

St John's School

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

Inspection dates	09/02/2016 to 11/02/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	1
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- The school leaders are passionate in their drive to ensure that young people are happy and thrive in the residential provision. This provides a secure foundation on which they make excellent progress in all aspects of their life.
- The senior management team and the governing body place a high value on the role of the residential provision in improving outcomes for children and young people. Staff are encouraged and supported to develop their skills to provide a continually improving and evolving service to children and young people. A parent commented, 'I think it's a very special place with amazing people in care and education.'
- The committed, skilled and competent staff team build good quality relationships with young people that give them the confidence to develop new skills and try new experiences. Young people and their parents talk enthusiastically about the difference boarding has made to them. Young people take pride in their achievements, cooking an evening meal for example. Parents note improvements in personal care and independent life skills. One parent said, 'X is talking about wanting to stay in the area, it's fantastic that he's creating a life for himself.'
- Young people benefit from care that is wholly determined by their needs and aims. As one parent said, 'My child is valued as an individual person, offering him the best individualised service that they can provide. It is the same for each and every child, whose needs are met individually.'

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Incorporate staff knowledge of individual young people's culture into their care plans.
- Ensure that staff are consistent in the action they would take should they have a safeguarding concern.
- Ensure that there are two written references on file for every member of staff employed.
- Provide young people with specific information about who will be on shift each day.
- Consider how to improve the evaluation of effectiveness of care and safeguarding in the independent visitor's reports.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with three and a half hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of boarding practice over two evenings; informal discussions with young people during shared meals and during boarding time; meetings and discussions with the headteacher, the head of care, the care manager, residential staff, site managers, the multi-disciplinary well-being team, the HR manager, and the chair of governors; contact with the local statutory safeguarding authority; a tour of the accommodation; and scrutiny of the wide ranging documentation about boarding. The views of parents and carers were sought during the inspection. There were no pupil or staff responses to Ofsted's point in time surveys nor were there any parental contributions to Parent View.

Inspection team

Maire Atherton

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

St. John's is a non-maintained independent special 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). It is situated in a quiet residential area in Seaford. A further education college provision is registered with the Care Quality Commission and is known as the Brighton campus. These sites share common management strands.

Residential provision is on the Seaford campus within four separate living areas, three within the main building and a separate house on site. At the time of this visit there were 21 learners on the Seaford campus school roll, 13 are residential learners. The social care provision was last inspected in January 2015.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Young people make excellent progress as a result of their residential experience. Young people describe themselves as, 'Much calmer since coming here' and one said, 'Staff have helped about not swearing and behaving well.' Parents express pleasure in telling the difference boarding has made. Some of the examples cited were: 'In a short time I am seeing the first signs of empathy towards others'; 'X is beginning to laugh a lot more at home'; 'Much calmer, more articulate and confident in himself' and, 'Far happier, far more independent, trying to communicate more, better use of signing and far fewer incidents.' For some it has made a difference to the quality of life at home as they have learned to express themselves safely.

Staff ensure that the care that young people receive is tailored for them and have a detailed knowledge and understanding of their needs. A parent said, 'It is all tailor made for them, they know what X needs and cater for that need.' The new personal support plans enable monitoring of the small steps taken by young people and further enhance their sense of achievement as they succeed in meeting their targets.

Young people know how to keep themselves safe commensurate with their level of understanding; staff are vigilant in applying safeguarding measures where young people are unable to do this for themselves. There is always someone available to young people, so they can share good things or any concerns.

Young people thrive in an environment which supports the development of excellent relationships. Young people generally behave very well and know what staff expect of them. They express regret appropriately, when they know their communication through behaviour has not been acceptable, to staff and each other. Staff use behaviour management strategies very effectively so that the frequency of such incidents is reducing. One young person looked at their plan and said, 'It gives staff good guidance about how to calm me.'

The residential provision is very well organised. Young people are the centre of all that staff do. Staff training, supervision, support and deployment ensures that they are properly equipped to meet the needs and wishes of young people, including most activities. Young people enjoy a range of activities, both off and on site. These include shopping trips, visits to a skate park, walks on the beach, swimming and playing sports in the hall. Staff communicate very effectively with children and young people so they are supported to understand any changes in plans.

Staff focus on obtaining the views, wishes and feelings of young people. Staff ensure that they offer choices meaningfully so that young people can make informed decisions without feeling overwhelmed.

Young people benefit from excellent healthcare support. Staff work with parents to ensure that known health needs are met and prompt action is taken to meet new and emerging needs.

Partnership working is well embedded throughout the school, underpinned by open channels of communication and replicated with parents and external agencies. Managers and staff routinely seek the views of others, through house meetings for young people for example, and take action taken in response.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Staff have an excellent understanding of young people's individual needs. The young people's wide ranging communication styles are very well known by staff. They listen and watch attentively and engage with young people so that the communication is unambiguous and easily accessible. Staff deployment is such that there is always someone young people can speak to. A parent wrote of staff, 'They have real understanding, patience and time for the learners. You feel they like them, that's it's not just a chore!' The details of the independent listener are well-advertised, and include a photo alongside the contact details.

The staff responsible for transitions ensure that bespoke, detailed, well-planned and executed transition arrangements support secure moves into and on from the residential provision. This routinely includes visits to the family, the young person, current placements and overnight visits to the school as part of the assessment process.

The therapy, counselling and nursing professionals within the school work highly effectively together, as a health and well-being team, sharing information and strategies with each other and the residential and educational staff. This close and co-operative working style ensures young people receive consistent care, support, direction and communication, tailored for them, from all staff working with them.

Diversity is celebrated and each young person is and feels valued by staff. Inclusion is central to the ethos and practice of the school, in particular equality of opportunity. As a consequence young people develop self-confidence and belief that stands them in good stead. A parent reported that their child 'has got much more sense of self'. This excellent practice is not fully reflected in the care plans.

Boarding accommodation is of a good standard, well maintained and reflects the needs of the individuals. The suitability of the accommodation is kept under review and as a result plans are well underway to create new accommodation that is better suited to the emerging needs of particular young people. All young people have their own rooms which they personalise. The excellent use of photos on canvas on the walls celebrate the local environment and contribute to a warm atmosphere. The careful consideration by staff of the needs and potential behaviour of young people ensures their access to the facilities is safely managed.

There is a range of activities that young people enjoy. The excellent onsite facilities include: a sensory room and a sensory garden, both with good quality equipment; outside gym equipment; a youth club room with table tennis, pool, air hockey and games consoles; and the 'hub', a new facility, with number of computers. Off-site activities reflect individual interests of young people, some are limited by their self-restricting choices. Some young people are engaged in enterprise activities in the wider

community, others benefit from work experience in the college café. There are frequent trips out for drives, to the shops or the beach for example.

The well-being team work very effectively in partnership with parents and each other to promote and support the holistic health needs of young people. This multi-disciplinary approach served to identify, for one young person, a possible link between seizures and episodes of challenging behaviour. This led staff to request a medication review, changes to which resulted in a subsequent reduction in both the above. The team have developed sensory profiles and sensory diets that support young people. Staff have established strong links with local practitioners; the newly appointed mental health nurse is making links with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Parents are very complimentary about the level of support provided to them and their child to ensure that health needs, known and emerging, are very well met.

Young people are given easy-to-understand information about healthy eating, for example red and green labels on items in the café. Staff actively encourage young people to make healthy choices, but young people do not always want to be guided by this and their individual choices are respected. Staff aim for mealtimes in the residential dining rooms to be social occasions, with varying degrees of success depending on young people's frame of mind. A parent commented, 'Meal times before and after school in the house not in the canteen help the learners really feel at home.' The atmosphere in the café at lunchtime is calm and relaxed. Individual dietary needs are well known and met without fuss.

Care planning is very detailed. Staff regularly update care plans to ensure that the progress of young people is effectively recorded and used to inform annual reviews. Young people are involved in developing their plans, where they can, and key workers support them to read and review them. The care plans provide a secure platform on which to build the new positive behaviour support plans. Those developed so far are excellent.

Young people confidently engage with staff, secure that their views and opinions are important and will be taken seriously. All forms of communication, including behaviour, are heard by staff and used to inform and develop the care they deliver.

Staff provide young people with the support they need to achieve the level and type of contact detailed in individual care plans. This includes the use of electronic forms of communication. Staff also provide regular written updates to the families of young people.

Staff are knowledgeable about the policies and procedures that underpin their work and effectively use them in practice.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Young people feel and are safe. They know how to complain and are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and any action required will be taken. Parents spoken

with share this, one said, 'I am confident that staff listen and take X's concerns seriously.'

Staff benefit from robust guidance and training in relation to safeguarding. There are established reporting mechanisms that staff are familiar with and use to good effect. Not all staff are fully secure in their responses should they have a concern but all would take action. The management team are vigilant in their monitoring of safeguarding records and any learning points identified are used to inform staff training. All staff are aware of the safeguarding team and their photographs and contact details are prominently displayed throughout the school. The head of care presents governors with safeguarding information in an easily accessible format that enables them to understand the issues and monitor the action staff are taking.

There are well-established links with the local authority designated safeguarding personnel. The leadership team manage any allegations well, acting on advice sought from relevant external professionals and undertake any necessary internal investigations promptly and thoroughly. They also make referrals to placing authority social workers where this is an identified need; this includes low level concerns where a picture may be emerging. Staff are sensitive to the individual needs of young people in how information is shared with them and their families.

Young people have individual plans for staff to follow should a young person go missing, there have been no such instances. Staff know how to respond to safeguard young people should such an event occur.

Risk assessments are of an excellent standard. They are detailed, thorough and cross reference with the support plan so staff know the action to take to minimise a range of risks effectively. This is working very well.

Staff are well informed and trained about how to keep young people safe and are able to communicate with young people about how to keep themselves safe. Staff emphasise the education of young people so that they are equipped to keep themselves safe when on line. Residential and education staff work effectively in partnership to provide consistent information about safer internet use, which was a focus during one of the inspection days. Young people demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the message in conversation and in their actions. Staff also monitor young people's internet use, with their agreement and intervene if necessary. The senior management team have a very good understanding of their responsibilities under the Prevent agenda and residential staff are becoming familiar with this and their responsibilities. Staff have a very good awareness of those young people who may be vulnerable and strategies to minimise their vulnerability are being developed.

Over the past couple of years senior managers have led a root and branch review of behaviour management and engaged a specialist in this area. Staff are trained in a model in which all behaviour is seen as a form of communication. Staff have put in an immense amount of work to identify triggers and indicators and develop strategies that effectively distract young people to reduce the need for them to display challenging behaviour. This information is being incorporated into positive support plans. The use of consequences and physical intervention has decreased significantly. The monitoring of all incidents by management is excellent and is used to inform updates to plans and staff

training needs. Staff are supporting young people to learn to self-regulate as they encourage them to identify their triggers and learn how to reduce or change their responses. A parent said, 'X is better at self-regulating and recognising when behaviour is escalating.'

The recruitment policies are robust and are soundly applied. In one case a second written reference was not on file. The telephone verification of references is consistent and well recorded.

Health and safety systems are well implemented and provide young people with a safe and secure environment. This is achieved by robust monitoring, maintenance and servicing that takes place as required. Children and young people know what to do in the event of a fire and this has been tested through regular drills and false alarms.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

The experience, passion and commitment of the leadership team is exceptional. They are all focused on the needs of the young people. They promote and model a culture of continual improvement for young people, the team and themselves and aim high. The chair of governors said, 'The Principal has pumped his own adrenalin throughout the organisation, he came with a vision that he has been able to share, keeping the young people at the centre.'

The residential provision is staffed to meet the needs of young people. The skilled competent and effective team are diverse in age, culture, hobbies and interests for example. This provides young people with a range of different people to engage with. One parent noted, 'My child is happier having young trendy men to relate to and feeling he is mates with them and they have really achieved this for him.' The young people have established excellent relationships with the staff that care for them. The successful deployment of staff also supports the safe development of friendships between young people. The on-call arrangements are robust. Some young people said that they would like to know exactly who will be working with them each day.

The management team undertake thorough and robust internal monitoring which supports the improvement agenda. Their prompt monitoring of incidents ensures action, when required, is taken swiftly and evaluation over time enables a strategic oversight that is used to inform the development plan. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed. External monitoring by the governing body is of a high standard and takes several forms. They are led by an enthusiastic and committed chair who ensures that the welfare and happiness of young people is the focus of their work. The independent visits take place as required and are shared with the governing body, which includes a young person at the school. The visitor uses a template that reflects the areas to be monitored as outlined in the standard. The reports are limited in the evaluation of the effectiveness of care and safeguarding.

Communication throughout the school is of a very high standard. Staff benefit from regular formal supervision and talk about daily informal supervision. They describe the management team as very approachable and like the open door policy and practice. This open approach provides a strong foundation for good practice. Managers encourage

staff to see mistakes as learning opportunities and share these so they are not repeated. The excellent team working secures the holistic approach, appreciated by a parent who said, 'There is an holistic approach to everything, learning, therapies and care and you really feel it is a very integrated organisation with all areas supporting each other to achieve results and solve issues.' Parents also comment very positively on the quality of the staff communication with them, with typical descriptions being 'readily available' and 'responsive'. The few complaints are well managed and recorded

Staff induction and training is well considered and effectively equips staff in their respective roles. The diligent management team ensure they keep up to date with current practice and cascade this to staff.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

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	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	13
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to19
Headteacher	Mark Hughes
Date of previous boarding inspection	15/01/2015
Telephone number	01323 872940
Email address	headofcollege@st-johns.co.uk

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