

St Anne's Community Special School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Helen Walker

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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.^{1,2}

Information about the school

This is a local authority maintained residential special school. The school has 85 children on roll aged from two to 19 years, who have a range of learning disabilities.

The school has an attached residential facility which has separate access from the school. Currently 45 pupils use the residential facility. Up to 14 pupils stay at the residential facility each night. Pupils stay at the residence for short breaks of one or two nights each week on a regular basis. Some pupils also stay at weekends and during school holidays. The school is situated in its own grounds in the village of Welton near the town of Brough. The residential and education provision were last inspected in June 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	good
Residential pupils' safety	good
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the school's residential provision is good.
- Residential pupils significantly benefit from their stay at the school. They make good progress, enjoy their stays, develop friendships and gain in confidence and in self-esteem. The outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding.
- The residence is effectively managed by a competent and experienced head of care. Relationships between residential pupils and staff are very warm, respectful and caring. Care is of a consistently good quality and tailored to the individual needs of the pupils.
- The safety of residential pupils is given a high priority. Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and staff understand their role to protect pupils from harm. Residential pupils say they feel safe whilst at the residence and this is confirmed by parents and professionals.
- Residential pupils have access to and participate in a wide range of enjoyable activities and play opportunities of their choice. Many of the experiences significantly enhance their social and independence skills.
- The residence is comfortably furnished and provides a welcoming environment.
- Residential pupils health needs are well met. Good partnership working exists with health care professionals. Residential pupils benefit from sound advice and guidance to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- Equality and diversity is well promoted. The residential facilities are organised in a way that enables residential pupils to have support that meets their individual needs.

- Residential pupils are looked after by a consistent, competent and experienced staff team who have their best interests at heart. The service is flexible and staff work with parents to ensure their child's needs are met.
- Communication between the parents, staff and professionals is very good. Parents are confident about the positive care provided. They say staff always keep them up to date about matters relating to their child.
- The school meets most of the national minimum standards and has addressed all but one of the recommendations made at the last inspection. These relate to monitoring systems relevant to the residence and care. The residential provision has areas of strength and no weaknesses which have a direct impact on the outcomes for residential pupils. Areas for improvement relate to choice of meals, record keeping, policy review, residence décor and minor repairs.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Pupils significantly benefit from their residential experience and the individual support they receive. They develop their self-esteem and confidence through positive interaction with staff and other pupils. The school has recently introduced post 16 education which means the older pupils also have access and benefit from short breaks in the residence.

Pupils really look forward to their stay and thoroughly enjoy the residential provision. They form relaxed and trusting relationships with staff who promote and support their individual needs. Parents comment that their child has made exceptional progress whilst cared for in the residence and developed independence and social skills. For example, their child now makes efforts to bathe and dress themselves which parents consider a great achievement. They said, 'Things have improved ever so much.' Additionally, residential pupils develop strong and respectful friendships with each other which lead to positive friendships.

Residential pupils have access to an extensive range of varied and meaningful opportunities and experiences. Staff are motivated and inspiring. They are eager to seek out new and different experiences for pupils. A residential pupil recalled their trip to London and expressed their delight about the event. Other activities also promote their participation such as the recent visit to the youth club and being able to have close contact with different small animals. Pupils are fully involved with social inclusion, for example fundraising for 'children in need' and contact with children in schools overseas. This enables pupils to understand and gain an insight into other children's social situations.

A number of pupils are members of the school residence council and this has given them a voice to bring about change in the residence. For example, choices in activities and displays in the residence. Pupils are also enabled to have a choice of bedroom and wherever possible continue to use the same room at each stay in

residence.

Residential pupils' health and wellbeing is effectively supported by an informed staff team and substantial partnership working with other health professionals. They have significant support from the speech and language therapy team who are on site and ensure communication has a high profile. Staff are extremely confident and skilful when communicating with the pupils to obtain their views.

Residential pupils have effective support from staff to help them develop their life skills. This is tailored to their age and abilities. For example, some pupils learn to keep their bedroom tidy, set and clear the dining table and recognise items to pack in their overnight bag. Strong links with other agencies ensure pupils have appropriate support in their transitional year at school. Pupils also have support to undertake work experience tasks in the school and residence.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of boarding provision and care is good. Admissions to the residential facility are very well planned and pupils are always at the heart of the process. The head of care ensures all reasonable steps are taken to ensure pupil's individual needs are known prior to admission. Pupils and their parents have the opportunity to visit the residence to view the facility, meet with staff and other residential pupils. This enables them to make an informed decision about their child using the residence.

Residential and school staff work well together to enable residential pupils to benefit from the school's 24-hour curriculum. This provides residential pupils with stability of care, support and varied learning opportunities which take account of their personal needs and interests. The provision of care is effectively organised and enables pupils to establish routines in the residence.

The consistent and experienced residential staff team have a thorough understanding of each pupil's needs and assist them to meet their individual planned care targets. Staff are knowledgeable about residential pupils learning targets so that they are able to make significant strides in different aspects of their life.

Staff approach was seen to be warm and very caring. This supports young people to develop a sense of security and feelings of belonging to the residence. A parent said, 'Staff know my child well and they always have time for them. My child can't wait to get there.' A social worker said they had observed staff as being very competent and the children 'very happy'.

Regular meetings and sharing of information between the care and school staff supports the residential pupils to reach their full potential. All achievements are celebrated which gives residential pupils a sense of personal development and fulfilment. For example, residential pupils were delighted with their recent success in a countrywide drama-dance competition which promoted healthy life choices. The

school provides pupils with positive cultural experiences and there are regular theme days which continue in the residence. This includes celebrations such as Chinese New Year, Mardi Gras season and Remembrance Day.

Care staff promote residential pupils' good health and support them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Parents or the pupil's main carer retains responsibility for their child's health needs. Residential pupils benefit from health professionals who visit the school. A school nurse is currently based part time at the school and a range of therapists visit the school to support the pupils. Residential pupils also have use of the school's hydrotherapy pool and well equipped sensory room.

Staff have a thorough understanding of the medication procedures so that this is competently administered. However, record keeping showing when medication is taken from the residence is not always up to date. This means staff do not always have reliable information to confirm medication is properly accounted for.

The residential accommodation is comfortably furnished and provides a homely environment. A programme of refurbishment in some areas means improvements are being made for the benefit of the residential pupils. New floor covering in some areas and planned updates to the heating system and decoration in parts of the residence are already underway. All residential pupils have access to a telephone and are able to contact their families.

Residential pupils are provided with healthy and nutritious meals from catering staff who receive relevant training for their role. However, choice of meal is limited and alternative options are not always readily available. Individual dietary needs are given a high priority. The cook is fully committed to working with parents and staff to ensure suitable meals are provided. Mealtimes in the residence were seen to be well organised and lively social occasions.

Residential pupils' safety

The arrangements for safeguarding residential pupil's welfare are good. Pupils benefit from staff who are aware of child protection and familiar with the school's safeguarding procedures. This supports staff to protect the pupils from harm. Residential pupils indicate they feel safe and are happy at the school. The school has a robust recruitment and employment procedure which helps to ensure pupils are looked after by suitable staff and are protected from potential abuse.

A number of parent surveys were received at the time of the inspection and show parents are 100% satisfied with safeguarding arrangements. Pupils receive extremely good supervision from staff who are vigilant and promote anti-bullying in the school. Communication is a strength of the school and staff encourage pupils to make their views known. Residential pupils have regular visits from the local authority participation and rights officer. This gives them an opportunity to speak to someone who is independent of the residence about any matter of concern.

The head of care is careful to assess the mix of pupils who use the residence so that their needs are well matched and friendships develop. Pupils' individual education and placement plans are available and known to staff. This assists them to manage behaviour properly and in a positive and effective way.

Good behaviour management strategies and risk assessments help to promote an environment where physical intervention and sanctions are rarely used. There is frequent partnership working between with parents, care and education staff and other professionals. This helps staff to be fully informed and aware of any issues concerning the welfare of the pupils.

Residential pupils benefit from good health and safety arrangements at the school. Senior staff and a designated governor are responsible for health and safety matters which support a safe school environment. However, some of the automatic holdback devices for the self-closing internal residence fire doors are broken. Therefore, doors are not held open automatically which hinders pupil and staff's easy access in parts of the residence.

The school has appropriate assessments relating to managing risks and promoting the welfare of those who use the residence. These include risk assessments for pupils who might go missing, the building, school grounds, fire and various activities undertaken by the pupils. Residential pupils are given support and advice on a range of matters relating to keeping themselves safe. This includes road safety and an awareness of stranger danger. Pupils enjoy visits from local police community support officers who help them to develop positive relationships with people in a position of trust.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. Management of the residential facility runs very smoothly and pupils are well supported and cared for by a consistent and experienced staff team. The head of care is competent and effective in her management role. Additionally, she is very well organised and efficient in her work. This assists her to ensure sufficient staff are on duty who provide pupils with continuity of care, clear routines and boundaries. A social worker said, 'Staff really know the children well' and 'They meet children's needs well and are exceptionally supportive to the families.'

The head of care ensures there is continuous improvement in the service which brings about outstanding outcomes for pupils. A parent said staff are, 'Really lovely, they are very energetic, my child loves them' and 'they know my child.' Pupils receive care from staff who are well trained, motivated and fair. They have pupils' best interests at heart. Management place a strong emphasis on providing a flexible and inclusive service that meets the diverse needs of the pupils and their families.

Care staff consider they are well supported and have good access to the management team. They are aware of the school and residential policies and find these helpful in their work with the residential pupils. However, some policies are not routinely reviewed to ensure they are up to date and meet legislation. All information is appropriately and safely stored so that confidentiality of records is maintained. Records kept at the school are informative and assist staff to meet the needs of the residential pupils.

The school have a range of mechanisms to evaluate the work of staff and care within the residential facility. This includes the use of reports and information from governors who comment on aspects of the residential care. However, the governor's report does not include details to confirm all relevant records relating to the residence have been checked and verified for compliance. The headteacher produces an annual report about the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision. This has yet to include an assessment against the national minimum standards to ensure the standards are met.

All but one recommendation from the previous inspection have been met. Pupils are aware of how to make their views known if they are unhappy whilst in the residence. They were seen to be confident and approach staff without hesitation. The complaints process has been improved to include written information about the action taken and the outcome of any complaint made. Staff recruitment and employment procedures are more robust. There are now checks to ascertain the reasons for new staff leaving their previous employment if their job involved work with children or vulnerable adults.

The recommendation and points for further improvement raised through this judgement area do not have a significant detrimental impact on the residential pupils.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- The Headteacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to: its Statement of Purpose, its staffing policy, the placement plans for individual children; and an internal assessment of its compliance with these Standards. Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school. (NMS 20.4)
- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for

children; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS 20.2)

What should the school do to improve further?

- continue to review and update all policies and procedures relating to the residential facility. Review menus to improve meal choices
- improve maintenance in the residence such as the decoration in the bathroom and bedroom areas and repairs to internal door holdback mechanisms
- ensure records show any medication brought in and taken out of the residence.

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.



13/11/2012

Dear residential pupils

Inspection of St Anne's Community Special School

I am writing to thank you for all your help during my recent inspection of the residence. You were all so very helpful, friendly and polite. I enjoyed being with you at mealtimes and it was great to see the fun and laughter between you and the staff. You were all well behaved and very considerate of each other.

As well as meeting and talking to some of you, I also talked to the staff and some of your parents about the residence. I saw how much you like staying at the residence and spending time with your school friends.

I think the staff do look after you really well and they know how to keep you safe. I am pleased to hear that you feel safe and that there are people who you can talk to during your stay. I know some of you use makaton and it was good to see you can talk to staff by using this.

There are lots of activities that happen during your stay and it was lovely to see how much you look forward to them. Staff are really keen to get you involved in things and make craft things like the poppy wreath and kites. I really enjoyed watching you play in the different rooms in residence such as the soft play area and the sensory room.

Some of you went to the youth club and were able to see the different animals someone had brought in. Staff said the ferrets were the most popular animal there! I found staff to be very caring and they try to make sure you have a happy and jolly time in residence.

I have asked the headteacher and head of care to improve some things in residence so that this makes it an even better place for you to stay. This is mostly about choice of meals, keeping records up to date and improving the bedroom and bathroom decoration.

Best wishes

Helen Walker

Yours sincerely,

Helen Walker