

# St Andrew's School

St Andrew's School, St Andrew's View, Derby DE21 4EW  
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

St Andrew's School is a local authority co-educational residential special school. All pupils have autistic spectrum disorder and/or learning disabilities. Twenty students access the residential service, which operates from Monday to Friday. A maximum of 10 students at any one time reside at the school. The residential accommodation is provided in an annex attached to the main school and a bungalow for older pupils is in the school grounds.

**Inspection dates:** 11 to 13 July 2017

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of previous inspection:** 28 June 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Leaders and managers are creative, extremely child focused and inspirational.
- Each student's experiences are consistently positive. There is an abundance of learning opportunities and enjoyable activities.
- Staff are highly motivated to make a positive difference to students.
- Outcomes are particularly strong in the area of independence. Students work towards independence with meticulous planning and support from staff. Progress is so great that this is 'life changing' for some.
- Students' physical and emotional health vastly improves because of the bespoke work that staff do. Students learn about their own health conditions, build up resilience and develop strategies to manage their own anxieties.
- The safeguarding ethos is excellent. Staff are consistently vigilant in ensuring each student's safety at all times.
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety, where appropriate. They are able to take proportionate and carefully assessed risks to help their development.
- Staff coach parents and carers in how to support students to take controlled risks. This means that students can experience risk and learn how to protect themselves effectively.
- Training workshops and outside speakers are regularly available to parents and carers. This ensures that they can learn about the school's approach to their child's behaviour. This provides excellent consistency and supports progress.
- The impact of residence extends to the students' families. The work in this area is so good, that it is worthy of sharing with others.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The practice of assessing and managing risk is good and as a result children are kept safe but the recording and review of some risk assessments needs to be clearer. (National Minimum Standard 6.3)
- Some recruitment references contain limited information. All references should contain sufficient information so as to be able to demonstrate that the recruitment procedures are robust. (National Minimum Standard 14.1)

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

The quality of care is consistently excellent. Students' comments highlight this. One student said: 'St Andrews is amazing because it is special.' Although advisory recommendations in relation to recruitment practice and risk assessment have been made, these do not detract from the outstanding overall experience of young people. Leaders and managers are extremely clear in their vision and continue to improve the help and protection provided to young people.

Students have excellent experiences while in residence. Plentiful activities give them opportunities to spend time with friends. They also develop new interests. Staff nurture their talents, such as dancing, music and singing. Any progress or success is widely celebrated, filling students with confidence and aspiration for their future. Students' extremely positive comments include: 'We are happy all the time' and 'it's amazing'. Activities strongly support educational targets. There is a consistent and rounded approach to learning. A parent commented on this saying: 'They are absolutely brilliant.'

There are strong relationships between staff and students. Staff are exceedingly kind, nurturing, calm and compassionate. Their approach suits the students exceptionally well. Students are enabled to grow in confidence and develop in all aspects of their lives. One student, when asked about staff, said: 'I give them ten out of ten.' Parents also speak very positively about the staff team.

There is a very strong emphasis on emotional well-being as well as physical health. Progress in all aspects of health is vast. Recent creative practice includes the development of communication aids and social stories. Staff have designed these to help students to come to terms with difficult periods in their lives, such as loss and grief. One social story has assisted a young person in accessing medical treatment. Students learn about how to manage their own health conditions, and this highly bespoke work positively impacts on their health. One parent is particularly happy with how their child now takes their tablets successfully. Each student's progress is so significant that they can look forward to a healthier future.

The school's nurse makes sure that staff know how to meet all students' medical needs. She advocates very well for students and challenges other medical professionals when she feels that students have not received the support that they deserve.

Engagement with parents is outstanding. Staff coach parents and carers to support their children in taking controlled risks. As a result, each student's progress improves in a number of areas. Staff have developed initiatives such as parents' meetings and coffee mornings, where outside speakers have delivered informative sessions. Particularly strong training sessions have been delivered on behaviour management for parents and carers. This has significantly reduced instances of challenging behaviour. Parents find it useful to adopt strategies that are proven to work. A well-

planned support network greatly assists parents to identify problems and to overcome them.

Students are selected very carefully in line with strict criteria. They are admitted only when an assessment shows that residence will significantly improve their development. The admission takes place at the students' own pace. They can try tea visits and activities first, before deciding if they want to stay overnight. Students, that staff feel would benefit from a residential experience, are coaxed very carefully so that their admission process is successful.

A particular strength of residence is the development of skills for independent living. Even when some parents had thought it would not be possible for their student to live in an independent setting, many students have been very successful. Some parents highlighted their child's achievements by saying: 'The school's biggest skill is pathway to independence', and, 'I just think it's fantastic, I am confident that he will go on to independent living.'

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Students become much safer because they attend the school's residential provision. They are encouraged to take controlled risks, so that they can enjoy new experiences. Students learn how to look after themselves and how to keep themselves safe under very strict conditions. For example, one student has been practising using a knife to chop vegetables. Staff empower parents and carers to take risks at home and students make very positive progress in managing their own safety and welfare.

The arrangements for maintaining a safe building are very clear. Leaders have made a concerted effort to improve the monitoring of health and safety matters. Since the last inspection, a company has been commissioned to work with maintenance staff. This has ensured that all aspects of safety are well considered. This work is highly organised and well monitored.

No young people have been missing or absent without permission since the last inspection. This is because of the very good and consistent supervision of students. All students appear to be very happy in residence and, therefore, have no desire to run away. However, missing from home procedures and policies have been updated since the last inspection and the needs of this very vulnerable group of students have been fully considered.

The behaviour management ethos works extremely effectively and gives students a feeling of well-being and security. The de-escalation of challenging behaviours is very effective. Staff always support students with compassion and great care. They fully understand the underlying causes of challenging behaviour. Consequently, there have been some excellent results. These show that students are having fewer incidents in which they become challenging. Students are developing coping strategies.

Recruitment procedures protect students. A number of checks are undertaken, so that an informed decision is made about suitability. For example, there are robust

checks on employment history, through the application form and interview. There are always two references, which are verified. However, the leadership team has been satisfied with some references that contain only limited information. More work could be done to send for other references and to pursue information until a clearer, more robust, picture about staff suitability can be established.

Staff manage risk very well through regular risk assessments. Staff at every level are very clear about how to minimise risk. There are risk assessments in relation to the use of the building and for student activities. Each student also has a personal risk assessment in relation to such issues as health and behaviour. The documentation trail could be improved to provide further clarity about how the risk should be minimised, and some documentation is a little confusing. Also, the review of risk assessment documents is not always clearly recorded. These are recording issues which do not impact on students.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

Senior leaders are inspirational and aspirational. A new leadership team is in place since the last inspection. The new head of school and deputy head have been instrumental in creating energy and excitement at the school. They have not allowed challenges, such as staff strike action as part of a local authority dispute, to impact on the quality of care. Staff are highly motivated by their energy for improvement. One staff member said: 'I am buzzing.' Students are tremendously positive about how leaders help them. Their comments include: 'Super duper', 'fantastic' and 'marvellous' when talking about the leadership team.

Leaders generate a momentum of consistent, significant improvement. Developments include improvements to the way that safeguarding matters are recorded. There is a new electronic system, which has streamlined information more effectively and has improved the monitoring of safeguarding matters. There are new residential reports for students that use photographs very well to capture the progress and development of young people. New meeting structures assist leaders in monitoring the performance of residence staff. New roles and better career development opportunities have been created for staff. There has been an excellent response to the recommendations from the last inspection; for example, improvements have been secured to fire safety, to the school's policies, and to staff training. One parent said: 'Progress has far exceeded my expectations.'

The deputy head has brought fresh ideas about how to listen to the views and wishes of students. Student views are instrumental to the developments in the school. For example, the newly established 'residence voice' group works very well and gives students the confidence to express their opinions. Students talked to the inspector about some changes made to the food, activities and play equipment.

Students are very excited about the local youth council. The confidence and assertiveness of students involved has flourished because of their involvement in this group. Students learn that their views are very important. A staff member reported

that one student had 'blown them away' with their performance in this group.

The school has shared their excellent practice with other schools. Other children and young people will benefit because other professionals have opportunities to learn from what has gone well.

There is an exceptionally strong commitment to staff development. Staff training is highly effective and equips staff with the skills that they need. The leadership team has taken the previously good training to the next level, in a very short space of time. The team has developed formal evaluation of training. It now examines how courses and training sessions impact on the students. For example, 'toolbox talks' are organised for staff. This provides an opportunity for them to look at how they can use their newly acquired skills to inform their future practice.

Leaders are aware of areas in which further improvement is possible. They know the residence provision extremely well. This is because they observe day-to-day activities, check on young people's well-being and carefully scrutinise all areas of practice. The head of care commented very positively on the new senior leadership approach to monitoring, saying: 'It's an asset because the head and deputy understand residence provision.'

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## **Residential special school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC053344

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Suzanne Pennington

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspector**

Caroline Brailsford, Social Care Regulatory Inspector (lead)





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