

# St Andrew's School

Independent school inspection report

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DCSF registration number 928/6071  
Unique reference number 135785  
Inspection number 344425  
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Reporting inspector Sue Aldridge

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

Age group: 13-19

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1</sup>

## Information about the school

St Andrew's School is located within the grounds of St Andrew's Healthcare, an independent, charitable mental health facility, just outside the centre of Northampton. The school is housed in two buildings, Lowther and Malcolm Arnold House, each of which provides education in a medium secure setting. The adolescent services provide mental healthcare including therapy, psychiatric nursing and residential care, which are registered and inspected separately by the Care Quality Commission. This is the school's first full inspection since it opened in January 2009.

The school is registered for 100 young people aged from 13 to 19 years. It is a national resource for students, most of whom have a history of high risk, who are in need of mental health care within a medium secure setting. Students are drawn from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are almost twice as many boys as girls. The great majority are above compulsory school age. Roughly a third have statements of special educational needs, mainly because of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, moderate to severe learning difficulties and autism. About a fifth are in the care of local authorities. All students are detained under the Mental Health Act. Students in Malcolm Arnold House have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Occasionally, students are taught on the wards, but for the majority of time they are taught in the school setting. All students are funded for their care by their primary care trusts. Recently, a year's funding has been allocated by the Learning and Skills Council for the education of students aged 16 to 19.

The school aims to provide a supportive learning environment in which young people can experience success and embark on the journey of lifelong learning.

## Evaluation of the school

St Andrew's provides a good quality of education and outstanding care for students. It meets all of the regulations and is successful in meeting its aims. The key factor underpinning its success is the seamless approach by staff from many different disciplines who treat each student as a 'whole' individual, and cooperate most effectively to support, educate and treat individuals. There are very good arrangements to keep students safe.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

## Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum, closely matched to students' needs and abilities. All the required areas of learning are available, although there has to be a very flexible approach to how many education sessions students are offered, taking account of their emotional and medical conditions. Timetables are individual and closely monitored. Education is effectively balanced with therapy and nursing. Nonetheless, several students would like more education sessions. Occasionally, students over 16 choose not to take part in education and their right to do so is respected. There is a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills (ICT), and this is highly appropriate. All academic courses are externally accredited and they are well matched to the range of students' abilities. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are catered for well. For instance, a dedicated room at Matthew Arnold House is well adapted and used effectively to teach students with autism. There is suitable enrichment, in the form of activities such as a drama club and occasional music sessions, but students would like these to be more frequent. For those who are permitted to leave the site, learning is enlivened by visits, such as to the theatre. A few access college courses and vocational placements at a local provider. Those who have to remain on the site have access to limited vocational experiences, such as horticulture. There are plans to improve the provision of vocational education and these are dependent upon the charity identifying the funding to build new accommodation. There is suitable involvement of a Connexions officer to assist students in making decisions about their futures.

Teaching and assessment are good and students make good progress as a result. Comprehensive assessment by a range of professionals is used effectively to draw up programmes for students and to place them in one of the two houses. All available assessment information is used to write individual education plans. These are generally of good quality. They are designed to be meaningful to students and so some are constructed using pictures and symbols as well as text. Occasionally, targets are not precise enough or are not accompanied by strategies showing what staff will do to help students achieve their goals. The key strengths of teaching include the very good relationships that staff establish with students. Staff are very well informed about the emotional state of each student every day, and they use this skilfully to gauge the best approach and level of challenge. They build enjoyment into lessons as well as success, yet they retain challenge and present new learning at exactly the right time. Education staff work well as a team. For instance, they join a starter in a lesson to make a game possible and enjoyable. As a result of these strengths, students make good progress. They consolidate existing skills and knowledge, build their self-confidence and move on to acquire new knowledge and skills. They are well supported in lessons; most groups are small or even individual, yet staff build students' independent working skills well and do not do the work for them. A variety of resources is used well to encourage learning, including ICT, and interactive whiteboards are soon to be installed in teaching rooms. Students are

involved well in their learning. Objectives are made clear at the start of a session and they are reviewed during or at the end of a lesson. As a result, students can see their successes. Those following examination courses are guided well about expectations and requirements. However, students are not always clear about their personal targets, and a few say that they would like more guidance about how to improve their work. Despite these minor shortcomings, students make good progress and achieve a range of examination passes, including full GCSEs, Entry Level passes, Adult Literacy and Numeracy and unit awards. The great majority reach or exceed the targets set for them based on their initial assessments.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is encouraged well by education and health professionals, such as therapists. Spiritual awareness forms part of care plans, so group work as well as access to faith leaders and celebrations is provided. Students grow in self-awareness and self-esteem. Their behaviour during education sessions is outstanding. They respect staff and resources, and are often well motivated to learn. They show pleasure at their successes. Where students work in small groups, they get on well together and occasionally help one another. During life skills sessions, students learn self-help skills, such as planning, shopping for and preparing meals. Students learn about how society works through their personal development course, which includes aspects of citizenship. They experience democracy in action as they have a voice through their community meetings and they are represented on the organisation's service users' group, which has been influential in driving forward the recycling agenda and improving the quality of food. A few work as volunteers in a local conservation group. They also raise funds in their houses. Through the school's 'diversity days' students learn about other cultures, customs and beliefs. Students are able to express themselves through art work, some of which is of a high quality. However, several would like more regular opportunities to participate in drama and music activities.

## Welfare, health and safety of the students

Arrangements to assure the welfare, health and safety of students are outstanding. The quality of communication and cooperation between the many different professionals who treat and educate the students is excellent. For instance, at the start of each day, information about each student's evening on the ward is passed on to education staff, so they are very well informed about the emotional state and medical condition of individuals. Initial multi-disciplinary assessment is used very well to inform detailed and comprehensive care plans. These plans draw together all the sources of support and therapy necessary to address students' needs. A common record keeping system enables staff to carefully monitor and evaluate all aspects of a student's welfare and health. Serious incidents are carefully reviewed and analysed to identify 'lessons learned' in the organisation. Wide-ranging risk assessment

underpins all aspects of the establishment's work. Staff are very well trained in matters such as child protection and the management of difficult behaviour. A two-week induction course ensures that new staff become fully conversant with policies and procedures before they begin to teach or support learning. Staff are exceptionally alert to risks and vigilant at all times. There are well established procedures for all eventualities. Staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of students' difficulties and establish very good working relationships with them in education. As a result, almost all students say that they feel safe. Physical access for people with disabilities is good and the school has a suitable three-year plan showing how it intends to improve access in its widest sense.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

There are very secure arrangements to ensure that all staff employed are suitable to work with adolescents with mental health difficulties. All the required checks are carried out when staff are recruited and prior to confirmation of their appointment; these are correctly recorded in a single central register.

### School's premises and accommodation

The quality of the premises and accommodation is good, as it is effectively adapted to meet the needs of the students. Strengths include the good leisure and recreation facilities on the site, including a swimming pool and sports hall. The adapted accommodation for students with autism who require a particular teaching approach is good. There is a high standard of maintenance and decoration. The separate nature of the education premises ensures that lessons are uninterrupted by other activities. There are no specialist rooms for science and design and technology, as the risks associated with these are considered too great. However, an art room and separate art therapy room with a kiln are both used effectively. Teaching rooms at Lowther are rather small, but most students need to be taught in small groups anyway. Overall, there is ample space for students to be taught. The school has suitable plans to improve the facilities on the site, including the creation of vocational teaching areas.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has an informative website with all the information that should be made available to parents, carers and others. The prospectus, also available electronically, contains the details required. Comprehensive daily reports are made available to health professionals about how well students have achieved in lessons. There is very effective sharing of information across the many disciplines that are involved in treating or educating students. The school provides information as required and participates fully in reviews, such as for students who are in public care.

## Procedures for handling complaints

There is a comprehensive policy and procedures that allow for complaints to be heard fairly. One received in the last year was resolved informally.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- provide greater opportunities in vocational education and further experiences that promote students' cultural awareness, particularly music and drama
- monitor individual education plans to ensure that all targets are precise and measurable and are accompanied by strategies to help students achieve their goals
- ensure that all students are aware of their personal targets and are given regular feedback about how to improve.

# Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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## The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs		✓		
How well students make progress in their learning		✓		

## Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of students	✓			

## Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students	✓			
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## School details

Name of school	St Andrew's School		
DCSF number	928/6071		
Unique reference number	135785		
Type of school	Special – behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; autistic spectrum disorders, and moderate learning difficulties.		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	30 January 2009		
Age range of students	13-19		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 61	Girls: 34	Total: 95
Number on roll (part-time students)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 18	Girls: 14	Total: 32
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 9	Girls: 12	Total: 21
Annual fees (day students)	£ Nil		
Address of school	St Andrew's Healthcare Lowther Adolescent Services Billing Road Northampton NN1 5DG		
Telephone number	01604 614331		
Fax number	01604 614362		
Email address	rwalker2@standrew.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Richard James Walker		
Proprietor	Professor Philip Sugarman		
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge		
Dates of inspection	19-20 January 2010		