

St Joseph's School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	John Chivers
Type of Inspection	Key

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

St Joseph's is owned by the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Arundel and Brighton and the Diocesan Trustees and the Trustees of the school. The school is a state non maintained residential special school specialising in language and communication disorders. The school has evolved in more recent years to encompass a wide range of learners who have from Mild Learning Disabilities to Severe Learning Disabilities. In addition to this the remit of language and communication has come to embrace an ever increasing number of learners with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. The age range is five to 19 years in key stage groups. Key Stage 5 often has a new and separate intake in addition to the existing learners who have come up through the school. Traditionally the more able learners at year 11 will be placed within their local authority provision if they are able to access the local community colleges.

The school provides a very caring and supportive service where learners are encouraged to achieve in a safe, homely and stimulating environment.

Summary

The inspection was a 'key' inspection and announced.

All of the key standards in the sections Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution, Economic Wellbeing and Organisation of National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools were inspected on this occasion. The five recommendations made at the last inspection were found to have been met and only one recommendation is made as a result of this inspection. The boarding section of the school is organised and managed to a high standard and affords an equal standard of care to the resident learners. There is full regard for the promotion of equality and diversity within all aspects of the school's operation which is underpinned by the management's and staff's commitment in this area.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered manager was asked to amend the complaints procedure to show the Ofsted contact details, expand the learners' individual fire risk assessments, review the provision of individualised support for learners, identifying areas that may require specialist staff training, ensure better consistency and accuracy regarding learners' records and keep a record of any restrictions on contact learners may have with parents, family and friends.

The complaints procedure has now been amended to show the contact details of Ofsted which will provide the reader with more up to date information should they wish to complain to Ofsted. Individual learners' fire evacuation risk assessments are now in place which give staff clearer guidance in the event of a fire evacuation. The provision of individual support to learners has been reviewed and appropriate training or specialist support obtained as appropriate which will ensure a higher standard of care for the learners concerned. Learners' records are now more consistently kept and accurate which will provide staff with greater clarity of information when delivering care to the learners. Any restrictions on contact between learners, their parents,

family and friends are now recorded which will give staff and others concerned better clarity and understanding of learners' individual contact arrangements.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a clear and positive regard for health and medical matters concerning the learners and ensures that such areas are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Catering is of a high standard and the school's menu affords a balanced, healthy and nutritious diet, where any special religious, cultural or preferential diets are catered for. Questionnaires received from parents show very positive comments regarding the school's health and medical care arrangements.

The school has comprehensive policies and procedures covering learners' health care and medication administration, storage and disposal arrangements. The two school nurses are responsible for learners' health and medical care and both have current registration 'pin' numbers which are renewable annually from the Royal Nursing and Midwifery Council. A local GP is available to the school and visits each Thursday. There are clear and detailed health and medical histories held on individual learners and height and weight measurements are taken twice a year and are recorded. Parental consent forms regarding first aid and medical treatment are also in evidence on learners' files. Care staff support the school's health care curriculum and advise learners on aspects of healthy living and encourage and engage them in a range of physical activities and exercise which assists learners to develop coordination and general fitness. There is a range of specialist medical professional input in appropriate learners' care and reports and correspondence from these specialists are held. Care staff are knowledgeable regarding appropriate learners' conditions and the care and treatment they require. Each learner has a comprehensive and detailed health and medical care written risk assessment which is regularly monitored and reviewed. Medication is securely held in locked metal cabinets in the school surgery which is organised and managed to a high standard. Controlled drugs are kept, administered and recorded appropriately. There is a clear and diligent record of medication being brought into the school and of being disposed of via returning it to parents or the local pharmacy. Records show that care staff receive training in first aid, epilepsy and medication administration. Refresher training in this area is scheduled in the very near future.

The school's menu provides for a balanced, varied and nutritious diet and the catering section has been awarded the 'Food for Life' Silver Award, which they hope to progress to a gold award in the near future. The lunch time meal is taken in the main dining room and breakfast and the evening meal are taken in the individual house units. The meals provided are of excellent quality, plentiful and well presented. Learners assist in the purchasing of some provisions and in the preparation of some meals as part of their independence and life skills training. Some learners prepared and cooked pizzas during the inspection, an activity which they clearly enjoyed and were proud in achieving. There is regard for ethnic catering with food theme nights being held and where parents from ethnic minority backgrounds may prepare certain ethnic meals. There is a current Environmental Health Department (food hygiene) certificate and appropriate staff have current food hygiene training. Provisions are safely and correctly stored and freezer and refrigerator temperatures are taken and recorded. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene in the kitchen and provision storage areas are high.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a clear policy and procedure regarding privacy, confidentiality and intimate and personal care. Learners are treated with dignity and respected and have their personal and intimate needs met in a caring and sensitive manner. There are telephones available for learners' use, without reference to staff, which have a range of learners' help and advice contact telephone numbers displayed in the private telephone booths. Learners have their own lockable cabinets where they can keep any valued or treasured possessions. The importance of confidentiality is reinforced to staff at their induction and all confidential and sensitive information is securely held in locked drawers and cabinets within locked offices. Toilet and bathing facilities afford good privacy.

The school has a comprehensive complaints policy and procedure and a simplified pictorial version is available for the learners. A staff whistle-blowing policy is also held. Staff receive training in the complaints procedure during in-set staff training days. There is a range of complaint related information displayed around the school. The school's complaints book shows that only one complaint has been received since the last inspection. The record is detailed and evidences thorough investigation, action taken and an outcome. Parents revealed no complaints or concerns via their questionnaires and learners raised nor indicated any complaints or concerns during discussion and contact with the inspector. Ofsted has received no complaints about the school. The school takes any complaint seriously and allows parents, learners and significant others unrestricted access to the appropriate procedures.

The school has comprehensive child protection policies and procedures which are accessible to staff. In addition the Surrey County Council Multi Agency Safeguarding procedures are also held. The school has two Child Protection Liaison Officers 'CPOs'. Staff are trained in child protection and are due to attend further training in the near future. The head of residential services and head of care said there are no current or ongoing child protection issues at the school. Learners are taught about personal safety as part of the school curriculum and such areas are reinforced by care staff in pastoral time. Parents raise no issues via their questionnaires in this area and learners also raise no concerns, saying they feel safe and well cared for in their environment. Staff are aware and alert to such issues and take their child protection and safeguarding responsibilities seriously.

There is an anti bullying and inclusion policy and procedure and information regarding such issues is prominently displayed around the school. Bullying is not a current issue in the school, though a minority said via their questionnaires that some minor matters have occurred in the past; however, they were clear that these were promptly dealt with by staff. Parents raise no issues via their questionnaires. Learners integrate harmoniously and get on well with each other. No bullying or intimidating behaviour is evident and the diligent supervision and care arrangements employed by staff and the homely and caring atmosphere maintained in the boarding units helps reduce the likelihood of bullying occurring.

The school has a clear policy and procedure regarding learners who are absent without authority. Occasionally a minority of learners have broken school bounds but only for very short periods; however, there have been no absconders from the school. The positive and friendly atmosphere maintained in the boarding units also helps to reduce the likelihood of learners becoming absent without authority.

The school has a detailed behaviour management policy and procedure and follows the 'Team Teach' method of behaviour management which is a recognised and approved system used in residential schools and children's residential settings. All staff are trained in behaviour management and such training is updated annually. The school uses a positive reinforcement programme where learners are awarded 'stickers' for good conduct and behavioural achievements to enable them to obtain privileged items or outings to various venues. Sanctions are not used in the pastoral section and any misdemeanours are generally dealt with by verbal reprimand and disapproval. Acceptable behaviour and control is maintained by establishing and maintaining good working and professional relationships with learners who respond to such methods effectively. Staff are committed to the learners achieving good conduct and interact, engage and communicate with them positively. Learners have behavioural/residential targets which staff monitor and review on a regular basis. All of the current learners are within the school's remit in terms of behaviour management and control and no behavioural issues arose in pastoral time during the inspection. Learners appear relaxed and at ease in their environment and adhere to the rules and routines of the boarding section appropriately. There is a clear physical intervention and restraint policy and restraint records show that incidents of restraint are rarely used in pastoral time. Restraint episodes can be cross referenced with learners' incident reports. Such records are monitored and signed by the school management and further scrutinised at the Standard 33 (half term) visits. Any restraint used is implemented in a caring, sensitive and non aggressive manner with staff speaking calmly and reassuringly to learners throughout an incident. The school has a commendable standard of behaviour management.

The school has a health and safety policy and procedure and the 'health and safety law' poster is prominently displayed. There is a current fire risk assessment and fire evacuation drills and fire alarm tests occur on a regular basis. There is evidence of current servicing of the school's fire prevention system and fire extinguishers. Staff receive fire awareness training and quarterly fire audits occur. Each learner has an individual written fire risk assessment and a wide range of generic risk assessments are held and reviewed on an ongoing basis. There are current utility safety test certificates regarding gas, mains electricity, portable electrical appliances, Legionella, and an asbestos report. Hazardous substances are appropriately stored and staff are trained in moving and handling. Hot water temperatures are taken and recorded. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the boarding areas and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed. The school takes positive steps to keep learners, staff and visitors safe from the inherent risk of fire and other potential safety hazards.

The school's staff recruitment policy is currently being reviewed. Samples of files of staff appointed since the last inspection evidence sound and thorough recruitment and vetting procedures with all required information held, including two written references and checks via the Criminal Records Bureau at enhanced level. The school's arrangements in this area help ensure that only suitable staff are employed to look after the learners.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school has full regard for learners' education and learning and clearly encourages and enables them to achieve. There is a high level of support provided by the care staff and inputs from other professionals as appropriate.

Statements of special needs and individual education plans are held in learners' files. The education plans are thorough and cover a range of areas and include targets and evaluation. There is evidence of the education plans being reviewed on a regular basis with comprehensive review notes also held. There is a range of reports and correspondence from relevant professionals such as the speech and language therapist and occupational therapist. Care staff support learners in education, learning and play and leisure activities and encourage and engage them in both sedentary and physically active pastimes. The school also has a prayer room where members of different faiths may pray and worship, and involves learners in cultural and ethnic theme nights and learning regarding equality and diversity issues. There are excellent relationships between care and teaching staff with two staff handovers being held daily attended by both professions. There is much evidence of learners' achievements displayed throughout the school regarding written work, art and craft work and other accomplishments. A wide range of photographs are also displayed showing involvement in many activities and excursions which learners clearly enjoy. Learners also write up their own achievements in their 'Every Child Matters File'. There is a strong emphasis on placing older learners in work experience and the school has established many contacts with local employers covering a range of industries and work areas. The school has also received the 'Autism Accreditation Award'.

Each learner is allocated a link worker who is responsible for liaison work with parents, teachers and other professionals, though other staff may perform such tasks if the link worker is not available. Link workers make a valuable contribution to the 'holistic' care of learners and meet with them on a regular basis to discuss and monitor progress or issues. Care staff have excellent working relationships with learners and provide close support in a range of areas. Care staff also carry out their duties with good humour and banter which is appreciated and well received by learners. Learners have 'Residential Targets' which are evaluated and reviewed each half term. A range of other professionals also support the learners as appropriate and reports and correspondence from them are held on learners' individual files. The pastoral section is also involved in outreach work with families which reinforces the holistic care package provided.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school has full regard for consulting with learners and their parents and provides a range of forums where this can be achieved. There are clear admissions criteria and effective arrangements are in place regarding learners' transition into other environments, further educational settings or returning home.

The school has a range of forums where learners can express their views, opinions and exercise choice. This may be through one to one discussion with staff or via communal meetings where written minutes are taken. A range of non verbal communication methods are also employed as appropriate. Learners may attend their annual reviews and also make a verbal or written contribution. There is regular communication with parents where their views are sought and opinions gained. Parents comment favourably on the level of communication between the school and themselves and the helpful and cooperative conduct of staff.

The school has a clear admissions policy and criteria. Initial enquiries are made, followed by a formal application and a multi disciplinary meeting. Following an interview, a familiarisation visit may occur followed by a trial period prior to full admission. The school has sound transition and discharge arrangements and liaises with employers, colleges and organisations such as

'Connexions'. Older learners are placed on an independence training programme where they learn basic life and domestic skills. The school's work experience programme also provides learners with excellent opportunities to gain knowledge and skills in an adult environment and help equip them for life after school.

Each learner has a statement of educational needs and an individual education plan which acts as a placement/care plan and shows evidence of regular monitoring and review and is detailed more fully in Standard 12 above.

Any contact that learners have with their parents or significant others is clearly recorded and any restrictions agreed on contact is detailed in the learners' individual files.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Learners are well presented in age/fashion appropriate clothes and have a range of personal requisites in their bedrooms. Parents provide pocket money which is securely held by staff and issued to learners on request. Pocket money records listing income, expenditure and the balance are available.

Preparation for transition and leaving the school are sound and are detailed more fully in Standard 11 above.

The five boarding units, including a large detached house positioned off site have communal and private space areas which are decorated and furnished to a good standard and are well maintained. All areas are warm and comfortable and provide a homely environment for the learners. Play and activity areas are well equipped with a range of play equipment, books, games and materials, some of which depict positive images of ethnic minority groups and cultures. Such material is also available in the school library. Learners' bedrooms are decorated and furnished to an equal standard as the communal areas and have been personalised to varying degrees by their occupants. Some are personalised to an excellent standard evidencing interest in subject matter and pride in preparation and presentation of décor and personal items. Toilet and bathing facilities are well equipped and afford good privacy. Learners appear settled and relaxed in their environment and comment positively on their standard of accommodation.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding with the school having full regard for such issues in all aspects of its operation.

The boarding section of the school is organised and managed to a high standard and affords an equal standard of care to the resident learners.

The school has a comprehensive Statement of Purpose and a detailed prospectus and statement on flexible boarding. These documents contain information on equal opportunities and diversity, are informative and accurately describe the services and facilities provided. The documents are reviewed annually, updated where appropriate and are available to parents, learners and significant others.

The school has a comprehensive staff policy which clearly lists staff responsibilities, expectations and accountabilities. The school's staff duty roster is available and gives a clear account of staff on duty and duty times worked. The boarding section is appropriately staffed during the day and night time and senior staff are always on call during the evenings and weekends. The majority of staff have substantial experience of working with learners with disabilities and less experienced staff are closely supervised by their more experienced colleagues and boarding management. The boarding management team hold appropriate professional qualifications and lead the care staff team in a competent, and consistent way, facilitating clear lines of communication and accountability and providing strong leadership, direction and guidance. Staff comment very positively on the school management and ethos and are very supportive and appreciative of their input. Staff work in a professional and committed manner and have the necessary skills, experience and competence to meet the needs of the learners and enable the school to achieve its aims and objectives. Most care staff hold the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3 and the remainder of staff are either currently undertaking such training or awaiting enrolment onto the course. Both internal and external training is active with staff attending a wide range of appropriate courses organised by the school. The school is member of the 'Train to Gain' arrangements at a local college. All staff have a training and development plan which lists courses attended and scheduled future training. Individual formal staff supervision occurs at least every half term with new staff receiving supervision every two weeks. Written notes of staff supervision are available and staff may also receive informal supervision on a more frequent basis. Staff appraisals occur on an annual basis. Staff are clear that the school has full regard for equal opportunity and equality and diversity issues and that no discriminatory attitudes or practices exist within the service.

The boarding management team closely monitor and scrutinise the activities and conduct of the pastoral section and sign appropriate records. There is also a check list for monitoring purposes which covers 30 separate headings. The organisation conducts Standard 33 (half term) visits; however there is a shortfall in the frequency of such visits which do not evidence consistent half term inspections, nor do they cover all areas required by Standard 33.3 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, in the Standard 33 visit reports. The school is currently developing questionnaires for parents and learners which will assist them in their internal quality assurance systems. The school has a current annual development plan and holds a current insurance liability certificate. Parents' questionnaires reveal very positive comments and all round praise for the staff and service provided.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the organisation responsible for the school is reminded to undertake and conduct Standard 33 (half term) visits at the frequency required by Standard 33 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools and that the records referred to in Standard 33.3 are evidenced as having been inspected in the Standard 33 visit report. (NMS 33)