

# St John's Catholic School for the Deaf

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Sarah Urding
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	22 January 2008

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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. John's School for the Deaf is a registered residential and day school for pupils aged from three to 19 years. The curriculum is based on the National Curriculum and all the teachers are qualified Teachers of the Deaf. Classrooms are acoustically treated and are equipped with group hearing aid systems. The school places great emphasis on developing the spoken language rather than relying on signing. There is an onsite audiology centre and full time audiologist. Pupils are also supported by speech and language therapists and can access a specialist mental health team for deaf children. Accommodation is in groups according to age and gender. Bedroom sizes vary with single rooms, doubles and rooms for four. Each group has at least their own lounge, dining room and kitchen. The majority of boarders are weekly though some stay at the weekends. The school has additional guest accommodation for visitors and a car park. The school's ethos is based on Catholic values, though children of other faiths are welcome.

### **Summary**

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

#### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

SIE-see organisation

#### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is inadequate.

SIE-see organisation

#### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

SIE-see organisation

#### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

SIE-see organisation

#### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

SIE-see organisation

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The quality of the boarding provision is inadequate but has some good and outstanding features. The school meets most of the National Minimum Standards though one shortfall is significant

and compromises the welfare of pupils. Children experience smooth transitions on admission to the school and when moving on. These events are well planned, for example, spending time in a child's former place of learning so that information can be shared and introductory visits to the school. A multi-disciplinary assessment on admission enables clear identification of children's individual needs. However, the resulting plans of care are not fully incorporated in to a single plan, which limits the capacity of care staff to promote learning opportunities beyond the school day. Staff equip students well with life skills and are exceptional in assisting students to manage risk outside the school environment. There are good links with further education colleges and work based projects. Throughout their time in the school, pupils receive outstanding levels of individual support and health care. There are a range of professional networks that promote physical wellbeing and mental health within the school such as audiology, speech therapy, medical support from a school nurse, religious and moral guidance, and support from an independent listener. The school's external networks are equally accessible with strong links to primary health care trusts and York Deaf Child and Family Service. The latter offers counselling, financial advice and a range of social care services for children and their families. Staff are proactive in promoting healthy lifestyles. The school nurse rigorously monitors children's health and medication is safely administered. Pupils are confident that their health will be looked after and feel cared for by staff if they are ill or homesick. Nutritious, well balanced and tasty meals are provided and children's dietary needs are well catered for. Staff inform children well about being healthy, resulting in the school council voting to remove chocolate vending machines throughout the school. Staff are positive role models and encourage children to be active. There are a range of activities to be enjoyed. Child protection, complaints, privacy, behaviour management, anti-bullying, unauthorised absences and health and safety are well defined in policies and procedures, and the practice of staff is accountable and safe. Although the school has yet to plan responses to a range of foreseeable crises. Pupils have devised a list of 'golden rules' to encourage good behaviour, and these reflect the religious and moral ethos of the school. This inclusive approach encourages ownership and responsibility. Relationships with staff are positive and they know the children well. This encourages good behaviour. Children are clear about the rules and are encouraged to aim high because of the positive rewards they receive. Pupils' views of the school included the following comments, 'I love this school', 'the best thing is the teachers' and 'I feel really safe'. The school is inconsistent in how it manages the recruitment of staff. There is a systemic failure in the seeking of references prior to staff starting work, and no evidence to suggest that all of the necessary checks are in place. This includes Criminal Records Bureau checks and verification of references. Staff are not left unsupervised until these checks are in place which reduces risk to an extent. However, the practice is poor and means that children are being introduced to people who have not undergone a full assessment of suitability. The joint arrangements for education and care are well coordinated. Well established communication systems are in place that promote educational attainment. For example, daily handovers, weekly meetings, assessment meetings and annual reviews. The development of a shared network notice board where significant issues can be posted, effectively aids communication between teaching and care staff. Care staff support children well during the school day encouraging a prompt return to lessons following temporary exclusion for disruptive behaviour. However, despite the many opportunities for staff to come together they are not secure in an understanding of each others roles. Staff work in a manner that builds self esteem, confidence and a respect for others. Consultation with and inclusion of pupils and their families in all aspects of school life is outstanding and embedded in practice. There are a number of forums available for pupils to make a positive contribution to their lives and how the school is run, such as one to one meetings with keyworkers, annual reviews, house

meetings and the school council. Staff fully understand how accessible contact with families can serve to reassure and promote children's well being. There are excellent facilities for parents to stay in the school with their children and opportunities created for contact by telephone, web cam and text phone. Parents are fully involved and consulted with in decision making about children's lives. The school is outward looking and promotes equality of opportunity well. Inclusion is promoted by encouraging links with communities on a local, national and global level. This creates opportunities for children in the school and beyond. Managers, staff, pupils and their families share a common understanding of the remit of the school, which is well defined in the school's Statement of Purpose and handbooks. Staff are child centred, committed and positive about their work. They are reflective practitioners and focus on raising outcomes for children. The boarding provision is well staffed and flexibly managed to meet the needs of pupils. Staff are well supported, supervised and trained which assists in the meeting of children's needs. The school is committed to raising standards of care through training, and are near to meeting the 80% target of staff trained to National Vocational Qualification level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People. There is a strong commitment from senior managers to develop and raise standards from within and external scrutiny is welcomed. However, the existing quality assurance systems have failed to identify some shortfalls. There is no case recording policy and as a result case records are inconsistently kept. Patterns relating to safeguarding concerns are not easy to establish because of the manner in which records are held and the lack of overview of action taken in response to concerns raised. More significantly systems have failed to identify unsafe recruitment practice.

## 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 written records are made of any allegation of abuse and of the action taken in response (NMS 5.4)
- ensure the recruitment process includes all elements outlined in standard 27.2, including verification of references and that staff do not start work prior to the receipt of Criminal Records Bureau checks and two written references (NMS 27.2 and NMS 27.7)
- produce a placement plan that includes all aspects of this standard (NMS 17.5)
- provide training to staff to assist their understanding of multi-disciplinary roles within the school (NMS 29.6)
- provide staff with written guidance on procedure and policy as outlined in appendix 3, in particular a case recording policy (NMS 30.7)

- ensure that a minimum of 80% of staff are qualified to NVQ level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People (NMS 31.4)
- ensure planned responses to a range of foreseeable crises (NMS 31.9)
- develop a system whereby child protection issues and recruitment can be effectively monitored (NMS 32.2).