel that they can make a difference, including choosing décor, choosing different and additional activities and what meals they receive. Parents are fully confident about the approachability of the staff and raising concerns. Residential pupils have good access to meaningful information about what they should do if they are not happy and satisfied.

The comprehensive and outstanding features of this service are maintained due to robust and regular monitoring systems. Residential pupils benefit from the strong ethos and drive for improvement. Self-evaluation is a clear strength, used to promote and drive improvement. Reports are routinely submitted to the board of governors, who are themselves proactive and involved in the development of the school and residential service. Reports written by the independent visitor reinforce the positive impact the residential service has on pupils.

Parents' are extremely positive and their comments about the service include, 'Fantastic provision'; 'Excellent and safe environment' and, 'Words cannot say enough about the excellent service we all receive.'

## **National minimum standards**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



05/11/2012

To all residential pupils at St Andrew's School

### **Inspection of St. Andrew's School**

Thank you for making me welcome and helping me with the inspection. I am writing to let you know the residential provision at St Andrew's School has been judged to be outstanding.

Everything about the residential service is outstanding and I can see why you really enjoy your stay at the service. You learn well, improve behaviour and learn how to be more independent. The staff keep you very safe.

You, your parents and people who come to visit the school told Ofsted that the residential service is excellent and helps you do even better in your education and grow in confidence.

I was very impressed with the improvements you make in language and communication. I can see how this progress helps the brilliant relationships you have with staff. You also make great friendships with the other pupils and treat each other really well.

Your behaviour is also better because you can let staff know how you are feeling and they listen. You and the staff have some really good ways to help manage behaviour so you get less anxious.

You all clearly enjoy a good range of activities. Everyone has a chance to do their favourite thing. It was great to watch you hold the sparklers on bonfire night.

Your views are very important to the staff. They make sure you can have your say about the residential units and your plans for the future. The picture boards in the meeting room make sure you can write and use symbols about your views. This is excellent.

You say you feel safe and do not worry about bullying. It was great to see you all so happy at the residential service.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Cray

Yours sincerely,

Elaine Cray