

St Catherine's School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Brian Mcquoid

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

St Catherine's is a non-maintained residential special school approved by the DFES for the education of students aged between seven and 19 who have needs associated with language and speech disorders. The school is situated in Ventnor, a seaside town on the southern coast of the Isle of Wight. There is easy access into town with Ventnor being a short walking distance from the school campus. The residential accommodation is provided in a number of houses spread across the school campus. The children's accommodation is on the St Catherine's school site while accommodation for Further Education students is provided in a number of residential units close to the school.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	good
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the school's residential provision is good. Residential pupils enjoy the experience of boarding and parents report positively on how the school cares for their children. Staff identify very strongly with the school, they are highly committed and proud to work there. Pupils enjoy very positive and constructive relationships with them.
- There is good overall provision for safeguarding the welfare of residential pupils, with some outstanding aspects. Pupils feel safe within the residential provision and there are excellent arrangements for ensuring their safety while out in the local and wider community. Staff are acutely aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and receive appropriate training annually.
- Outcomes for residential pupils at the school are outstanding. They receive high quality care and support and make remarkable progress in their personal and social development. Care staff are part of an integrated team across the school and contribute highly effectively to the progress that pupils make. There are close working relationships with parents and with other professionals involved with pupils.
- There is good leadership and management of the residential provision, which was seen to operate very smoothly on a day to day basis. The care staff team are a very established and highly experienced group. Provision for their learning and development of staff however needs to be reviewed in order to ensure they continue to be able to meet the needs of students being admitted. Monitoring systems are being effectively implemented and the school has a clear commitment to continuing improvement.

- Residential pupils engage in an extensive range of activities that they enjoy and which enhance their personal and social development. There are excellent links with the local and wider community which benefit pupils. The Rotary Club are very actively involved with the school and there are established links with a school in Ghana that is sponsored by St Catherine's. Provision for promoting equality and diversity across the school is excellent.
- Healthcare provision at the school is excellent. Healthy lifestyles are successfully promoted and there are established relationships with external health professionals which benefit pupils. The meals provided are of a high quality and are thoroughly enjoyed by pupils.
- The residential accommodation is of a good standard overall with some provision outstanding. All areas are being well maintained and provide environments well suited for their purpose. Provision to support pupils in developing their independence levels is excellent and benefits pupils greatly.
- The school has successfully addressed the recommendations from the previous report. The residential provision has significant strengths and no weaknesses which have a direct impact on the outcomes for residential pupils. There are five national minimum standards that the school is not fully compliant with.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils at the school are outstanding. They have extremely positive relationships with staff and successfully develop friendships with other pupils. Their confidence improves significantly while at the school and individual pupils told of making remarkable progress since being there. Residential pupils overwhelmingly enjoy their experience of boarding and take full advantage of what is on offer. Taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and school fundraising events are examples. Pupils successfully increase their levels of independence with invaluable support from the care staff team. Crossing the road safely, using public transport, and travelling home to the mainland independently are all examples of objectives successfully achieved by pupils.

The school has exceptional relationships with the local community that benefit pupils greatly. Members of the local Rotary Club were very successfully entertained by pupils during one evening of the inspection, while another group visited an Island police station as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Pupils clearly develop a sense of responsibility while at the school which is enhanced by their community involvement. There is also a strong awareness of the wider community with daily newspapers provided and an active involvement in sponsoring a school in Ghana, to which a school trip took place earlier in the year. Pupils confirmed having a voice within the school. There is an elected school council which pupils reported to operate effectively, house meetings take place regularly and were also seen to provide a forum for pupils to express their views.

The school makes excellent provision for pupils' healthcare and they feel well looked after when they are unwell. A dedicated school nurse provides a highly effective service for pupils and there are excellent working relationships with external health professionals which benefit pupils. Healthy lifestyles are promoted across the school and pupils have a clear awareness of what that entails. They enjoy the meals provided for them which are produced on the premises using almost wholly fresh ingredients.

Residential pupils feel fairly treated by staff and are generally extremely well-behaved. They have a tolerance and respect for others and do not cite bullying as a problem within the boarding houses. They are actively involved in an extensive range of activities which successfully helps them to develop new skills and interests, and provides them with opportunities to succeed. The school has established links with the further education college on the island and the connexions service, both of which contribute effectively to preparing pupils for when they leave the school.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision and the care provided for residential pupils at St Catherine's is outstanding. Arrangements for supporting new pupils are excellent and those spoken to were extremely positive about the process. The care staff team are an established and very experienced group and deliver a high standard of pastoral care to pupils. They perform remarkably effectively as part of an integrated and holistic approach to working with pupils across the school, and this is a real strength. Communication across the school is excellent and collaboration between departments enables the aims and objectives for each individual pupil to be successfully addressed. Individual plans and aims for pupils are highly effectively implemented and support the social, personal, and academic development of residential pupils exceptionally well. Care staff work extremely closely with speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. Residential pupils acquire life skills and dramatically increase their ability to be independent as a result of this relationship. All residential pupils have identified key workers who have clear responsibilities relating to their welfare and who closely monitor their progress against individual aims being worked towards. Pupils attend and contribute to the care planning process and are fully involved and consulted about matters affecting them within the school. They say they are 'listened to' by staff and report that the elected school council operates effectively in their interest. Parents report that their children enjoy boarding and feel strongly that it helps their progress and development. 'The care staff are exceptional and are always approachable, we have a great partnership with them' was one comment received.

The school have excellent provision for promoting the physical and emotional health and well being of pupils and they report being well looked after when they are ill. Healthy lifestyles are actively promoted across the school, with a qualified nurse providing an excellent service and close working relationships with external health professionals benefitting pupils. The health of residential pupils is closely monitored and there are rigorous systems being effectively implemented for the management and administration of medication. Residential pupils participate in an extensive range of purposeful and enjoyable activities which contribute to their personal, social, and educational development. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme is one example of this which was observed in action during the inspection. There are extremely strong links with the local community and pupils regularly raise money for their own school and a school that they sponsor in Ghana. This is a long established relationship and a small number of pupils and staff were able to visit the school earlier in the year. A delightful display within the school celebrates the occasion.

The school's residential provision is a safe, secure, and inclusive environment where individual needs are extremely well catered for and where differences are learnt to be tolerated and respected. The accommodation provided for residential pupils is well suited for its purpose and has some outstanding aspects. Pupils are actively encouraged to look after their environment and personalise their own living areas. Pupils report being able to maintain contact with their families and friends easily and say overwhelmingly that they enjoy boarding. They enjoy the healthy and nutritious meals provided for them, which are of a high quality, and report having plenty to do

in their free time. Boarding is a wholly central aspect of the school's operation with day pupils being remarkably well integrated into the boarding community and frequently staying late or overnight in their allocated boarding house.

Residential pupils' safety

There is good provision at the school for ensuring residential pupils are safe and protected from harm. Recruitment procedures are effectively implemented by appropriately trained staff and help to ensure the suitability of staff employed to work with pupils. The safeguarding of pupils is a priority within the school. The head of care is a designated person with responsibility for child protection and has received training relevant to the role. Care staff have a good awareness of safe working practices and complete child protection refresher training on an annual basis. They are proactive in promoting and protecting the welfare of pupils and effectively implement the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. Pupils feel safe within the residential provision and report that bullying is not a significant problem. Incidents that do occur were seen to be taken seriously and addressed effectively by staff. Parents agree overwhelmingly that the school keeps their children safe.

Residential pupils enjoy positive and constructive relationships with care staff. There is a positive approach to managing behaviour which is successfully implemented and the general behaviour of pupils was seen to be extremely good. Pupils develop friendships while at the school and were seen to display a tolerance and respect for others. They feel fairly treated and have a number of adults they are able to talk to if they are unhappy or have any concerns. Pupil success is duly celebrated and any sanctions imposed were seen to be appropriate and in accordance with school policy. The use of physical interventions within the school is at an extremely low level and staff have been trained in techniques to de-escalate incidents of challenging behaviour. They would however benefit from increased training and support in this area in order to gain a better understanding and be able to manage more complex behaviours effectively. Residential pupils enjoy the experience of boarding and there have been no incidents of any pupil going missing since the last inspection. The residential provision provides a physically safe and secure environment where there are good arrangements for the management of risk. Written risk assessments are regularly reviewed and contribute effectively to the protection of residential pupils. Pupils successfully keep themselves safe and receive excellent support for enabling them to access the community independently and in a safe manner. Established systems ensure all health and safety matters across the school are addressed, however there is a need to have regard to the guidance referred to under national minimum standard 6.2. This shortfall is not having any impact on the safety of residential pupils. Residential pupils are well aware of the fire evacuation procedures and confirm that fire drills take place regularly. All other aspects of fire safety are being satisfactorily addressed.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Boarding is central to the school's operation and there is good leadership and management of the school's residential provision. There are clear aims and objectives for residential pupils which are being successfully translated into practice. Both the school and the further education provision are long established and operate very smoothly on a day to day basis. Dedicated staff teams in each residential house provide sufficient supervision and support for pupils, and form part of a very experienced staff team who are truly committed to what they do and are proud to work at the school. 'It is a privilege to work here' was one comment received from a staff member. Links between the residential and educational settings are excellent and care staff contribute significantly to the achievements of pupils, and to their personal, social and educational development. Involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, in community activities, and in schemes of accreditation such as ASDAN are examples of this. Staffing levels ensure the individual needs of residential pupils are able to be met effectively and policies and procedures in place support and promote good practice across the school. Parents report that they can easily contact staff caring for their children, and that boarding is well organised and managed effectively. Care staff undertake a structured induction upon joining the school and are provided with ongoing training enabling them to provide appropriate safe care and to meet pupils' individual needs. There is a need to ensure that the induction conforms to the requirements of the standards and that the learning and development programme for staff is effective in enabling staff to meet the individual needs of pupils being admitted to the school.

Monitoring systems provide well for ensuring the welfare of residential pupils and the care they receive. The most recent independent monitoring report was very thorough and assessed against all of the new national minimum standards, making recommendations where necessary. Currently there is no report being produced that meets the requirements of national minimum standard 20.4. There is extremely good communication across the school and close working relationships between the care and education settings ensure the close and effective monitoring of individual pupils. Pupils feel they are able to influence events within the school and they are able to express their views openly. They also feel the school council represents their views effectively.

Individual case records for pupils are being stored securely and provide a good overview of a pupil's time spent in the residential provision.

The shortfalls identified under this heading are not considered to be significant weaknesses and do not have a direct impact on outcomes for residential pupils.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- The school has regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State 'Health and Safety: Department for Education Advice on Legal Duties and Powers for Local Authorities, Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies' (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 6.2)
- Staff receive appropriate training and support to recognise and deal with incidences of challenging behaviour or bullying. This training should include assistance in managing staff members' responses and feelings arising from working with children who have emotional difficulties which result in challenging behaviour. Staff training is regularly refreshed. (NMS 12.3)
- New staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction, beginning within 7 working days of starting their employment and completing training within 6 months. (NMS 19.3)
- The learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and is updated if necessary. (NMS 19.4)
- The Head teacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to: - its Statement of Purpose, its staffing policy, the placement plans for individual children; and an internal assessment of its compliance with these Standards. Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school. (NMS 20.4)

What should the school do to improve further?

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



05/10/2011

Students,

Inspection of St Catherine's School

I am the Ofsted inspector who visited your school recently. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit and would like to say a big thank you for making me feel so welcome and for your help during the inspection. I was really pleased to find that you are being so well cared for. Your care staff make sure you are safe at all times and provide you with the individual support that you need. They work very closely with the therapy and education teams and help you to achieve positive outcomes and make great progress. I was particularly impressed with how you develop your ability to be independent. Your school has fantastic links with the local community and I particularly enjoyed the quiz with members of the local Rotary Club. You have a real 'voice' within the school and are able to bring about change. There are lots of opportunities for you to do things that you enjoy doing and I was pleased to see you are able to follow the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. You are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and have excellent support if you are unwell for any reason. The meals provided for you are excellent, your accommodation is good and you are able to keep in regular touch with your families.

Overall I was extremely impressed with the school's boarding arrangements. The care staff do a fantastic job and play a big part in helping you to prepare for the future. I have made a small number of recommendations for the school. These are included in my report which I am sure staff will be only too pleased to share with you. I wish you all the very best for the future, Brian McQuoid.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Mcquoid

Yours sincerely,

Brian Mcquoid

