

# St Francis Community Special School

St. Francis Community Special School, Wickenby Crescent, LINCOLN, LN1 3TJ

**Inspection dates** 18/03/2014 to 20/03/2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Boarders receive the highest quality of individualised care to meet their varied and very complex health and learning needs. There is a clear commitment to inclusivity and an unwavering focus on young people's abilities rather than their disabilities.
- Safeguarding and the welfare of boarders are given a very high priority by all managers and staff. A wide range of clear and fully implemented policies and practices support staff to keep boarders safe. All boarders spoken to say they feel safe here; this is fully endorsed by parents, social workers and other professionals involved in their care.
- The boarding provision is a fully integral part of the service offered by the school. The seamless cross-over between pastoral and educational staff ensures there is a complete awareness of young people's changing needs and that consistent approaches to their care are taken; boarders' needs are extremely well met at all times.
- The positive impact of the boarding provision on young people's lives cannot be overstated. Particularly noteworthy is the way staff develop relationships with young people, work tirelessly to see how they can best meet individual need and then offer them every conceivable opportunity to take part in new experiences.
- Managers have met and significantly exceeded all national minimum standards.

### Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

## Information about this inspection

The school were contacted at 9.00am on the first day of inspection and the duration and initial plans for inspection discussed with the headteacher. The inspection took place within three and a half hours of this initial contact. Inspection activity included discussions with young people, residential staff, the headteacher and parents and social workers of residential pupils. A full tour of the premises was undertaken with young people, meals were taken with the residential group and after school activities were observed. Documents checked included risk assessments, personal education plans, sanction and restraint records, missing from care records and policies and procedures in place within the school.

## Inspection team

Stephen Halliley

Lead social care inspector

## **Full report**

### **Information about this school**

St Francis Residential Special School is a maintained school that provides residential care within a 24-hour curriculum for young people up to the age of 19 years with medical, learning or physical disabilities. The school provides a full curriculum for nursery, primary, secondary and post-16 pupils.

Boarding is available from Monday afternoon to Friday morning during school term time. There is accommodation for up to 18 residential pupils each night. Pupils choose to stay over and different pupils stay each night; currently 25 are in residence.

The school is situated on a residential estate in Lincoln. All accommodation is on one level and there are two separate living areas. Each of these areas has a lounge with adjoining bedrooms and bathrooms.

The residential provision was last inspected in December 2012.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- ensure clear and comprehensive records are maintained of individual staff supervision.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

**Outstanding**

Outcomes for boarders are outstanding.

Boarders' social development is given an extremely high priority by staff and this is clearly focussed around their abilities rather than their disabilities. The completely inclusive approach of staff has enabled boarders to make very positive relationships with peers. Relationships with staff are also a strength of this school with boarders commenting that 'they are like a second family, easy to talk to and down to earth.' Boarders are extremely tolerant and understanding of each other's differences. The independent listener talks of a residential community where 'everyone cares for each other genuinely and everyone has a clear level of respect and honour and they clearly understand the limitations of each other but recognise abilities in order to gain engagement in activities.'

Boarders comment on the fact that staff allow them to be independent and for them to continually develop in this area. This is evident in a number of areas ranging from learning to eat independently, to traveling to school independently using public transport. This dramatically improves their levels of self-esteem and self-confidence; challenges are faced and overcome, new skills are developed and increased awareness of the possibilities which are open to boarders are realised.

Boarders have a very high level of respect for the rights of others. This ensures all boarders are treated with respect and dignity throughout the residential provision and their support of each other is a pleasure to witness.

Boarders thoroughly enjoy the time they spend in residence and say they look forward to boarding. The primary reasons given are the much improved opportunities to socialise, develop life skills and be involved in a range of new experiences they may otherwise be denied. For example, camping, climbing, sailing and trips abroad.

Boarders make a huge contribution to the boarding community from choosing what they want to eat to making suggestions for activities and how boarding budgets should be spent on decoration. Staff listen attentively to these ideas, consider them carefully and then give clear feedback as to whether these new ideas will be implemented. If ideas put forward cannot be taken forward this is clearly explained. This ensures boarders know their views, feelings, opinions and ideas are important to staff and that they are fully involved in the running of the boarding provision.

Boarders have a very wide range of diverse health needs. These are very well met through the employment of qualified nurses and by training all residential staff to be able to manage situations should they arise. The ready availability of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, hydrotherapy and speech therapy fully supports boarders' health and development.

Boarders are well prepared for the transition from this school. They have clear targets and are supported to make their own choices about their next educational placement and where they wish to live. The very close links between the school and the intake team from the local authority fully supports this transition.

### Quality of residential provision and care

**Outstanding**

The quality of residential care and provision is outstanding.

New boarders are provided with an individually planned induction process which can vary over time according to their needs and wishes. The links between pastoral and academic staff are very strong and these provide for continuity of care and for any concerns or issues to be fully shared. This ensures the needs of young people are fully met in both areas. The experienced residential team, together with some newer colleagues, provide an exceptionally high quality of individualised care and support to all young people at all times. Boarders acknowledge this saying 'Some of us are very independent but when we need help they are there. They know us really well and give us individual support and they know something is wrong even if we don't say anything.'

Individual care plans are highly detailed, regularly reviewed and clearly updated as needs change or new information about children is received. This ensures all staff are able to work in a very consistent manner to ensure individuals' varied, complex and ever changing needs are very well met at all times.

The range of activities offered both on and off site is stimulating, well-planned and designed to always develop or enhance the skills, abilities and understanding of pupils. The highly inclusive approach of both staff and boarders towards all members of the boarding group is particularly impressive. Staff are clear, however, to ensure boarders are always given the choice between being involved in activities or not.

Boarders' health and well-being is promoted continually and is the focal point of all work carried out in the school. Staff provide balanced diets and try to increase young people's food choices in order to improve their diet where necessary. Physical, emotional and psychological health needs are met as fully as possible by the care team and a range of appropriate professionals who work alongside them. Some boarders require intimate personal care and this is managed sensitively, with the full cooperation and involvement of the young person ensuring the boarder's dignity is maintained at all times.

The catering arrangements are of a very high quality and meals provided are varied and nutritious. Individual dietary needs are very well catered for, including vegetarian diets or the preparation of food in such a way as to support young people who are fed through gastrostomy tubes. The availability of a kitchen in the residential area for independent cooking supports young people to develop life skills in this area and also allows access to snacks and drinks outside of normal mealtimes.

The residential accommodation is well furnished, decorated and well-maintained. Special adaptations in the residential units, the use of preferred communication formats for each pupil and individualised boarding programmes ensure young people's individual care is entirely appropriate to their level of need. Bed areas have been individually decorated ensuring boarders' personalities and interests are recognised and celebrated.

Careful planning of the nights boarders stay supports them to make and maintain meaningful friendships. This is further supported by attending local discos and youth clubs where former pupils go ensuring that long standing relationships can also be maintained.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

## **Outstanding**

The safety of boarding pupils is outstanding.

Safe recruitment processes are in place and fully adhered to. A considerable number of staff and Governors have completed safer recruitment training ensuring at least one suitably trained individual is on all interview panels for new staff. Checks on visitors to the school are robust, visitors badges are unfailingly used and unchecked visitors are appropriately chaperoned at all

times. This ensures boarders, and all other pupils, are protected from the potential of harm or abuse being perpetrated by adults who work with them or visit the school.

There are detailed, recently updated policies in place ensuring staff are clear on what is expected of them in areas including child protection, bullying, behaviour management, health and safety and should young people go missing from school. There have been no incidents of pupils going missing from the school but the fact policies are supported by a clear protocol between the school and local police ensures that everything would be done to facilitate the swift and safe return to school should a boarder absent themselves.

Boarders are extremely clear they feel safe and protected from harm or injury. Boarders comment that they feel 'really safe because of the staff who work with us and the environment we live in. Staff know where we are, allow us to develop independence in a safe manner and support us when we are struggling'.

Positive behaviour is an absolute core principle of this school and good behaviour is unfailingly role modelled by staff and young people. Policies and procedures are in place should sanctions or restraint be necessary or inappropriate behaviour require staff to manage this. Boarders exhibited exemplary behaviour throughout the course of this inspection both in terms of their attitudes toward each other and their relationships with staff. The manner in which visitors are made to feel very welcome and a willingness to engage them in a range of games and discussions further evidences high levels of emotional maturity and the fact boarders feel safe in this environment.

There have been no allegations or suspicions of harm or abuse and no need to report any issue to safeguarding boards, Local Authority Designated Officers or Ofsted. Clear guidance is in place for all staff should an allegation or disclosure be made. Senior staff have been suitably trained to allow them to fill the senior designated safeguarding officer role and they are fully aware of when matters may need to be referred to external professionals.

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

Leadership and management of the boarding provision is outstanding.

The very clear aims and ethos of the boarding provision are fully translated into practice. All staff within the residential area have a philosophy of openness and honesty with the young people and their families and friends. Each young person is treated with respect and dignity recognising their need for privacy and time alone, as well as the company of their peers, friends and staff while boarding. Each the young person's needs with regards to their background, culture, religion, race, gender or disability are catered for while boarding and staff are fully committed to creating an environment which is appropriate and accessible to all.

Boarding is well managed in an effective and efficient manner and is a key, fully integral part of the service offered by the school. Routines and procedures are very clear and very well known by staff and pupils. This ensures a feeling of safety, a calmness throughout the environment and young people are able to thrive knowing what is expected of them and when.

There are always sufficient numbers of well trained, qualified and knowledgeable staff on duty to ensure the needs of individual young people and the group as a whole are fully met. All staff receive annual appraisal of their work and are individually supervised by managers. However, clear detailed recording of the individual supervision sessions could be improved.

The boarding provision has looked at the progress made over the last year and continues to look at how it can be developed. This has led to the extremely high quality service currently in place but there is a drive and passion within the staff to continue to evolve. Regular monitoring is

carried out by an independent visitor and reports of these visits are provided in order for the school to take any actions which may have been raised.

All required policies, documents and records are in place and fully meet requirements. It is clear from young people's files and the oversight of managers that the quality of care being provided is regularly reviewed and reflected upon.

There have been no complaints received but there are clear policies and procedures to be followed should one be forthcoming. Boarders' views are unfailingly taken into account as an everyday part of working practice. Their ideas are also submitted through the suggestions box and boarders are very clear that they are responded to.

Records held about young people are comprehensive, meet the regulations and national minimum standards and are securely stored at all times ensuring confidentiality is maintained.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	120755
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC038622
<b>DfE registration number</b>	925/7016

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	25
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	7 to 19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Ann Hoffmann
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	10/12/2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01522 526498
<b>Email address</b>	admin@st-francis.lincs.sch.uk

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