

St. John's School (Seaford)

Firle Road, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2HU

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

St. John's School (Seaford) is a non-maintained specialist school that works with children with complex learning disabilities, including some children who may have difficulties resulting from autism spectrum disorder and pathological demand avoidance syndrome.

They provide education and care for up to 40 learners. Currently, 28 children attend the school. At the time of this inspection, there were two children who attend the residential provision for five days a week, and one child who attends two days a week. The residential provision can accommodate up to 16 children.

This was a welfare only inspection and did not look at the quality of the education provision.

Inspection dates: 29 November to 1 December 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 22 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Significant improvements have been made to the residential accommodation since the last inspection. This has resulted in children moving from the main school building accommodation to a newly refurbished house on the school grounds.

The house where children stay is beautifully presented, and adaptations have been made with the needs of the children in mind. For example, to reduce the stress of moving on one child leaders designed the extension to the new house and copied his living area in the main building. This highlights the thoughtful, child-focused approach promoted throughout the school.

To improve the outdoor space for children, a new swing and gym equipment have been added, and staff completed a 'colour run' to raise funds for a new outdoor terrace for children to enjoy. Plans are in place to make a sensory planting area and a vegetable patch, which should be completed in the spring. Children are excited to use their new space, and eagerly await the warmer weather.

Children attending the residential provision make significant progress in their independent living skills. Children, staff and parents were all keen to share stories of children improving their communication skills and their ability to access the community. One parent was particularly pleased that staff had helped her child to learn to ride a bike. Staff capture these achievements with certificates, which helps children to be proud of their achievements.

Residential staff work very closely with school staff to ensure that any issues that children may be experiencing that could impact on their school day are fully understood and that the support children need is in place.

Children's day-to-day experiences are positive. They share close relationships with staff, and staff speak fondly of the children. One child has improved their communication and social skills by going on excursions in the local community. This has resulted in them meeting new people and making friends.

Parents are positive about the care that their children receive. Parents of all children in the residential provision were unanimous in their praise of the care that their children receive. All parents gave examples of progress that their children had made in their independence skills and their ability to better manage their emotions at a pace that suits their needs.

One parent said, 'The staff have given me an opportunity to be a parent again and not a carer. I drop off a really happy child and pick up a really happy child each weekend.' Staff are nurturing children's talents by providing them with a range of opportunities to learn and develop. This parent went on to describe how their child is

now and able to speak to different people, which they were not doing before. She said, '[Child] is going to be the best version of themselves because of residential.'

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

Since the last inspection, significant improvements have been made to the structure of the school's safeguarding team. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) no longer has responsibility for the provider's college, and is clearly focused on the school and residential services. Any safeguarding concerns are shared with the relevant safeguarding agencies, and prompt action is taken to safeguard children. The DSL leads weekly meetings with senior staff to review any emerging welfare or safeguarding concerns.

The safeguarding team has responded effectively to all complaints. One child in the residential provision has made two complaints this year. When asked, the child said that they were listened to. The DSL acted swiftly to resolve their concerns and ensured that they were fully informed throughout the process. This has allowed the child to trust that staff listen.

Staff have an in-depth knowledge of children's needs and behaviours. There are detailed behaviour plans that are written by staff who know the children. The therapy team are involved in the creation and review of these plans and ensure that all aspects of the child's needs are considered. Staff follow these plans in practice and ensure that they intervene early to help children to feel safe and ensure that their dignity is protected.

Children feel emotionally and physically safe. Children are supported by a therapy team, and this has led to children better understanding their emotions and learning coping skills to help them when they feel unsettled. As a result, there has only been one occasion when physical intervention has been required. This incident was clearly recorded, and the manager had good oversight of this incident.

Staff understand the vulnerabilities of individual children and how to safeguard children, and they attend regular safeguarding training sessions.

The shortfalls identified at the last inspection regarding fire safety have been addressed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders have been quick to respond to shortfalls identified at the last inspection. They have commissioned an independent audit of the care provided in the residential provision and have acted on this to implement a wide range of improvements. As a result, the residential provision has been extensively refurbished. The manager's oversight of safeguarding practice has improved. Leaders have taken prompt action to manage staff performance in order to improve the quality of care and

safeguarding practice. This has resulted in a meaningful change to children's experiences, which has had a positive impact on their progress.

An independent visitor spends time in the residential provision each term. He speaks to children and staff, and provides reports on the quality of care provided to children and children's experiences of care. Leaders and managers make good use of the independent visitor's feedback to improve practice.

The governor who has lead responsibility for residential care has good oversight of care practice. She visits the provision, speaks to children, and has regular meetings with the residential team. She also provides scrutiny of safeguarding concerns and works closely with leaders to ensure that children receive good quality care.

Leaders promote a positive, collaborative culture. Staff, including night staff, speak highly about the support that they receive from leaders. Staff describe themselves as a 'family', and say that these close relationships help them to provide consistent, nurturing care to children. Children have better managed changes to their residential accommodation because of the care and dedication of staff.

New staff are subject to checks and scrutiny to ensure that they are suitable for their role. The school's human resources team is well informed of key legislation with regards to safe recruitment. However, on one occasion, a staff member's full work history had not been fully explored, despite all other checks being completed.

Staff speak highly of the training that they receive. Bespoke training regarding managing difficult conversations with parents has been well received, and communication between staff and parents has improved. The headteacher has also introduced 'Earwig', a communication tool, to enable parents to see pictures of their children learning and achieving while at school. This helps parents to stay connected and involved in their children's lives while they are away from home.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff have a full work history when employed to work in the residential team at the school. (Linked to NMS 24.1)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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: SC050366

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Anthony Carlo

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspector

Matt Nicholls, Social Care Inspector

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