

St John's School

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

Inspection dates	13/01/2015 to 15/01/2015	
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	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Arrangements for ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils are strong with practice that is supported by robust policies and procedures. Designated staff members with lead responsibility for child protection are suitably qualified and experienced. Challenging behaviours are well managed with a focus on positive intervention. The number of incidents of challenging behaviour continues to decrease. New and improved systems allow for analysis of individual behaviours and effective approaches being implemented.
- The residential provision provides pupils with good overall care. Pupils make excellent progress in many areas across their lives. The impact of the residential provision enables pupils to focus on their futures with confidence. Pupils experience positive and smooth transitions onto further education and training. Feedback from parents and professionals is extremely positive about the residential experience.
- Pupils benefit from the strong integration of care, education and therapy across the whole school. Pupils speak very well about the care, education and therapy staff. They form excellent relationships with adults they feel they can trust.
- A real strength of the school is the celebration of friendship, diversity and engaging pupils in fundraising. Pupils enjoy being part of decision making and fully embrace all opportunities to help others.
- The pupils' voice is at the heart of every aspect of the school, including the school council and pupils having an input into their care plans and attending their reviews. Pupils' views and opinions are very well captured. School staff have a great depth of knowledge about each pupil and are sensitive to the challenges faced daily by the pupils.
- The leadership and management of the school is strong. Senior and middle managers know the school's strengths and weaknesses and work hard to implement new systems to ensure the service continually develops, and so meet the changing needs of pupils.
- All national minimum standards are met. The four areas for the school to improve, relate

to better organisation of fire drills, improve the standard of accommodation in all houses, refresh training for maintenance staff and to ensure consistency in the recording of telephone verifications of references.

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 was given three hours notice of this inspection. During the inspection all accommodation areas were seen. The inspector had meetings with pupils of all ages. She also took lunch and supper with them. Interviews with key staff were held including the head teacher, the lead staff for child protection and safeguarding, residential care staff, the head of care, the care manager, the school nurse, the counsellor, the speech and language therapist, the occupational therapist, the premises manager, the catering manager, and the human resource manager. The inspector also met with the chair of governors. School policies and procedures, records and boarding routines were scrutinised. Feedback was gained from the local authority designated officer for child protection. Parent view was also examined in addition to questionnaires received by Ofsted from staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Liz Driver

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

St. John's is a non-maintained independent specialist school, 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). A further education college provision is registered with the Care Quality Commission and is known as the Brighton campus. Residential provision is on the Seaford campus within three separate living areas. Currently there are 21 learners on the Seaford campus school roll. Of these, 13 are residential boarders. The residential provision was last inspected in December 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- apply the same standard of accommodation in all three residential houses (NMS 5)
- ensure there is consistency in the recording of telephone verification of references, in relation to staff recruitment checks (NMS 14)
- ensure the maintenance staff undertake timely refresher training relevant to their role (NMS 19)
- re-organise the fire evacuation drill process to ensure access to the meeting point is made easier and that they are better managed. (NMS 7)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Pupils make outstanding progress at this school and benefit from the residential experience. Taking pupil's starting points into account, they make excellent progress in areas such as education attendance and achievement. In addition pupils make excellent progress in improving their communication and social skills, and managing their behaviours. Pupils are proud of the progress they make with comments like 'I am now able to go to the shop on my own' and 'I know when I need to take myself away from a difficult situation'.

Relationships between staff and pupils are sensitive, caring and professional. Pupils trust staff and openly show how much they appreciate the support staff provide. Comments from pupils include 'the staff are brilliant' and 'I like the staff because they look after me how I want to be looked after'. Parents and social workers also comment favourably about the high levels of support provided by the staff.

Pupils make exceptional progress in managing their behaviours and emotions. Pupils recognise themselves how they are supported to manage feelings of anger and frustration. They continue to utilise different approaches to reduce presenting behaviours and to improve their social skills. The multi-disciplinary approach, that includes both residential and education staff, ensures consistency in behaviour management. Pupils say 'I understand when I am feeling angry and I know who I can go to for help' and 'I am able to take myself away from a difficult situation that makes me anxious and use ways staff have taught me to make sure I control my anger better'. The number of behaviour related incidents continues to decrease as a result of the positive behaviour management culture. Parents comment include 'I can actually have a discussion with my child when they come home at weekends' and 'my child can now walk to our local shop on their own which is a massive improvement as their previous behaviours would not allow this'.

Pupils enthusiastically take part in regular charitable events, both national and local. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to engage in fundraising events with numerous certificates on display showing their contributions and achievements. Pupils take part in a wide range of activities, both on and off site. These can be stimulating or calming depending on individual needs. For example a drive after school to see the lights of a nearby town is one calming strategy enjoyed by some pupils while others enjoy indoor skiing.

The school promote successful integration into the local community with positive impact on pupil's future lives. Pupils successfully engage in independence programmes and work base experiences. For example the school provide work based learning opportunities within different departments such as with the grounds team and catering department. This greatly increases pupils chances of employment.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of residential provision is very good. Residential pupils benefit from being cared for by a team of staff who are led by a strong senior and middle management team. Pupils understand what is expected of them and trust staff to support them. Parents and social workers say the staff ensures that pupils receive very good standards of care and enjoy their time at the school.

The care provision is integrated across education and care. This provides good multi-disciplinary working and ensures staff are well informed of each individual pupil. The good flow of communication between the school and residential staff allows for consistency in practice. Regular meetings with care, education and therapy staff, including health staff and counsellors, focus on the individual physical and emotional needs of the pupil. These needs are identified in

the pupil's comprehensive support plans. Pupils are involved in their creation and review and engage fully in them.

Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Regular key worker sessions provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their progress and review their targets. Pupils have a key role in this process and are able comment on how they have achieved their targets. Pupils comment 'I know my targets and staff help me with them' and 'I now make sure I clean my teeth every day'. Daily handovers between education and care staff provide detailed information about the individual pupil's day.

Catering arrangements are excellent. Pupils enjoy the café style environment where they have lunch each day. Pupils take an active part in designing menus and assist care staff with shopping, preparing and cooking evening meals.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities offered. Comments such as, 'I really love skiing evenings' and 'I am happy when I am swimming', show how much pupils enjoy the activities on offer. Activities that take pupils out of their comfort zone are carefully managed. Staff support pupils and slowly introduce them to activities in the local community. Pupils keep in regular contact with their families and those important to them. Staff support contact where necessary. This ensures they maintain attachments to those significant to them while attending the school.

Access to health professionals is very good. The onsite nurse provides a very good service. Pupils know who she is and how they can access her. Access to other health related services such as dental and optical appointments is supported. The school employs a occupational health therapist and a speech and language therapist. They provide support to the education and care staff as well as to the individual pupils. The school also has a trained counsellor who works in the houses once a week. This provides for hands on staff training and ensuring consistency in practice. Access to the local child and adolescent mental health service is good. However, waiting times are, on occasions, too long. A consultant psychiatrist provides half termly clinics with the care and therapy staff to offer support and guidance.

Residential accommodation in two of the houses is of high quality. The third house is in need of updating, refurbishment and re-decoration. The pupils do not comment negatively on the difference and appear happy with the current standard of provision. Plans to upgrade are in place. Pupils personalise their own rooms with posters, pictures, photographs and their certificates of achievement. One pupil stated 'I love my room, its got all my favourite things in it'. Another said 'I can play my play station in my room with my friend, I have it set up so we can play together'.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

Safeguarding arrangements for the pupils are good. Pupils say they feel safe as the staff team are good at keeping them safe in school and when out in the local community. Parents and social workers also say the school keep pupils as safe as possible.

Designated staff responsible for safeguarding and child protection matters are experienced, confident and knowledgeable. Robust referral procedures ensure all concerns and allegations are addressed by the appropriate safeguarding agency. The local authority designated officer confirmed that the school applies correct referral procedures and manages concerns well. Staff say they receive good quality training so they are able to follow the school's and local protocols. The recently updated safeguarding and child protection policy refers to the management of allegations, including those made against staff. Recent training has focused on e-safety and appropriate touch practices relating to personal care. Staff are clear about the limits and benefits of touch and practise appears safe. Staff receive training so they are able to confidently support

pupils in safely accessing the internet and social media applications.

Good quality recruitment and vetting procedures ensures that only suitable adults are appointed to work with children. There is however, inconsistencies in recording the telephone verification of reference checks. A few records do not identify the name of the person making the call or the date the call is undertaken. All other aspects of recruitment procedures are consistently applied. Pupils are actively involved in the recruitment procedures at interview stage. This demonstrates that their views are important.

The electronic recording system known as 'Behaviour Watch' provides staff with detailed records of each pupil's daily events and incidents. The records are monitored and scrutinised by managers to ensure all incidents are addressed correctly and not left. Analysis of data informs strategies for behaviour management and individual target's for pupils. The system is bespoke to the school. Positive behaviours and rewards are soon to be included into this system. The system has a positive impact on reducing the number and severity of incidents.

Challenging behaviours are extremely well managed. Physical intervention is only used to protect pupils and staff. The numbers are decreasing. All interventions are recorded and analysed to ensure they are appropriate. The manager reviews all intervention records and provides clear feedback to staff. Pupils are offered time to express their views and feelings on the intervention.

Procedures for missing pupils are robust. Protocols match the local police protocols to ensure consistency in managing such incidents. The number of missing pupil incidents is very low. Staff supervision levels are high so this ensures staff know the whereabouts of pupils at all times. Any pupil who may wander off site are closely followed by staff and quickly return, safely.

Health and safety routines are generally good. Fire evacuation drills need to be better organised with access to the meeting point made easier. All health and safety checks are carried out effectively. The school need to ensure the maintenance team are provided with refresher training in relation to the checks they undertake.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The leadership and management of the school is good. The senior leadership team is well informed of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has a comprehensive development plan in place with a clear drive for improvement. The re-organisation of the school's structure is now fully embedded with all pupils based on the one site. This benefits pupils as they now do not have to travel between two sites. The Statement of Purpose of the residential provision describes the aims of the school and how the residential provision can enhance the school experience. This enables parents and placing authorities to make correct placement decisions.

The residential provision is at the heart of the school. Staff, parents and pupils are extremely positive about the value of boarding and its contribution to pupil's personal, social and academic development. Staff consistently apply high expectations for pupils and staff. The strong communication that flows from senior managers through the whole school staff team results in good organisation of the provision. This enables pupils to engage in their education or social life with the knowledge they are being well cared for.

A recommendation, made at the last inspection relating to staff qualifications has been successfully addressed. Staff have either completed or are soon to complete the diploma level qualification. New staff undertake a comprehensive induction programme followed by regular training that provides a wide range of learning opportunities. This ensures pupils are cared for by staff who can meet their needs. Areas identified for improvement have also been addressed. The school's safeguarding policy now includes clear detail on how allegations are managed, including

information about the support and guidance offered to staff that may be subject to an allegation. In addition, a comprehensive, recorded de-brief takes place with both pupils and staff after every physical intervention. Managers act on any lessons learnt as a result of monitoring of all incidents. This can be seen in the revised behaviour management plans and restructuring of the houses carried out since the last inspection. This has resulted in all residential houses being on the school site.

Staffing levels within the residential houses are sufficient to meet the needs of individual pupils. Most pupils are on one to one supervision, and get to know their key workers well. Staff receive good supervision on a regular basis. They feel very well supported by senior care staff. Staff say 'I am very proud of the role I have and of the pupils I care for' and 'we are very well supported by our seniors and managers'.

Pupils benefit considerably from the integration of the care, education and therapy provision. This ensures pupils receive consistent messages and can make good progress. Parents feel supported by school staff and that they are fully informed of their child's progress. They confirm the school is very good at communicating by telephone, email or written reports on weekly, monthly and termly basis. Social workers comment positively about the school and the overall provision. Parents state 'the school is brilliant, I and my child are very happy with the staff and school' and 'my child enjoys school so much he doesn't want to come home some weekends'.

Monitoring procedures are good, suitably challenging with action points addressed. Pupils know how to complain. Concerns and complaints raised by pupils and external parties are investigated and fully resolved. Leaders and managers demonstrate learning from all concerns raised, in order to improve the quality of care and to maintain good community relations. All required policies are in place and implemented effectively and overall record keeping is safe and secure. This helps to ensure that pupils' welfare is promoted.

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	
Number of boarders on roll	13
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	14 to 18
Headteacher	Mr M Hughes
Date of previous boarding inspection	03/12/2013
Telephone number	01323 872940
Email address	mhughes@st-johns.co.uk

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