

St Joseph's Specialist School and College

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	John Chivers
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Setting address	St. Josephs specialist School and College, Amlets Lane, CRANLEIGH, Surrey, GU6 7DH
Telephone number	01483 272449
Email	office@stjosephscranleigh.surrey.sch.uk
Registered person	Arundel & Brighton Diocesan Trust
Head/ Principal	
Nominated person	Mary Fawcett
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 under the trusteeship of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. The school is a non-maintained residential special school specialising in children and young people with autistic spectrum disorder, severe learning disabilities, moderate learning disabilities and speech, language and communication difficulties. The school has specialist status in 'communication and interaction' and is an accredited Autism Specialist School by the DfE and the National Autistic Society.

The children and young people attending the school are from 5 years to 19 years in key stage groups.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

The inspection was a full inspection and announced. All of the 'key' standards of the national minimum standard for residential special schools were assessed. There were no recommendations to follow up from the last inspection and there are no recommendations as a result of this inspection.

The boarding section at the school is organised and managed to a high professional standard and affords an equally high professional standard of care and support to the children and young people, having full regard for equality and diversity throughout all aspects of its operation. There were 38 children and young people resident at the time of the inspection, a number of who took an active part in the inspection process via discussion, consultation and returning completed questionnaires.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations as a result of the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people benefit from diligent health and medical care from staff that are appropriately trained in a range of health care and medical practices. All children and young people have access to a local general practice and visits to health and medical professionals are clearly recorded. Children and young people have detailed medical histories on file and comprehensive health care files are held. All

health and medical care is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Signed parental consent for emergency medical treatment is held. There are detailed and informative health and medical risk assessments. Children and young people are encouraged to live active and healthy life styles and take part in a range of physical and sedentary activities that help develop their movements, coordination and stimulate them intellectually. Medication is administered in a caring, sensitive and reassuring manner and children and young people said their health care needs are well met. Medication administration records are clearly recorded and medication is securely held in locked cabinets within the school surgery and within each residential group. Old or discarded medication is returned to parents or the pharmacy for disposal. The school nurse's organise and manage the school surgery to a high standard and children and young people enjoy the care and attention they receive in surgery time.

Children and young people enjoy a balanced and healthy diet and any special medical, cultural or preferential diets are catered for. Children and young people may also help to shop for provisions and prepare meals as part of their social and independence training. Meals are of very good quality, well presented and plentiful. Meal times are a well-ordered social occasion. The school's catering arrangements meet the standards of the local environmental health department, having received the highest (five star) award at the last inspection. All staff are trained in food hygiene. Children and young people said the food is always good and they have plenty of choice.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are aware of the importance of confidentiality and confidential records are securely held in locked cabinets with locked offices. Children and young people confirm that staff treat them with dignity and respect their privacy. There are telephones available for children and young people use without reference to staff and there is ample space where children and young people can receive appropriate visitors in private. Toilet and bathing facilities afford good privacy.

Children and young people and their parents have unrestricted access to the school's complaints procedures and a range of external help and advice lines including the school's independent visitor are displayed. Complaints are clearly recorded and show action taken and an outcome. Children and young people said they have no current complaints or concerns about the service. This view is also clearly reflected in parents' questionnaires; their comments are very complementary about the standard of care and support the school provides.

Children and young people are protected from harm and abuse by staff that are well trained in child protection and who are aware and alert to safeguarding issues. Children and young people benefit from close supervision and care staff reinforce the school's education curriculum regarding their personal safety in boarding time. Children and young people said they feel safe in school and that staff have full

regard for their protection and welfare. There are no current or on-going child protection or safeguarding issues regarding the boarding section of the school.

Children and young people are clear that bullying is not an issue in the school and that staff are alert to such behaviour and promptly challenge problems when they do arise. The close supervision arrangements coupled with the homely, supportive and caring ethos helps to reduce the likelihood of bullying becoming a significant problem. There is a detailed missing people procedure; however no unauthorised absences have occurred.

Children and young people behaviour is very well managed by staff that are appropriately trained in behaviour management and who work with children and young people in a committed, patient and resilient manner. Challenging and aggressive behaviour is handled in a caring, sensitive and reassuring way. Staff have positive relationships with children and young people and interact and engage them appropriately. Children and young people benefit from staff who have an excellent understanding of their backgrounds, conditions and special needs. Formal sanctions are not used and staff use distraction, disapproval and diversion as a means of dealing with unacceptable behaviour. A system of restorative justice is used with more able children and young people. Any restraint used is clearly recorded. Children and young people said the standard of discipline is fair.

The school takes positive steps to keep children and young people, staff and visitors safe from the inherent risks of fire and other potential safety hazards. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the school and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed.

The school's staff recruitment policy has full regard for equal opportunities throughout its recruitment process. The school's recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and staff personnel files hold all required details, including two written references and enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks. The school's recruitment arrangements help to ensure only suitable staff are employed to look after the children and young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people enjoy a comprehensive extra-curricula programme, including physical and sedentary pastimes, that extends their knowledge and skills in addition to receiving enjoyment from participation. Children and young people are encouraged in community involvement and attend a range of clubs and organisations. They also learn about equality and diversity via themed activities on different countries and cultures. They develop social awareness via fund raising activities for developing countries and disaster areas throughout the world. Children and young people benefit from having comprehensive individual education plans that are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Children and young people said the care staff have full regard for their education and learning.

Children and young people are afforded a high level of care and support from a committed, professional and competent care staff team. There is an effective link worker system where children and young people's progress is monitored, reviewed and targets set. Comprehensive link worker records are kept that keeps staff and children and young people informed of progress or issues. There is also access to in-house therapists, external specialists and the school's independent visitor. Children and young people said they appreciate the high level of inputs from their link workers and care staff and that they are always available to them. Parents views confirm the high professional standards at the school with comments such as, 'My child has had a wonderful experience at St Joseph's and frankly without them I would have personally 'sank', They have made my child reach their full potential. My child is happy there and I never worry. I think they are a totally amazing and wonderful school'. 'We are delighted with our child's boarding arrangements. The staff are of the very highest calibre and have seen my child through difficult times with the utmost sensitivity and the best possible standard of care'. 'Fantastic, best school around- Like winning the lottery- caring and supportive staff'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people are enabled to express their views, opinions and exercise choice via a range of forums including one to one discussion and consultation, committees and group meetings. Questionnaires also form an important component of the school's commitment to exploring and seeking children and young people views. There is a school newsletter and minutes of school council meetings are available in pictorial form for the children and young people. Children and young people confirm their views and opinions are sought, listened to and acted on by staff.

The school has a clear and comprehensive admissions criteria and process that helps to ensure only suitable children and young people are admitted. Children and young people leave the school in a planned way and follow detailed independence, social skills and transition programmes that help prepare them for further education, employment and adult life.

Children and young people have comprehensive assessments and statements of special educational needs. Detailed care plans are in place which are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. The care plans give staff and children and young people a clear picture of future goals, targets, progress and areas for development throughout their stay at the school. Children and young people said they are aware of their future plans and are in agreement with them. Any contact children and young people have with their parents or significant others is clearly recorded.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Parents supply children and young people with pocket money and the school ensures children and young people have individual money handling risk assessments as part of their care plans. Children and young people are well presented in age and fashion appropriate clothes and have access to toiletries and personal requests.

Children and young people live in a safe and very well-maintained environment. Communal areas are decorated and furnished to a very good standard and are homely and comfortable and well equipped. All areas are 'learner-centred' with pictures, posters and photos displayed. Children and young people enjoy and excellent range of facilities and have access to a range of play and activity material. Children and young people's bedrooms are well maintained and personalised by their occupants, most to an excellent standard. Toilet and bathing facilities are of a good standard and afford adequate privacy. The school grounds are spacious and well maintained. Children and young people said they enjoy living in the boarding units and are very satisfied with the standard of accommodation.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children and young people and their parents are given detailed information about the school that accurately describes the service and facilities provided. Such information is kept under regular review and updated as appropriate.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school has full regard for informing and educating children and young people regarding the understanding and acceptance of a range different cultures and individual differences. The boarding section of the school is organised and managed to a high professional standard and affords an equally high professional standard of care and support to the children and young people.

Children and young people receive a high standard of care from a well-trained, supervised and appraised staff team. The staff are sufficient in numbers, gender, experience, skills and competencies to meet the needs of the children and young people and enable the boarding section of the school to achieve its aims and objectives. Staff are fully supportive of the school's management and ethos, regarding them as open, inclusive and approachable. Staff also confirm the schools commitment to equality and diversity and that no discriminatory attitudes or practices exist within the service. There is a detailed annual development plan that includes marketing the service and fundraising. There is a high level of communication between staff with a range of handovers and meetings held on a regular basis. The conduct of the school is closely monitored by senior staff and this is reinforced by half termly Standard 33 visits. Children and young people and parents' questionnaires are also used to inform staff of views and opinions. The

combination of these activities provides robust and effective quality assurance systems. The school has a current insurance liability certificate that complies with the organisation's responsibilities as an employer.