

St Joseph's Specialist School and College

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	John Chivers
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	St. Joseph's Specialist School and College Amlets Lane CRANLEIGH Surrey GU6 7DH
Telephone number	01483 272449
Email	office@st-josephscranleigh.surrey.sch.uk
Registered person	Arundel & Brighton Diocesan Trust
Head of care	Mary Fawcett
Head / Principal	Alan Day
Date of last inspection	4 February 2009

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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 Specialist School and College is owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. The school is a non maintained Residential Special School specialising in learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Severe Learning Disabilities, Moderate Learning Disabilities and Speech, Language and communication difficulties. The school has specialist status in Communication and Interaction.

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 existing learners who have come up through the school. Traditionally the more able learners at year 11 will be placed within 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

This was an announced inspection. All of the key standards in the sections being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic wellbeing and organisation were assessed. The school is organised and managed to a high standard and affords an equal standard of care and support to the resident learners, having full regard for equality and diversity issues throughout all aspects of its operation. The one recommendation set at the last inspection was found not to have been fully met and a further recommendation regarding this is made.

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 organisation responsible for the school were asked to ensure that standard 33 visits and reports occur and are submitted each half term. This has not been fully addressed in that whilst visits have occurred reports have not been submitted following all visits and a further recommendation is made in this area.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school has full regard for health and medical matters concerning the learners and ensures these areas are monitored and reviewed as appropriate. Learners have a healthy diet and are encouraged to live healthy life styles. The school clearly recognises the importance for learners of a good diet and has awards regarding their achievements and efforts in these areas.

The school has a range of health and medical related policies and procedures which are reviewed on a regular basis and updated as appropriate. There are two school nurses who are responsible for the school health and medical care arrangements. Both have current pin numbers. Learners have comprehensive health and medical histories detailed on their individual admission forms and signed parental consent forms regarding medical and emergency treatment are also held. A local general practitioner is available to the school and visits once a week. Medication administration records are clear and show consistent recording. The school surgery is organised

and managed to a high standard with medication securely held in locked metal cabinets and additional secure provision for controlled drugs. Old or discarded medication is returned to the pharmacy for disposal. Medication to be used 'off site' is held in individual bags and risk assessments for this practice are held. Staff are trained in medication administration, first aid, epilepsy and other special conditions. Learners are encouraged to take part in physical exercise and lead healthy life styles and care staff reinforce the school's curriculum in these areas during boarding time.

Learners benefit from a balanced and varied diet and any special medical, cultural or preferential diets are catered for. The school was the first residential special school in the country to receive the 'food for life' silver award in July 2009 and is currently working toward the 'gold' award. The school grows its own produce with learners being actively involved in gardening activities. The meals provided are of very good quality, plentiful and well presented. Meal times are a well ordered social occasion with both learners and staff enjoying the meals provided. Learners help to prepare meals and cook as part of their independence training and life skills programmes. Learners take pride in their achievements regarding food preparation. There is a food hygiene inspection report from the local Environmental Health Department which raises no issues. Staff are trained in food hygiene.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Learners live in a safe environment. The school takes its responsibilities regarding learners' safety and wellbeing seriously and ensures rigorous systems are in place in order to protect and promote their welfare.

Learners benefit from the school's arrangements regarding privacy and confidentiality and are reassured by staff commitment in this area affording them dignity and respect and keeping appropriate information about them as confidential. The school has a policy and procedure regarding privacy and confidentiality. Telephones are available for learners to make and receive telephone call without reference to staff. Confidential records are securely held in locked cabinets and drawers within locked offices and staff are aware of the importance of confidentiality. Toilet and bathing facilities afford privacy and learners have their personal and intimate care needs caringly and sensitively met by staff.

Learners and their parents have unrestricted access to the school's complaints procedure and are confident any complaints are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. The school's complaints procedure is available and a simplified pictorial version is held for the learners. There is a list of help and advice lines that learners may contact should they wish to refer a complaint externally. They also have access to an independent visitor. The complaints procedure is reinforced to staff at induction and periodically at team meetings. The school's complaint book shows that one complaint has been received since the last inspection. Recording is clear and shows action taken and an outcome. There is also a 'racist' incident book where action taken includes letters of apology being sent to the victim by the perpetrator. Learners and their parents raise no complaints or concerns via discussion or by their questionnaires.

Staff are committed to keeping learners safe and have full regard for their protection and wellbeing. The school has a comprehensive internal child protection policy and procedure and related guidance in this area for staff. The school also holds the county council multi agency 'safeguarding' procedures. Staff receive child protection training at induction and further

refresher training is held periodically. Any child protection issues are diligently recorded and appropriate notifications made; however currently there are no child protection or safeguarding issues regarding the boarding section of the school. Learners are closely supervised and learn about aspects of their personal safety via the school's curriculum which is reinforced by care staff in boarding time. The local community police officer and fire officer also visit the school and talks to the learners about 'staying safe'. Learners and their parents raise no issues regarding child protection or safeguarding via their questionnaires of discussion.

Learners are closely supervised and this coupled with the homely and caring atmosphere maintained helps reduce the likelihood of bullying occurring. There is a clear anti bullying policy and anti bullying notices and posters are displayed in pictorial form. Any bullying incidents are recorded which includes action taken and the effectiveness of such action. Learners and their parents raise no issues in this area and no significant matters regarding bullying or intimidating behaviour are currently evident.

The school has a detailed policy and procedure regarding missing persons; however no unauthorised absences from the boarding provision have occurred.

The school has a comprehensive behaviour management and inclusion support policy and follows a recognised system of behaviour management. Learners benefit from a behaviour management approach based on sound professional and working relationships between staff and learners, positive reinforcement, inclusion and praise. Incidents of physical restraint are clearly recorded and appear necessary and appropriate in the circumstances described in the records. The school rarely uses sanctions and relies mainly on verbal encouragement, distraction and disapproval when addressing such behaviour. There are excellent relationships between staff and learners and their behaviour is very well managed with learners responding positively to staff requests and instructions. Any incidents of difficult or challenging behaviour are well managed and appropriate steps taken should extreme behaviour occur. Learners interact well with each other.

The school takes positive steps to ensure learners, staff and visitors are safe from the inherent risk of fire and other potential safety hazards and enables them to live in a safe environment, which is monitored for such hazards on a regular basis. The school has a health and safety policy and procedure and the health and the employer's safety 'law' poster is displayed. There is a health and safety committee that meets each half term and minutes of such meetings are held. The school has a current fire risk assessment and fire evacuation drills and fire equipment tests occur on a regular basis. Staff receive training in fire awareness and health and safety at induction. Learners have individual fire risk assessments. There are a range of generic risk assessments which are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. The school has current utility safety test certificates available. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are good throughout the boarding areas and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed.

The school has a staff recruitment policy and an equal opportunities 'recruitment' policy statement. The school's recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and sound and staff personnel files hold all required information including two written references and checks via the Criminal Records Bureau at enhanced level. The school's arrangements in this area helps to 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 boarding section has full regard for learners education and learning and care staff are highly committed to the welfare of each learner, providing care and support to a high standard. Care staff are proactive at promoting learners' education and learning in boarding time. They provide sound encouragement and stimulation in a wide range of extra curricular activities. Learners are involved in charity work raising money for tents, equipment and provisions which are sent to disaster areas around the world, which helps to enrich their awareness of disadvantage and diversity regarding people, places and circumstances around the world. Learners' work and achievements are displayed throughout the school and observations evidence learners participating and wholly enjoying involvement in creative and purposeful pursuits. There is sound liaison between teaching staff and care staff with handover meetings being held twice a day where full information exchange and updates on learners' progress and issues are discussed between the two professions. There is ample space for home work and holistic learning within the boarding areas and classroom provision.

Care staff are enthusiastic and committed to the welfare of the learners and provide a high level of individual support which enables them to feel secure and helps develop their potential in a range of areas. Learners are allocated link carers who are responsible for a range of liaison, administrative, recording and relationship and support work within the pastoral provision at the school. Learners have care plans, action plans, behaviour management inclusion support plans and residential targets. Each learner has a comprehensive individual risk assessment which is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Learners also have an 'every child matters' file which covers the five outcome areas of the topic and is themed at certain times throughout the school term. In addition internal and external support from a range of professionals is used as appropriate. Learners also have access to an independent visitor. Staff use a range of communication forums including verbal and signing and makaton communication.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a range of forums where learners can communicate their views, opinions and exercise choice which includes one-to-one discussion with link carers and other staff, the school council and boarding house meetings. The school also has an 'ideal ideas' group which contributes suggestions and ideas to the school community. Learners are observed to be afforded choice in day-to-day matters that affect them and some also have a choice of joining in the 'Cultural Olympiad' which is to be staged in the near future. Learners said that staff listen to what they have to say and carry appropriate views and opinions forward.

The school has a clear admissions criteria and procedure which includes an initial referral, referral meetings involving the school, other relevant professionals and parents. Familiarisation visits are arranged prior to admission. The admission criteria and process helps to ensure that only learners suited to the school's curriculum and boarding service are accepted for a placement. Learners have clear transition plans when moving internally from key stage to key stage and older learners are prepared to leave the school by participating in independence and life skills training programmes. The school is also proactive at enabling learners to attend work experience and sound links with local employers are established. Photographs of learners on work experience placements are held on file of which learners are proud of. The school clearly recognises the

importance of developing work experience for the learners and their efforts regarding this are commendable.

Learners have statements of special educational needs and individual education plans. There are detailed education assessments and education and residential boarding reports are held in learners' individual files. Statutory reviews take place at the required time scales and care staff make a significant written contribution to review reports detailing progress and issues alike. Learners' progress is clearly monitored and recorded which provides care staff with up to date information regarding learners' educational and pastoral progress.

Any contact that learners have with their parents or significant others is clearly recorded.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Learners are well presented in age and fashion appropriate clothes, which parents supply, and have access to personal requisites and toiletries. Parents supply pocket money which is held in safekeeping by staff. Clear and accurate records of monetary transactions are kept.

Learners have transition plans and independence training programmes which have been detailed previously in this report which show sound preparation regarding transition or moving on.

Communal areas provide adequate space for the learners and have a good range of equipment and facilities. All communal areas are decorated and furnished to a good standard, are homely and comfortable. Most areas are bright and cheerful and have pictures, posters and photographs displayed. Learners are at ease in their surroundings and said they are satisfied with the standard of accommodation provided. Learners' bedrooms are single and shared occupancy and are decorated and furnished to an equal standard as the communal areas. Learners' bedrooms are personalised to varying degrees by their occupants and all areas of the boarding areas are well maintained. Toilet and bathing facilities are of a good standard and afford adequate privacy. Some bathrooms have specialist equipment such as grab rails and hoists etc. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are good and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The boarding section of the school is organised and managed to a high standard which enables an excellent standard of care and support to be afforded to the learners.

The school has a detailed and attractive prospectus which includes a clear mission statement, aims and objectives, a section on boarding provision and an equal opportunities statement. The prospectus and boarding information accurately describes the facilities and services provided.

The boarding section is adequately staffed and comprises a workforce of both genders which includes staff from ethnic minority groups. The boarding provision has a high staff learner ratio. The staff duty roster is available and gives a clear account of staff on duty and duty times worked. There is sufficient staff cover with a member of staff on sleeping in duty in each boarding house with senior staff on call. The boarding management team are qualified or

working towards a recognised qualification and have substantial experience of working with and managing services for children with special needs. Most staff hold the National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 and some hold the National Vocational Qualification at Level 4. Most staff are experienced in the work and provide good supervision and support to their less experienced colleagues. The staff team have sufficient qualifications, skills, experience and competence to meet the needs of the learners and enable the boarding section to achieve its aims and objectives.

Staff receive regular formal supervision and written notes of supervision meetings are held. Staff training is proactive and staff confirm the school's commitment in the area of supervision and training. Staff are appraised annually and appraisal reports are available. There is sound communication between staff with handovers being held twice a day and boarding staff team meetings held weekly. Staff team leaders also meet weekly and senior team leaders meet each half term. Staff are supportive of the school's management and ethos and appreciate the management's inclusive and 'open door' policy. Staff are clear that the school has full regard for equal opportunities and equality and diversity issues and that no discriminatory attitudes or practices exist within the service.

The senior staff team monitor the conduct of the school and sign key records as part of the internal quality assurance process. Standard 33 (half termly) visits occur; however two reports on the visits were not completed. Whilst this area was identified as a shortfall at the last inspection, this still does not detract from the high standard of management and practice within the boarding service, though a further recommendation regarding this is made. Questionnaires are also received from parents and learners in order to secure their views and opinions regarding the boarding provision. The school has sound internal quality assurance mechanisms and senior staff are committed to consistency regarding this practice, though the governing body have not fully met their responsibilities in this area. The school has a current insurance liability certificate which complies with its statutory responsibilities as an employer and service provider.

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 governing body of the school are clear regarding fully meeting their responsibilities by submitting a report following each Standard 33 visit. (NMS 33)