

St John's Catholic Specialist School, Boston Spa

Church Street, Boston Spa, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 6DF

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a non-maintained day and residential special school for children aged from three to 19 years with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including hearing impairments. Residential accommodation is in the main school building and is arranged in separate groups according to the ages and needs of the children.

There is a significant emphasis on supporting the development of children's spoken language. The school has 74 children on roll. At the time of this inspection, 13 children were accessing the residential provision. Several of these children are post-16 students, most of whom attend local colleges to complete their education.

The head of care has the appropriate experience and qualifications for their role.

An inspection of the school's education provision was carried out at the same time as this inspection.

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 February 2024

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 **outstanding**

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

Date of previous inspection: 21 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy staying in the residential provision. The trusting relationships they have with staff help them to grow in confidence and develop their self-esteem. The nurturing environment helps children to feel safe, develop friendships and have fun.

Children's lives are enriched as staff encourage and promote their personal interests. Children enjoy a wide variety of activities at the residential provision and in the community. Children have access to a broad range of opportunities that help them to develop socially and build on their personal interests. One child said, 'The best thing about living in the residence is the fun things I get to do with my friends.'

The low-stress environment in the residential provision helps children to make progress socially and academically. Children also learn a range of skills that help them to be more independent. For example, children develop their cooking skills, learn how to do their own laundry and become more independent with their personal care. For older students, this also involves learning how to travel independently. Children successfully use the skills they learn in the residential provision when they go home, which makes a difference for some families.

The team's supportive and caring culture transcends into the care children experience. Staff ensure that children's wishes and feelings shape their experiences when staying in residence. Staff have reflective conversations with children to ensure that they capture their views.

Staff carry out key-work sessions around a variety of topics. These sessions are child-centred and provide children with the opportunity to communicate their thoughts and feelings. The sessions are individualised to the children's needs to support their learning.

Children's health needs are well met. The multi-disciplinary team in school, which includes the speech and language therapist and the school nurse, ensures that children have readily available specialist help that is responsive to their needs. Physical exercise, such as swimming, and learning about healthy food and lifestyle choices keep the children fit and active.

Most parents and carers recognise their children's progress. They attribute this to the support and guidance that children receive from the staff at the school. The interface between school and the residential provision provides a strong foundation for the children's learning journey. Some parents described their children's progress as 'flourishing'.

Lots of space in the residential accommodation offers children ample opportunities to have fun or relax. The head of care has created more areas for children to have additional space for privacy or timeout. The well-maintained communal areas provide

welcoming spaces for larger social gatherings. Children's bedrooms are personalised and give them a sense of home from home.

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

Staff know the children exceptionally well. This gives children a strong sense of safety. Children do not feel bullied and are confident that staff will keep them safe. When difference of opinion arises, staff help children to work things through. One child said, 'I can speak to any of the staff if I'm sad or worried.'

Staff are effective at guiding children through periods of distress when they are experiencing difficult emotions. As a result, physical restraint is not needed at this residential provision. This helps to maintain children's trust and helps them to feel safe in the company of staff.

The designated safeguarding lead, who is also the head of care, is supported by the school leadership team. Together, they are all responsible for safeguarding the children across the school. The connected leadership team is helping to drive forward improvements in the school's safeguarding practices.

Since the last inspection, a well-managed integrated safeguarding information system that tracks low-level concerns about staff's practice has been implemented. This has supported the school's safeguarding practice, as leaders look to continually develop in this area.

The multi-disciplinary professionals in school ensure that training and support are readily available when gaps in staff's knowledge are identified. For example, training was arranged by the school nurse to develop staff's awareness of how to manage head injuries. The shared awareness of the children's needs throughout the school, and a thirst to continually develop staff's knowledge, demonstrates the school's strong safeguarding culture.

Children learn about the risks and dangers associated with the internet and social media. An effective firewall monitoring system reduces the risks for children in the school. Staff also use creative strategies to develop children's awareness of online safety, deepening some of the children's understanding of keeping themselves safe online.

One child's behaviour support plan does not include all the essential information, which limits the guidance available to staff. However, these plans do include children's views. Where possible, staff agree with the children on how they will be helped when they experience strong and overwhelming feelings. Children's input ensures that staff know what to do to help to reassure and soothe the children effectively.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The head of care is inspirational and ambitious for children. Her steely determination, and desire for children to have the best experience, helps to improve the lives of those in her care. A newly appointed deputy head of care has improved the residential leadership team further.

The ethos and values shared among the school leaders creates a culture of aspiration and positivity in the workforce. High expectations are upheld by staff, which contributes to improving children's lives. Staff are proud to work at this setting.

Leaders and managers have staff's well-being at the forefront of their practice. Reflective and supportive conversations help staff to feel valued and respected in their work. The supportive and caring culture creates a sense of community for staff and children alike. One staff member said, '[Name of head of care] is very supportive, knowledgeable and will always take the time to listen to our thoughts.'

Staff receive the training they need to perform well. They are confident in their roles and are clear about their responsibilities. The quality of training, reflective practice and the guidance that staff receive from their leaders helps to nurture their confidence. This also helps to develop a sense of shared ownership among the team.

School leaders give licence to the head of care to be innovative. This creates opportunities for creative ideas to evolve to help sustain the quality of care for children. Continued work on improving practice around mental health and safe strategies on managing self-harm, among others, are examples of this innovative practice.

The head of care knows the strengths and weaknesses of the service, and she works exceptionally hard to drive forward improvements. External scrutiny by the independent visitor also assists leaders in developing the service provided to the children.

The head of care and staff are exceptionally strong advocates for children. They will do what is needed so that children have the best opportunities and their rights and needs are met.

Children's safety and well-being are at the forefront of the school's practice. Governors have strong oversight of the residential provision. They provide appropriate challenge to school leaders and take a keen interest in children's experiences.

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

Point for improvement

- The registered person should ensure that children's welfare at the school is safeguarded and promoted by drawing up and implementing a written risk assessment. In particular, they should ensure that children's risk assessments hold all essential information about children to help staff respond appropriately. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 19, paragraph 14.3)

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: SC001535

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Ann Bradbury

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01937 842144

Email address: info@stjohns.org.uk

Inspectors

Aaron Mcloughlin, Social Care Regulatory Inspector (lead)

Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024