

# 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 the education of students between the ages of nine and 19 years who have a primary need relating to speech, language and communication.

The residential accommodation is provided in four houses on the St Catherine's School site. At the time of this inspection, there were 93 students, of whom 19 were accessing three residential houses. There is a separate site close by where the sixth-form students are educated.

The school was inspected at the same time as the social care provision. A separate report is available to see the findings of that inspection. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

### Inspection dates: 30 January to 1 February 2024

**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:** 20 March 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

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

Students thrive due to the exceptional quality of the individualised care and support provided by staff. There is a strong sense of community. Care, education and therapy staff work exceptionally well as a team to ensure that students' learning and support are continual. The sense of mutual respect is a strength throughout the students' waking day.

Students have warm and nurturing relationships with staff who strive for them to achieve. Staff have a meticulous understanding of each student and how to tailor the support needed to meet their individual needs. Staff speak passionately about the students, and they are proud of their contribution in helping them to succeed.

Students make exceptional progress, supported and accelerated by a skilled team of staff who work closely together. Staff identify and understand the critical areas for each student's development and target these in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. This includes working in partnership with students' families. One parent said: 'My child has made remarkable progress in his learning since being at St Catherine's. This has been life-changing for them, and also for us as a family.'

The therapeutic and health team provides expert guidance and support to ensure that practice is well informed and makes a positive difference to students' lives. Students make transformative progress in their emotional, social and personal development. For example, students with medical needs are supported to manage their conditions themselves, promoting their independence in preparation for their futures.

Students, alongside their families, are actively involved in their care planning, giving them a sense of ownership in their lives. Students are listened to in a variety of ways. This is a key strength throughout their residential experience. For example, students can raise concerns, give compliments and make requests through communication boards in their houses.

Students are encouraged to participate in activities that promote their sense of achievement, confidence and self-worth. The after-school club, The Grove, is a hub of enjoyment and laughter while providing opportunities to learn vital social skills. Students said that they now have new friends and enjoy having fun with them.

Parents value and praise the quality of care and attention that staff give to residential students. One parent said: 'They are amazing, always so receptive. I am really impressed with the amount of communication. Everyone knows the children really well. They are doing everything right.'

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

Students live in a safe and supportive environment. They say that they feel safe, and all students can identify a member of staff that they can talk to if they are worried or concerned. The implementation of a software program to monitor children's online activity has provided excellent oversight of students' safety and this is very much valued by parents. Leaders use this well to consider patterns of behaviour and there is consistent communication with parents.

The safeguarding lead makes good use of wider safeguarding networks to share good practice and enhance the safeguarding culture. Safeguarding records are clear and comprehensive. The service has an open and transparent approach to all safeguarding concerns and staff seek professional guidance from external professionals whenever this is required.

Students are supported to understand and manage their own behaviour. Staff place a strong focus on the creation of positive relationships with others and students recognise the impact that this has on them, others and their environment. For example, one child said that he learned that using defamatory language was not acceptable and how this may have offended others.

Parents have absolute trust in staff. One parent said: 'The staff have supported [child] to call home, enabling them to do this safely with close supervision. They have learned how to cross the road safely and they are now aware of risks thanks to the great supportive work of the staff team.'

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

Leaders are extremely dedicated and constantly look to improve the experiences of the students. They ensure that everyone has high expectations for what all students can achieve.

Leaders demonstrate a highly developed understanding of the needs of each individual student. This is replicated across the entire staff team. They inspire the confidence and trust of their staff and inspire total commitment to the students. The devotion of leaders models a culture of mutual respect which staff and children embrace.

The highly motivated team of staff are supported to develop their extensive skills through training and experience. This means that the care that the children receive is of the highest standard.

Staff demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of students' needs and risks. There is a child-focused culture, which means that all students are encouraged to grow and develop in accordance with their needs. Students are consistently supported to develop their independence and autonomy, and staff recognise

contextual progress for each student. Consequently, students thrive and take great pride in learning new skills that keep them safe and promote their independence.

Staff benefit from high-quality professional and personal support. Staff value the support that they get from leaders. Leaders have created some excellent initiatives promoting mental health and well-being, and staff and students are supported by highly experienced and trained practitioners.

Leaders are forward-thinking and constantly aware of the ever-changing needs of the students. Students are supported to develop their independence in a way that is unique and takes into consideration their diverse needs. Monitoring systems are effective and inform exceptional care and practice.

## **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/teacher in charge:** Sarah Thompson

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01983 852722

**Email address:** thompsons@stcatherines.org.uk

## **Inspectors**

Hannah Cox, Social Care Inspector  
Ashley Edwards, Social Care Inspector

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