

St Dominic's School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	John Chivers
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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 Dominic's was established in 1929 and was founded by the 'Order of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary', who are currently trustees and governors. The Christian ethos has been maintained to the present day. The school accepts pupils from all denominations and backgrounds. St Dominic's is a non-maintained weekly boarding and day school for boys and girls (aged eight to 16 years) with special needs. These may include autistic spectrum disorder, learning difficulties, speech and language and communication difficulties. Pupils may also be emotionally vulnerable or have motor planning, co-ordination and perceptual difficulties. The boarding pupils are currently accommodated in four separate boarding houses separated by gender and age range. The fifth boarding house is currently not in use due to a reduction in boarding pupil numbers. The range of therapeutic support available to pupils enables them to access a curriculum at an appropriate level and maximise each pupil's potential for achievement.

Summary

The inspection was a key inspection and announced. All of the National Minimum 'key' Standards for Residential Special Schools in the sections Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution, Economic Wellbeing and Organisation were inspected on this occasion. The four recommendations made at the last inspection were found to have been met and four new recommendations are set as a result of this inspection. Despite the current shortfall in senior management arrangements due to sick leave, contingency plans are in place and existing staff are managing the boarding section of the school in a sound and professional manner which affords a good standard of pastoral care to the pupils.

The overall quality rating is good.

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 ensure that staff do not commence duties until all recruitment and vetting checks have been completed; ensure that placement plans and care plans hold all details consistent with Standard 17.5 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools; ensure that suitable supervision arrangements are implemented regarding the head of care and deputy head of care; ensure that a check list is developed regarding the areas to be monitored consistent with Standard 32.2 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. All new staff files evidence full recruitment and vetting checks which will help ensure that only suitable staff are appointed to look after the pupils. Suitable supervision arrangements were set in place regarding the head of care and deputy head of care, however, due to the supervisor being on sick leave an external person has been appointed to fulfil this task which will ensure the senior boarding management team are appropriately supported. Placement plans have now been expanded to cover all required areas which will enhance the all round care package for pupils. A check list has now been developed regarding the areas to be monitored under Standard 32 which will assist in the boarding sections monitoring arrangements.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The school has good regard for health and medical matters concerning the pupils and ensures these areas are monitored and reviewed as appropriate. Pupils who receive medical attention are treated in a caring, professional and sensitive way. The school nurse is responsible for the schools health and medical care arrangements. The nurse has a current 'PIN' registration number. A local doctor visits the school each Tuesday. The school has a sick bay which has three beds for pupils who may fall ill. The school surgery is well organised and the school nurse conducts her duties in a professional and efficient manner. The school has a range of policies and procedures covering health matters such as drugs, smoking, alcohol, intimate care, sexuality and food nutrition and medication administration. Pupil's files hold detailed health and medical histories and signed parental consent for medical and emergency treatment. A range of reports and correspondence from health and medical care professionals are also held where appropriate. Pupils health care is monitored and reviewed and recorded in care plans and review reports. Pupils are taught aspects of healthy living via the school curriculum and such matters are reinforced by care staff in boarding time. Pupils take part in a range of activities which provide physical exercise and assist with physical development and coordination. There is an audit trail of medication received into the school, dispensed and medication remaining. Old or discarded medication is returned to the pharmacy for disposal and a record is kept. Pupils medication administration records show detailed and consistent recording and such records are kept in a well organised manner. Controlled drugs books are held to record the administration of controlled medication. All medication is securely held in locked cabinets which separate prescribed and non prescribed items. Refrigerators are also available to store certain types of medication. Pupils receiving surgery from the school nurse are treated in a caring, reassuring and sensitive way. Staff receive training in first aid and medication administration and epi-pen use. The school has a food committee and has achieved the schools healthy eating award. The school's menu provides for a balanced and nutritious diet and any cultural, religious or special diets are catered for. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and can shop for provisions as part of their basic life skills and independence training programme and prepare some meals themselves under staff supervision. Meals are of good quality, ample portions and well presented. Meal times are a well ordered social occasion with evidence of good verbal communication between pupils and staff. There is a large main kitchen which is well equipped and provisions are safely and correctly stored. Refrigerators and freezers are kept at the required temperatures and a record of temperatures is held. Kitchen and care staff are trained in food hygiene and the Environmental Health Department 'food hygiene' inspection report which evidenced no requirements or recommendations is available.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school takes the protection of pupils seriously and takes active steps to ensure their safety and wellbeing and allows pupils, parents and others unrestricted access to the school's complaint procedures should anyone wish to make a complaint or express concerns. The school has a policy and procedure regarding privacy and confidentiality of which all staff are aware and follow. Telephones are provided in each house unit which pupils can use without reference to staff. Some pupils also have their own cell phones. Toilet and bathing facilities afford adequate privacy and there is private space available within the school for pupils to meet with their parents and other appropriate visitors in private. Confidential records and information is securely held in locked cabinets and drawers within locked offices. The school's complaint procedure is available in formats that are suitable for adults and pupils use. Care staff receive training in the complaint procedure at induction and the procedures are reinforced periodically at staff

'in-set' training days. The school's complaints book shows that no complaints have been received regarding the boarding section of the school. Pupils and some parents in discussion said they have no complaints or concerns about the school and that they knew how to make a complaint and who to complain to should they be dissatisfied or concerned in any way. The substantial majority of questionnaires received from parents and pupils also convey this view and Ofsted have received no complaints about the school. The school has an internal child protection procedure which includes a flow chart that gives a step by step account of the child protection referral process. All staff are aware of the procedures and have access to them. The school also has the Surrey County Council Multi Agency Safeguarding procedures. There are currently two staff who are designated as Child Protection Liaison Officers at the school. Staff receive child protection training at induction and refresher courses are held periodically, the most recent being the Surrey County Council Multi Agency Safeguarding training held in March 2008 of which 14 staff attended. Pupils are appropriately supervised in boarding time and are taught aspects of personal safety as part of the school's Personal Health and Safety Education 'PHSE' curriculum, which is also reinforced by care staff as part of the pupils boarding experience during 'circle time'. The contact details of pupils help and advice lines are also displayed around the boarding units. Any child protection issues that occur in boarding time are appropriately referred for external investigation and detailed records held. The school has an anti bullying policy which covers areas such as emotional, physical, racist, sexual, homophobic, verbal and cyber aspects of bullying activities. There is a range of anti bullying information available for the pupils. The acting head of care said that bullying is not currently a significant issue and that any such conduct is immediately challenged and addressed by staff. Pupils in discussion are clear that no serious issues are evident, though say that some pupils 'wind' each other up which can result in arguments, name calling and occasional altercations. Questionnaires received from pupils and parents do not raise bullying as a significant issue and are confident that staff deal appropriately with incidents should they occur. No bullying or intimidating behaviour among the pupils is evident during the inspection. The boarding supervision arrangements in the school and homely ambience within the boarding units help pupils integrate well and reduce the likelihood of bully occurring. The school has clear policies and procedures regarding the absence of pupils without authority. The head of care said that no pupils have absconded in boarding time. The school's boarding register is available and confirms this. The school has a behaviour management policy which clearly details staff and pupil expectations and has an emphasis on promoting good behaviour and prevention of poor behaviour strategies. The boarding section places pupils on a house merit system of positive reinforcement which is understood by pupils. Staff receive behaviour management training at induction and refresher training in this area is held periodically, the most recent being March 2008. Sanctions records for all four house units list permissible and non permissible sanctions and show minimum use. Sanctions are clearly recorded and evidence that only permitted sanctions are used. The school uses the Non Violent Crisis Intervention methods of behaviour management and restraint which is a recognised and approved method of behaviour management in children's residential settings and residential special schools. Restraint records evidence minimum use. Entries in the restraint book are clear and detailed, however, the type of restraint hold used is not currently entered. The restraint used appears necessary and appropriate in the circumstances described in the records. Incidents are recorded on forms for that purpose and are available. Pupils behaviour is well managed with evidence of positive relationships between staff and pupils who respond favourably to staff requests and instructions. Staff interact and engage pupils appropriately, providing a good level of stimulation and occupation within a settled and homely atmosphere. Pupils said they are 'happy' in the house units and that the standard of discipline is fair and

that they get on well with their key workers and other staff. No significant issues regarding behaviour management or control are evident and staff are successful in providing a positive boarding experience for the pupils. The school has a health and safety policy and the health and safety 'law' poster is prominently displayed. The school's health and safety arrangements are sound and the whole school site is subject to an annual health and safety audit by an external specialist company, the most recent being undertaken in November 2007. This company is also responsible for auditing the wide range of written risk assessments, which are currently being reviewed and updated by the school. Staff receive training in risk assessment preparation. The school also has a health and safety committee. The school has a current fire risk assessment and records show fire evacuation drills occur regularly; however, fire alarm tests are not currently undertaken consistently on a weekly basis. There is evidence of fire equipment and fire extinguisher servicing. Certain staff are designated as fire marshals and records show that seven staff attended fire marshal training in November 2007. There are current utility safety test certificates regarding gas, mains electricity, boiler and portable electrical appliances. Water testing regarding the prevention of Legionella took place in September 2008. 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 has clear regard for keeping pupils, staff and visitors safe from the inherent risk of fire and other potential hazards. The school has a comprehensive staff recruitment policy and procedure. The files of the two members of staff appointed since the last inspection evidence sound recruitment and vetting procedures with files holding all required details including checks by the Criminal Records Bureau at enhanced level. Taxi drivers that transport pupils to and from the school evidence their Criminal Record Bureau checks at enhanced level via presenting their 'Blue Identity Badge' which is issued by their respective companies on receipt of Criminal Records Bureau clearance. The school's arrangements regarding staff vetting help ensure that only suitable staff are appointed to look after the pupils.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The boarding section of the school has full regard for supporting pupils' education and learning, encouraging them in a wide range of activities and experiences. The boarding staff also provide close support to individual pupils and engage the services of external specialists as appropriate. Pupil's individual files evidence Statements of Special Educational Needs Assessments and each pupil has an Individual Education Plan which is monitored and reviewed. Review reports are available and three reviews were being held at the time of the inspection which were attended by pupils' parents. Parents said they are pleased at their child's progress and the holistic inputs that staff put into pupils education and wellbeing. Each pupil has an individual profile which contains key information and target plans covering a number of areas. In addition reports from other professionals such as the speech and language therapist and educational psychologists are also held. Care staff support pupils education and learning and encourage them to participate in a range of activities including the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, football training for special needs pupils at Chelsea football ground, explorer groups, army cadets, guides, St John's Ambulance training, archery and drama and many other activities. Staff also encourage and assist pupils with homework and learning activities as appropriate. It is also commendable that 19 older pupils, ten of whom are boarders, have been placed on work experience programmes covering a range of work areas. Boarding pupils said in discussion they appreciate the school's commitment to preparing them for work and independence. There is close liaison with teaching staff and a member of the teaching team attends care staff handover meetings to pass on

relevant information regarding pupils. Pupils are allocated key workers who have specific responsibilities to individual pupils. Key workers provide close support to pupils and meet with them on a regular basis. They also formulate pupil's individual care plans which are prepared to a good standard and write periodic residential progress reports. Written care plans cover areas such as routines, health and medical, risk assessments, education, cultural/religious development, finance and independence, behaviour management, behaviour therapy and personal identity. Care plans are signed by pupils. Pupils said they appreciate their key workers support and inputs into their individual care programmes and that all staff are committed to their welfare and development. External specialist support is also used as appropriate.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The school has a range of forums that enable pupils to express their views, opinions and exercise choice. These forums include one to one consultation with staff, circle time discussion and the school council. Minutes of pupil's meetings are available which evidence agendas, discussion and decisions taken. Pupils take the meeting minutes which are later typed up by staff. Pupils can make a verbal and written contribution to their reviews and attend all or part of the review if they choose to do so. Review reports are in evidence on pupil's individual files. The substantial majority of questionnaires received from parents evidence satisfaction with the school's consultation arrangements and note that communication between the school and themselves has considerably improved. A small minority wish for further improvement. Parents in discussion confirm that good consultation and communication exists. The school has a clear admissions policy, procedure and criteria. There is a school admissions officer who deals with all referrals and initiates the admissions process which includes considering the new admissions impact on the group. There is a three day boarding assessment prior to any final decisions being made where all reports and observations are considered. The acting head of care said all of the current boarders are within the school's education and behaviour management remit. The boarding pupils are observed to respond well to the boarding programme, which indicates an effective selection and admissions process. Whilst pupils are not normally prepared for 'leaving care', the older ones receive independence training covering a range of basic life skills and preparation for employment by attending work experience. When pupils leave the school they mostly return home to their parents and attend further education or commence employment. Each pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Needs Assessment and a comprehensive care plan which covers a range of areas and has been described in greater detail in the previous section. Pupils are subject to ongoing assessment and care plans are monitored, reviewed and updated as appropriate. The care plans are prepared to a good standard and are signed by the pupils. Any contact that pupils have with their parents and significant others is clearly recorded on individual pupils 'tracking logs' which are held on their files. Pupils may also contact their parents via their cell phones. Any restrictions on contact are detailed in care plans, though currently none of the pupil's are subject to such arrangements.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Pupils may wear their own clothing out of school time and boarders dress in age/fashion appropriate clothing. Personal requisites are in evidence in pupils' bedrooms and pocket money is provided by parents which is held by staff in each house unit. Pupils are taught and advised regarding the handling of money. Samples of pocket money checked evidence some discrepancies

in the amount of cash held and what is recorded in the pocket money books; however these errors had been identified by staff and recorded. The acting head of care said the pocket money holding and recording system is to be immediately changed and closer scrutiny of its administration deployed. Pupils are not normally prepared for leaving care; however, they are placed on independence training programmes and attend work experience organised by the school. All boarding house units provide adequate communal and private space for the pupils. Communal areas are decorated and furnished to a good standard, are bright, cheerful and well maintained by staff and pupils which give a warm and homely ambience. There is a wide range of play equipment and materials, and books and games which are age and culturally appropriate. Pupils have single or shared bedrooms which are decorated and furnished to an equal standard and are personalised to varying degrees by the pupils. Pupils said they are satisfied with the quality and standard of their living accommodation and that they enjoy boarding at the school. Toilet and bathing facilities are of a good standard and afford privacy.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

At the time of this inspection there is a substantial shortfall in the senior management arrangements at the school in that the head teacher, deputy head teacher and head of care are all on sick leave and have been for several months. However, there is a clear contingency plan in place which lists individuals and areas of work and support necessary to maintain the overall safe and effective functioning of the operation. Despite this shortfall the contingency arrangements and staff involved are working extremely well with much evidence of staff working in an efficient, consistent and committed manner which has maintained the overall standards and professionalism in the school. The management of the current circumstances is commendable. The school's prospectus is available and a clear and detailed Statement of Purpose is held. In addition each house unit has a comprehensive guide for pupils and parents which accurately describe the facilities and services provided. All documents are well prepared and are informative. In addition to the sick leave issue there are currently two care staff vacancies which are being advertised. There are currently 15 care staff inclusive of the acting head of care and deputy head of care. Staff are appropriately deployed and carry out their duties diligently and professionally and have pulled together in a loyal and committed way in order to see the operation through the present crises. An external senior manager from a local authority is also providing additional support to the boarding section at the school and formal supervision to the acting head of care. The school is appropriately staffed by day and night, and both waking night and sleeping in staff are on duty throughout the night. In addition a senior member of staff is on call. The staff team are of mixed gender and most have substantial experience of working with children with special needs. The combination of their skills, experience and competences enable the boarding section of the school to meet the needs of the pupils and achieve its aims and objectives. The head of care and deputy head of care are currently undertaking the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 4 and another member of staff is due to commence this level of training in the near future. Two staff currently hold the NVQ Level 3 qualification, four staff are currently undertaking the training and a further three staff are to commence the training in January 2009. Staff training is active and attendance on a wide range of courses is in evidence. Staff training records and staff in discussion confirm the training arrangements. Formal staff supervision is held on a half term basis and written notes of supervision sessions are held. In addition informal supervision can occur daily. Staff said they are appreciative of the school's supervision arrangements. Staff have performance targets which currently act as an appraisal system; however, a more

comprehensive appraisal system is to be introduced once key staff have received training in this area. There are sound communication networks and a range of staff meetings are held. Minutes of meetings are available. Designated senior staff monitor the school's conduct and sign appropriate records in the senior management teams absence as part of the school's internal quality assurance system; however, there is a shortfall in external monitoring via Standard 33 (half term) visits by the provider organisation in that only two visit reports are available for the period since the last inspection. Senior staff said that this shortfall remains despite the provider organisation being reminded of their duties and responsibilities under Standard 33 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. The school has an improvement and development plan to cover the period 2007 to 2009 and a current insurance liability certificate is held. The boarding section of the school continues to be organised and managed in a sound and professional manner and provides a good standard of pastoral care to the pupils.

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 that the type of hold used is recorded in the restraint book. (NMS 10)
- ensure that fire alarm tests occur on a weekly basis. (NMS 26)
- ensure pupils pocket money accounts are kept more accurately and consider introducing a new pocket money holding system. (NMS 16)
- ensure the provider organisation undertakes Standard 33 visits on a half term basis consistent with its duties and responsibilities in this area. (NMS 33)

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.