

St John's Catholic School for the Deaf

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Helen Walker
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Setting address	St. Johns Catholic School for the Deaf, Church Street, Boston Spa, WETHERBY, West Yorkshire, LS23 6DF
Telephone number	01937 842144
Email	
Registered person	St John's Catholic School For The Deaf
Head/ Principal	
Nominated person	Ann Bradbury
Date of last inspection	16/09/2009

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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 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. 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 deaf people. 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 school 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. At this time 47 pupils age eight to 19 years use the school's residential facility. A significant number of residential pupils were present during the inspection and participated in the inspection process.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a short notice full inspection. All key standards were inspected alongside the progress made since the last inspection in September 2009. An additional standard within the staying safe outcome was also considered in light of the failure to report relevant significant events to Ofsted.

The quality of the residential provision and care at the school is good overall with some outstanding features. In particular, the areas of enjoying and achieving and positive contribution are exceptional.

Pupils are cared for by a consistent, experienced and very caring staff team. Residential care staff significantly promote the well being of the pupils in a very supportive environment. Strong links exist with a range of health professionals to provide a holistic care approach to the needs of the pupils. Staff encourage pupils to lead a healthy lifestyle with an emphasis on healthy eating.

Staff understand the need to protect the pupils from harm with relevant

safeguarding procedures and training in place. Pupils feel they are listened to and that their views are valued. They especially enjoy the friendships formed within the residential provision. The school benefits from effective leadership and there is a strong team approach to ensure the social and educational needs of the pupils are met.

To further promote pupils' well being, recommendations have been made. These relate to the implementation of the updated medication policy, that the school maintains an inclusive record for complaints and notifies Ofsted of all significant events relating to the protection of pupils.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the headteacher and head of care were asked to ensure pupils are made aware of the various choices for evening meal. Staff ensure through the use of menus and discussion that pupils know the range of alternative evening meals available to them. Parents are now fully informed of the school's complaints procedure. Information and evidence from parents show they are routinely informed about the complaints procedure and how to access this.

Records of injuries and incidents within the school, including the residential facility, are maintained. These demonstrate an accurate record is kept with appropriate follow up action as necessary.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The health care needs of pupils are well met. Strong links between care staff and health professionals help to ensure a holistic approach to health care for the benefit of the pupils. Thorough health assessments and available information enable staff to understand and support pupil's individual health needs.

A range of services are available on site and include the school nurse, audiologist and speech and language therapists. Additionally, there is effective partnership working with child and adolescent mental health services specialising in deafness. This service offers individual and family support and also provides advice and training for school staff. Pupils say staff encourage them to lead a healthy lifestyle and provide them with very good support on health and personal care matters.

Medication kept in the school is securely stored with good monitoring of the relevant records by the school nurse. There are clear procedures for the receipt of medication into the boarding houses. However, current written guidance and policy for medication although clear, has not been implemented in every case. This has led to a significant error in respect of the administration of medication. In order to address this issue the headteacher has put in place a robust contingency plan for managing the administration of medicines. Additionally, the headteacher and nurse are reviewing and developing the current medication policy and procedures to ensure the

specific needs of individual pupils are addressed.

Pupils are offered a varied and well balanced diet. Catering staff are knowledgeable about the promotion of healthy eating and the food on offer reflects this. All specialist health related diets are met and where required any religious or cultural requirements would also be met. The majority of pupils are happy with the variety and choice of foods available, both in the school and boarding houses. Mealtimes within the boarding houses are social, pleasant and well organised occasions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Pupil's privacy and confidentiality are very well considered and fully promoted within the school. For pupils who need additional support, the staff encourage them to be as independent as possible, for example in relation to personal care. There are excellent examples to show staff are confident to support pupils in a way that maintains and respects their dignity. Private areas are available for pupils to meet or contact their parents and friends.

The school's complaints policy and procedure is made known and accessible to pupils and parents. All complaints are taken seriously and acted upon by the headteacher. Pupils are confident staff listen to them and resolve concerns properly. Individual records of complaints are maintained. However, there is no inclusive record to show details of all complaints made, the action taken and the outcome.

Pupils are well protected by the school's child protection systems. Strong links with safeguarding authorities mean staff have up to date advice, training and guidance to help protect pupils from harm. Pupils say they feel safe and there are effective methods of communication, to enable them to raise concerns with different people. This includes access to the email, intranet, text and contact with key workers and the independent listener. As outlined in the outcome area of 'being healthy' a safeguarding issue has arisen relating to an error in the administration of medicine. Robust systems are now in place to help prevent a recurrence of this error and thereby safeguard pupil's well being.

Pupils consider bullying is not an issue and feel confident staff deal with matters such as disagreements promptly and properly. Effective arrangements ensure staff are aware of the action to take should a pupil be absent without authority. In the event of such an incident the staff are clear about their duties to enable the pupil's safe return.

Positive behaviour management strategies help pupils to have clear and consistent boundaries and know what is expected of them, and what is unacceptable. Pupils are actively encouraged to be respectful to each other and to behave appropriately within the school and in the wider community. Staff receive training to assist them to manage challenging behaviour. Staff are skilled to deal with difficult situations and resolve matters with minimal intervention. Staff readily give praise and

encouragement to pupils which means achievements are recognised and celebrated.

Staff deal with significant incidents within the school properly, for example, the need for a pupil to receive emergency medical treatment. However, these incidents are not always notified to Ofsted as recommended in the standards.

The vetting of staff is comprehensive and complies with the recruitment and selection procedures of the local authority. This helps to ensure staff employed are suitable to work at the school.

The residential provision is well maintained and staff understand the need to keep a safe environment for pupils, staff and visitors. Health and safety monitoring is very thorough. Pupils are involved in regular fire evacuation drills and are familiar with the action to take in the event of a fire. These steps contribute to the overall safety and wellbeing of pupils.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff take an excellent integrated approach to enable pupils to reach their full potential and benefit from their education at the school. Pupils receive support from staff who are knowledgeable about their individual education and learning needs. Staff are very enthusiastic and really positive to provide continuity and stability between education and care in the school. This helps pupils to develop their skills and build confidence in their abilities. A shared database on care and education needs also ensures that all staff are well informed of arising issues.

Care staff are fully involved in the educational review process and their views are taken in to account to inform the review meeting and outcome. Exceptional links with local colleges provide pupils with suitable ongoing education and training. The headteacher shows a strong commitment to involve parents in all aspects of their child's life at the school. All staff are enthusiastic in their involvement with the after school activities and make this an interesting and totally enjoyable time for the pupils. The activities are wide ranging and pupils are actively supported to participate.

The level of individual support the pupils receive is outstanding. A very friendly, consistent and competent team of staff demonstrate they know the pupils well. Extremely effective support systems in the boarding provision include access to key workers who spend time on a one-to-one basis with pupils, the independent visitor and a visiting governor. For more specific support such as that of communication, there are specialist services readily accessible to pupils, for example, the audiologist and speech and language therapists.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Support within the school to promote the pupils' views is exceptional. The opinions of pupils and those of their families are actively sought by the school. Their comments and views are valued and where ever possible acted on for the benefit of the pupils. There are many and varied systems in place to encourage pupils to give their opinions about their care, education and day-to-day life at school. Formal arrangements include the school council, questionnaires, group meetings and educational review meetings. The less formal meetings allow pupils to talk to members of staff including their key worker and the independent visitors.

Pupils say they are listened to and that positive changes are made as a result of this. For example, through the school council their request for a new relaxation area in the playground has come to fruition. An area known as 'the oasis' has been built in the playground. Pupils are highly delighted with this facility and understand that their views make a difference. Pupils contribute to everyday living in the boarding house and have a say about matters such as the menu and evening activities. All staff celebrate the progress and successes of pupils and are very committed to the care provided to them.

Robust arrangements are in place to ensure pupils move into and leave the school in a planned way. A comprehensive assessment of pupils' needs occurs prior to admission. This enables an informed decision about whether the school can meet their education and welfare needs. The process actively involves pupils, parents and the relevant health and education professionals. Staff support for pupils 16 years and over prepares them really well for the transition period to college and leaving school.

Pupils' needs are assessed and recorded in a range of informative written plans. Documents are very well maintained and encompass care and education to promote excellent outcomes for the pupils. Pupils' diverse needs are thoroughly considered and staff are extremely knowledgeable about how these are to be met.

Strong partnerships exist between families and the staff. This demonstrates a clear understanding and commitment to involve parents in school life. There are excellent facilities to promote contact in line with pupils' individual communication needs and for families to stay on the school site. This includes the use of text, email, telephone and video conferencing. The majority of parents consider the school has very good lines of communication to inform them about their child's progress and well being.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Overall the boarding house accommodation is good. There is an ongoing programme of modernisation and improvement to the boarding provision. Pupils consider recent refurbishment of some bathrooms and shower rooms are a big improvement. Older

pupils say they are extremely pleased with their newly refurbished dining/kitchen area.

The school and residential areas are spacious with suitable aids and adaptations throughout, to enable pupils to lead as normal lives as possible. This includes the provision of handrails, ramps, specialist baths and equipment for pupils with hearing or visual impairments. Continued links with the specialist services of the occupational therapist, audiologist and mobility officer ensure assessments of the environment assist the pupils' access and mobility in the school.

The residential accommodation is comfortable and homely. Staff make great efforts to involve the pupils in the appearance of the residential facility. The sleeping arrangements are in separate house groups for male and female students and subdivided for pupils over 16 years of age. Pupils are very happy with this arrangement and say one of the best things about residential is the friendship of other pupils.

The environmental health department and fire service report positively on the school. Health and safety and fire safety are taken very seriously and appropriate checks and risk assessments are carried out so that pupils are cared for in a safe environment. Effective precautions are taken with regard to security of the school from access by unauthorised persons. Additionally, there is a new lobby entrance door and panels. This provides a greater degree of security and protection at the reception point, to prevent unofficial access into the main school area.

The school promotes and maintains very positive links in the local and wider community. Pupils participate in fund raising for many charity events and inform and welcome local people to support them in such activities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school has a clear Statement of Purpose along with other supporting documents outlining the principles of the school and admission criteria. This information is available to parents and other interested persons to enable them to consider and make an informed choice about the suitability of the school and residential provision.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Individuals' rights are respected and exceptional regard is given to the diverse needs of pupils and their emotional well being. The staff group provide excellent role models for pupils in relation to values and attitudes in life. Staff have high aspirations for pupils to attain to their potential and significantly promote these aspirations through health care and educational opportunities.

Pupils benefit from being cared for by a consistent, experienced and very caring staff team who understand their individual needs. The staff team have worked together for a good number of years which enables continuity of care for the pupils. Staffing

levels are appropriate and in line with pupil's assessed needs. Pupils say they really like the residential provision and have a good relationship with the staff who care for them. Very good interaction and good humoured banter between the pupils and staff was seen throughout the inspection.

There is effective leadership in the school from a headteacher who is enthusiastic and experienced in her role and has an excellent overview of the care practice within the boarding house. Care staff have support and guidance from a well informed head of care and access to a range of networks, including that of senior management in the school and other professional agencies. Effective integrated management systems, as well as care and education staff meetings enable staff to understand their responsibilities and benefit from clear direction in their work.

Staff training and development opportunities are good and care staff are enthusiastic to acquire the skills and knowledge that equip them to meet the needs of the pupils. Where shortfalls in training are identified, for example, in the administration of medication, appropriate training is swiftly organised and undertaken by staff. The majority of care staff have a recognised child care qualification relevant to their work.

The quality assurance systems within the school are many and include systematic monitoring of records by the headteacher and head of care. Staff meetings at all levels give management a good overview of the practice in the school and highlight any areas for improvement. Immediate action is taken where issues come to light as a result of monitoring.

An independent person visits the school at timely intervals and provides a comprehensive report to the governing body on the conduct of the school. Governor responsibilities are taken very seriously and it is evident pupils' well being, safety and happiness are paramount. These monitoring systems, together with the views of pupils and parents help to ensure the pupils' welfare is fully promoted.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities, in particular Ofsted (NMS 7.1)
- ensure a written record is maintained to detail all relevant information with regard to complaints, in particular the action taken and the outcome (NMS 4.3)
- ensure updated policy and written guidance is implemented in practice for administering medication (NMS 14.7)