

# St Catherine's School

St. Catherine's School, Grove Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 1TT

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

This is a non-maintained residential special school for students with speech, language and communication needs and associated conditions, including autism spectrum disorders and attention deficit disorders. The residential accommodation is provided in four houses on the St Catherine's School site. At the time of this inspection, there were 92 students, of whom 21 were accessing the residential provision. There is a separate site close by where the sixth form students are educated.

### Inspection dates: 20 to 22 March 2023

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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:** 13 July 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

Students flourish through accessing the residential provision in the school. They receive warm and nurturing care and support from the dedicated staff team, who enjoy their roles. Students say that they love staying at the school. One said they 'would be very heart broken' if they could not come to the school. Parents are equally as enthusiastic, saying 'the care team always go the extra mile' and that their children have 'come on in leaps and bounds.'

Students' views are central to the running of the residential houses and the school. Their ideas are sought in the weekly house meetings, and decisions made by students include the activities for the week. The student council has a tremendous influence across the school with well-managed groups in the school and sixth form. It is exceptionally well organised, and students are passionate about their roles in the council. The process empowers students to collaborate with peers and staff while representing them and advocating for others.

All students attend school across the two sites. The ethos of the residential provision is that education and developing social skills are equally important to ensure students are ready for their next steps. Through developing their independence and social skills, residential students learn to not only care for themselves but be part of a group. They were seen to help their housemates and provide encouragement when they had done something well. The way students interact reflects the positivity created by the staff team across the school and in the residential houses. Activities are tailored to students' needs and likes, such as shopping, long walks and a particular favourite, 'The Grove', the school's club where they build confidence through stimulating and immersive games and activities.

Residential students learn about healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. The occupational and speech and language therapy teams work seamlessly across the school to provide a truly joined-up approach. Students benefit from a holistic approach to their physical and emotional health. They are supported along with their families, in recognition of the impact that homelife can have on children. This includes sourcing specialist counselling and support for parents where needed. The family liaison officer and mental health first aiders provide an essential service to ensure that children continue to thrive.

Students' health needs are particularly well managed by the school nurses who provide an invaluable service. They are thoughtful in their approach to meeting student's health needs, blending in with lessons and activities to ensure that students get the health support they need. They provide staff with the skills to ensure that children's specific health needs are met, along with providing highly detailed and easy to follow plans in case of medical emergencies. Students with specific health needs learn to manage their health by making positive choices. Specialist diets reflect

what other students are eating to make all children feel included, while learning to make choices to meet their health needs.

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

Students feel safe across the school and in the residential houses. They approach staff with any worries or concerns, and staff are attuned to each student's physical and emotional needs. Staff are confident in the process to follow should they be concerned for a student's welfare, and they know each student's nuances and recognise small changes in their behaviour.

The safeguarding approach in the school is exemplary. Vigorous measures are used when serious incidents are reported, and thorough risk assessing processes are completed that demonstrate clear monitoring systems that assures student safety. The school adopts exceptional multi-agency working processes to help keep students safe. Staff are persistent in ensuring students get the help and support that they and their families need from statutory services, providing suitable challenge and re-referring if they feel services have not provided what is needed. The school are creative in implementing their own protective measures, such as mental health first aiders, if they are concerned for any student's welfare.

Staff recognise all behaviour as a form of communication. They seek to understand what the student is communicating. There have been no serious consequences or physical interventions in the residential setting since the last inspection. Behaviour support plans are meticulous and support staff to understanding students' needs and ensure that they are comprehensively met. Plans are made in advance of any changes or new activity to support students in the event that they may struggle with their emotions and feelings regarding life experiences. Staff use their positive relationships to help students calm and self-soothe when they are struggling.

Health and safety monitoring of the school and residential houses is comprehensive. All checks are completed as required with strong management scrutiny. There are excellent individualised plans in line with students needs and understanding of emergency evacuations and danger. They also empower students to independently exit the premises with minimal mobility support and clear guidance from staff.

Students are protected from unsuitable people working in the school through the thoughtful application of safer recruitment practice.

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

The senior leaders provide inspirational leadership to promote a culture and ethos of high aspiration for all students. Staff are supported by leaders and can contact them at any time. Staff have bespoke training that they need to meet the complex needs of the children, and they can request specific training when needed. Staff benefit from regular developmental supervision. This keeps the staff team motivated to

provide the best quality care and support possible for students. The leadership team goes above and beyond expectations to ensure that staff returning to school from time off due to sickness are provided with the required care that they need.

The school has a well-led governing team that understands and supports the safeguarding of children. They are highly involved in the decisions made regarding educational and care needs. The headteacher benefits from a school partner to continue to develop the school and ensures that they stay at the forefront of practice in relation to the specialist needs of the students in the school.

Leaders have an exceptional knowledge of all the students in the school and regularly review children's progress against their agreed goals and targets. Residential students' progress is monitored through regular multi-disciplinary meetings. They identify when the service cannot keep a student safe or meet their needs. This is rare, and a decision that is not taken without trying everything they can to maintain the placement of the child in the school. They continue to support children until they have a new school placement.

The leadership team ensures that they continue to develop, and it has evaluated the service against the new minimum standards and inspection framework. They benefit from critical evaluation of the residential service through the independent visitor and governors' visits. As a result, the residential provision continues to improve and develop. Improvements include the décor and renovation of the residential areas.

## **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:** SC012597

**Headteacher:** Sarah Thompson

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspectors**

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Alphie Khumalo, Social Care Inspector

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