

St John's School

St. Johns School, Firle Road, SEAFORD, East Sussex, BN25 2HU

Inspection dates	03/12/2013 to 05/12/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- This residential provision provides learners with good overall care. Residential learners achieve outstanding outcomes. They make significant progress across all aspects of their personal and social development. Learners make particular progress in building self-esteem and managing behaviour. Safeguarding arrangements within the residential provision are good. Since the last inspection, the school has shown considerable improvement in the outcomes for residential learners and in the overall care provided.
- Learners speak positively about the impact the residential provision has had on their lives. Relationships between care staff and learners are exceedingly strong. Feedback from parents is extremely positive about the residential experience.
- A strength of the school is the celebration of matters relating to respect, friendship and diversity. Learners engage in creative strategies to help others less fortunate, and they learn through fun ways of discovering about other cultures.
- One national minimum standard relating to training is not fully met. The senior leadership team have adequately addressed a previous recommendation relating to the diploma level training needs of care staff. However, with a large number of new care staff joining the school from September 2013, the training of care is on-going.
- The current safeguarding policy describes the role of the school safeguarding team and the individual role each staff member has to keep learners safe. However, it does not describe in detail how allegations are managed once concerns are raised. The use of physical interventions within the residential provision is decreasing. However, a small number of higher risk incidents have occurred and although post-incident analysis has been completed, it is not robust or comprehensive.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced in the morning, and inspectors arrived at the school site later the same day. All three accommodation areas were inspected and views of learners were obtained during these visits; as well as through learner surveys returned during the on-site visit. Meetings took place with the chief executive, head of care, head of the pre-19 aged learners, care staff and key multi-disciplinary staff involved in the care of learners. Surveys returned to Ofsted prior to inspection, and telephone feedback obtained from parents was also evaluated. Documents relating to the safety and welfare of learners were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Anna Williams

Lead social care inspector

Janet Hunnam

Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

St. John's is a non-maintained independent specialist school and independent specialist college, working with learners who have complex learning disabilities including some learners who may have difficulties resulting from behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), Asperger's Syndrome, and Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome (PDA). Residential boarding is provided for pre-19 and post-19 aged learners separately. The adult accommodation is registered with the Care Quality Commission and is provided on the Brighton campus. Residential provision for pre-19 aged learners is on the Seaford campus within three separate living areas. This includes one house located within the town of Seaford. Currently there are 25 learners on the Seaford campus school roll. Of these, there are 13 residential boarders. The residential provision was last inspected in December 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- review the safeguarding policy to include clearer detail on how allegations are managed, including information on support and guidance offered to staff who may be subject of an allegation.
- ensure a comprehensive, recorded debrief takes place with both learner and staff after every physical intervention involving higher risk strategies.
- **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**
 - Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school. (NMS 19.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential learners are outstanding. Learners make significant progress from their starting point on joining the residential provision. Learners are extremely positive about the school and their boarding experience. One learner comments, 'I do trips here that I wouldn't get to do at home.' Relationships between residential learners are good.

Learners make considerable progress in managing their behaviours and emotions. One learner comments, 'If I feel angry now, I talk to staff and it goes away quicker.' Some learners now use behaviour techniques themselves and this has considerably reduced the number of incidents. One parent comments, 'My child failed at other schools, I am very impressed with this school.' Some learners have made substantial and exceptional progress in managing their own health and well-being and in communicating with others. This has had a massive impact on their self-esteem and confidence. Some learners have been sensitively and successfully re-engaged with the learning environment through the boarding routine, which has had a significant effect on their educational outcomes and achievements.

Learners enthusiastically take part in regular charitable events, including the 'pay it forward' club. A recent event raised a considerable amount of money for a local children's charity. This is celebrated openly within the school and is a very positive achievement. Learners take part in a wide range of stimulating and varied after-school opportunities, enabling them to have exciting new experiences, memories and a sense of self-worth.

Learners enjoy the outstanding opportunities the wider college and organisation offer, such as work experience. Some learners independently travel across the local area to be part of the café run by the college. One learner comments, 'I really enjoy my work experience, I think it's great.' This provides learners with excellent chances to develop teamwork and take on real responsibility.

All learners engage exceedingly well with goals and targets linked to promoting independence. Highly individualised independence booklets are child-friendly and learners enjoy ticking off their extensive achievements. Learners take turns with household tasks, as appropriate to their age and understanding. They work extremely well together to all support the daily running of their boarding houses. One parent comments, 'My child is becoming more independent through staying over at the school.' This effectively supports learners to become more self-reliant and achieve their potential.

One of the residential boarding houses has a specific focus on transition planning and preparation for adulthood. This further enhances opportunities for learners to take on more responsibility and build confidence around life-skills. Some learners successfully move across to the organisation's college for both further education and adult residential provision. This means learners are extremely well-prepared for the next stage of their education and future.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of the residential provision is good. Admission procedures are tailored to the individual learner. Learners, their families and significant others are fully involved in planning any transition. This includes planning for starting at the school, and also transition to the college setting, as appropriate.

Relationships between learners and staff are strong. Regular key worker sessions provide opportunity for learners to reflect on their very good progress and review their goals with staff.

Learner comments include, 'The staff are good' and 'I like all my teachers and staff'. This effective key working model builds and sustains positive relationships between learners and care staff.

Residential accommodation is well-maintained and hazard free. This provides learners with a safe and comfortable environment. Learners personalise their own rooms with posters, photographs, personal artwork and pictures. Some learners proudly display their certificates of achievement. One learner comments, 'I really like my room. I chose the colours on the walls.'

Catering arrangements are excellent. Learners take an active role in choosing the weekly menus, although staff suitably monitor choices to ensure an overall healthy balance. Individual diets and preferences are well-catered for. Learners all speak highly of the food on offer. One learner comments, 'The food is delicious.'

This promotes learning around maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and helps learners maintain good physical health.

Learners keep in contact with family, friends and those important to them when boarding. This ensures residential learners maintain attachments to those significant to them while they are attending school.

Links between the education and care staff are strong. Daily face-to-face handovers between care and education colleagues take place. The new computer based record-keeping, which has been introduced fully since the last inspection, has improved contact. Consequently, everyone within the school is up to date with learner information ensuring a consistent approach.

Additionally, regular team meetings take place involving care, nursing, education, speech and language, occupational health staff and counsellors. These sessions focus on the individual physical and emotional needs of the learner, as identified within comprehensive support plans. The learner is involved in their support plan creation and review. This good practice ensures the unique needs of each learner are actively identified by the school and fully met.

The range of extra-curricular activities and leisure opportunities are good. One parent comments, 'The extended day activities are very valuable. Learning for my child does not stop at the end of the school day.' Learners are involved in wide-ranging off-site activities such as skiing, bowling, ice-skating, shopping, beach walks, trampoline clubs and visiting local activity centres. Learners also access the main school facilities outside of the education day with appropriate supervision. This includes the swimming pool, new outdoor gymnasium and sensory room. This provides learners with a varied range of experiences to try and regular access to the local community.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

Safeguarding arrangements within the residential provision are good. Learners say that they feel safe within the boarding houses. One parent comments 'I have no concerns regarding the safety of my child, There is high levels of staff supervision.' Staff demonstrate sound knowledge of safeguarding policies and protocols. The school safeguarding policy references the role of the school child protection team and contains other key information. However, it does not describe clearly the management of allegations, including support which is offered to staff who may be subject to a safeguarding concern. This does not provide staff with detailed guidance to refer to with regard to these key areas.

Learners do not identify bullying as an issue. 'Friendship Week' within the school focuses on being a good friend, fairness and having respect for other people. This themed week also reminds learners what to do if they are worried about something. Learners confirm and identify appropriate adults they would approach if upset by something or someone. This approach

actively and effectively promotes a 'respect-all' ethos throughout the whole school.

Since September 2013, the 'Behaviour Watch' paper-free computer system has been fully launched. This system is bespoke to the school and provides assistance with identifying patterns and trends in behaviours and incidents. Staff skilfully use the data to create specific strategies to support individual learners. There is clear evidence of the positive impact of this system on reducing the number and severity of serious incidents within the residential provision.

There have been a small number of physical interventions which involved elevated risks since the start of September 2013 within residential time. While these have been recorded in line with school policy, the post-incident analysis has not been wholly robust or comprehensive. Consequently, records do not demonstrate clear learning and actions taken to prevent the higher-risk occurrence happening again.

Health and safety routines within the school are good. Regular servicing and maintenance of equipment takes place. Learners confirm they take part in emergency evacuation drills. This ensures the safety of all within the residential environment.

Since the last inspection, there have been no residential learners reported missing from school. Appropriate procedures are in place to protect learners if they were to be missing and staff are aware of these. Learners are protected by good recruitment practice. Some of the recent recruitment of staff has involved learners, and this is being developed further by the school. This demonstrates to learners that their views and opinions are important.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Adequate

The leadership and management of the residential provision is adequate. Since the last inspection, it has been a time of major change within the overall organisation of the residential provision. Residential learners who are aged under 19 are now based all together in Seaford. Previously, some pre-19 learners were based on the Brighton site and some within the Seaford area. This re-organisation benefits learners as they no longer travel daily between sites, and this lessens anxiety. Learners can still access the facilities of the Brighton site when appropriate. The Statement of Purpose of the residential provision adequately describes the goals and aims of boarding and are followed in practice.

A previous recommendation to ensure all care staff begin working toward a diploma level course within three months of confirmation of employment has been suitably addressed. Due to the recent changes in location of some accommodation, there have been some staffing changes and some staff have left. In September 2013, a large number of new staff joined the care team. The training plan for care staff is detailed and on-going. The senior leadership team acknowledge through focused action plans and the school improvement plan, that they have a strong commitment to ensure all staff hold the required skills to meet the needs of residential learners. This is the only national minimum standard which is not fully met.

Staffing levels within the residential houses are sufficient to meet the needs of individual learners. Staff receive adequate supervision on a regular basis. They feel well-supported by senior care staff.

Independent monitoring visits take place within required timescales and are suitably challenging. They involve the views of learners and action points raised are addressed. Learners know how to complain. Complaints raised by learners and external parties have been fully investigated and resolved. The leadership team demonstrate learning from all concerns raised, in order to improve the quality of care and to maintain good community relations.

Previous recommendations relating to the monitoring of the quality care and widening learner and stakeholder feedback have been met. New formalised systems of management monitoring are now in place, including regular scrutiny of areas such as medication and risk assessments. There are also a variety of consultation systems which involve learner and parent feedback, including questionnaires, the student council and boarding house meetings. One house now has an additional computer after specific learner feedback.

Since the last inspection, all learners took part in a first-ever school 'Learner Voice Conference' which allowed learners to provide feedback about their whole school experience. Views were sought through imaginative ways such as individual video booths. The school has actively learnt from and responded to feedback received. This demonstrates to learners that their views are valued and listened to.

A previous recommendation relating to fire drills within residential time has been fully met. Drills now take place at required intervals and are recorded. This ensures learners safety. Incident report forms are now consistently signed off by senior staff and managers through the new computer based system. This ensures effective and prompt communication between the senior leadership team and the behaviour support manager.

Organisationally there have been many changes to the boarding service since September 2013, and the impact of these is too early to fully evaluate. However, overall the school improvement plan has been successful at improving outcomes for residential learners, improving safeguarding arrangements and in raising the overall standard of care.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	114677
Social care unique reference number	SC050366
DfE registration number	846/7002

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.

Type of school	Non-maintained special school with residential provision
Number of boarders on roll	13
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	7 to 19
Headteacher	Mr M Hughes
Date of previous boarding inspection	10/12/2012
Telephone number	01323 872940
Email address	headofcollege@st-johns.co.uk

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