

St John's Catholic School for the Deaf

St. Johns Catholic School for the Deaf, Church Street, Boston Spa, WETHERBY, West Yorkshire, LS23 6DF

Inspection dates 25/02/2013 to 27/02/2013

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Residential pupils continue to receive outstanding levels of care and support in an environment that meets their varied needs. Family members are extremely confident the health care needs of their child will be met and their child will be kept safe.
- The promotion of diversity ensures disability is not seen as a barrier to experiencing a full, enriching lifestyle. Residential pupils benefit enormously from continually developing support to achieve their full potential. Daily routines and working practices actively promote and guide all residential pupils towards a more independent lifestyle regardless of disability.
- Residential pupils live in an inclusive environment where their views are continually sought using excellent communication methods. These views are then constantly reflected in the routines adopted within residential provision.
- The organisation and leadership of the school is outstanding, with a particular strength the school's quest for continued improvement.
- Residential pupils enjoy living in a safe environment, where achievements are celebrated. Safeguarding arrangements are extremely robust and effective in keeping residential pupils safe. Safeguarding is paramount in the minds of all managers and staff. Excellent joint-working with other professionals safeguard residential pupils at school and in the community.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The school received a morning's notice of the inspection. Meetings took place with key staff including the headteacher, head of care and Chair of Governors. Parents, the Local Authority Designated Officer and members of the residential team contributed to the inspection. All boarding accommodation was visited in the company of students who were also interviewed. Records and policy documents were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Robert Curr

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

St. John's School for the Deaf is a non-maintained day and boarding school for hearing impaired pupils aged 3 to 19 years.

The school is located in the semi-rural village of Clifford, Boston Spa. Accommodation is in the main school building and is arranged in groups according to age and gender. There are six residential areas and include a post 16 group. Each group has their own lounge, dining room and kitchen area.

The school's ethos is based on Roman Catholic values. There is great emphasis on supporting the development of pupils' spoken language. The school has 67 pupils on roll. At this time, 47 pupils use the school's residential facility. The school's residential provision was last inspected in March 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Introduce a more formal system that recognises the suggestions made by residential pupils with regard to the menus
- Confirm that the procedures for residential pupils going missing are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols
- The school has made good progress and now meets all the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils in this school are outstanding. Pupils have exceptionally good relationships with staff and with each other. They learn to work co-operatively, developing empathy and understanding of each other's needs, disabilities and strengths. Pupils have enthusiasm for boarding and enjoy the opportunities available to them within the residential provision.

Residential pupils make excellent progress as a result of highly individualised learning objectives, positive staff interaction and established routines. They develop confidence in their social skills and become significantly more independent. Parents consistently say that their children have developed independence skills, such as personal care, cooking, washing up and making their beds. Parents also say that their children have developed friendships with peers outside of the school, because of their increasing confidence. Feedback from parents includes: 'His independence has come on immensely and his confidence has grown', and, 'our daughter cannot wait to get back to school after the holidays. She misses all her friends, including the staff.'

Residential pupils participate well in a wide range of activities and opportunities. Pupils say they have learned new skills, such as how to ride a bicycle and to follow recipes and prepare a meal. Some describe their satisfaction at supporting local and international charity initiatives. Older pupils revel in the fact that they are learning to drive and engage in community-based activities in the local town. This gives them the opportunity to develop friendships with people they would not otherwise have met.

Residential pupils readily take on responsibilities within the school. They contribute to group living by taking on tasks such as washing up, tidying away and serving drinks to each other at meal times. They volunteer to represent other children's views through the School Council. This enables them to make suggestions and express their views, affecting change within the school and residential provision.

Pupils develop an understanding of their own health needs. For example, some pupils have specialist dietary requirements. They demonstrate good knowledge of foods they need to avoid and the reasons why. Pupils participate in, and are aware of the health benefits of physical activities. They have a strong sense of personal safety; they understand dangers in environments such as the kitchen and the roads. They also understand dangers of internet activities and how to keep themselves safe.

All pupils develop skills to prepare them for moving on from the school. They enjoy equality of access to services and facilities and benefit from independence programmes that consider their individual needs, disabilities and characteristics.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding. The 24-hour curriculum provides a seamless link between academic and pastoral care. Staff from the residential provision take part in lesson observations, strengthening the links further. There are effective systems in place to support excellent communication between the academic and care provision, enhancing individuals' potential for progress in all aspects of their development. Parents and placing authorities are all extremely positive about the care provided. They say: 'It was a good decision to use this school, it is amazing how well she has done' and: 'This is a happy place for my son, the care staff are very approachable, informative and understanding.'

The induction process is sensitive to individual needs. Parents and children visit the residential accommodation prior to commencement of boarding. Parents are able to meet with the residential staff to discuss their child's abilities, skills and areas for development. There is a robust system in place to review the settling-in period for pupils, ensuring they are happy and are benefiting from the residential experience.

Staff offer a wide range of activities, such as swimming, football, cookery, art and craft and information technology. The activity plans are exemplary. They are well structured around individual learning objectives and are linked to star charts. This ensures that achievement and progress are formally recorded and evaluated.

Staff support pupils to develop team-working skills that help broaden their sense of community living and co-operation. Pupils take on responsibilities such as helping staff to sort materials for recycling and showing visitors around the school. They learn negotiating skills, such as deciding fairly which programme to watch on television through discussing options with the group. The role modelling by staff helps to reinforce positive messages to the pupils. As a result, they work well together and accept each other's limitations. Staff celebrate pupils' achievements, constantly reinforcing positive actions. Staff consistently use positive language, so that actions are instantly acknowledged; this helps to build self-esteem and confidence.

Care plans are comprehensive and provide information that focuses on individual needs. An extensive range of professionals have input into care planning, ensuring the residential pupils needs are consistently recognised and highly individualised services are provided to meet them. There is excellent communication between parents and carers and the residential staff. This helps to ensure that care plans are accurate and reflect parents' knowledge of their child. Pupils are encouraged and supported to contribute to residential reviews. They are able to express their wishes and make requests. This has resulted in the number of boarding nights being increased or decreased according to individual preferences. One pupil shared his excitement at joining the boarding provision next term.

Residential pupils' health care is well managed. A qualified nurse provides a broad range of personal, social and health education. She also oversees the administration of medication. The quality of food is excellent. The meals provided are nutritious and offer pupils a choice, with healthy options always available. Pupils are able to make suggestions about the food, but report delays in the changes being implemented.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The residential pupils' safety is outstanding. Safeguarding is an absolute priority. Robust systems to report concerns, supported by regular staff training and auditing of safeguarding arrangements ensure that pupil's safety is promoted. The Independent Visitor focuses and comprehensively reports on safeguarding processes. The Local Authority Designated Officer for child protection states that procedures are in place to ensure that protection matters are managed safely and effectively by the school. Representatives from the school attend meetings with external professionals, developing ways to support children and families.

Staff are subject to appropriate vetting and checks prior to working with children in the school. Precautions are taken to ensure that pupils are not at risk from visitors to the school and contractors. Managers ensure that health and safety checks are in place. Regular fire evacuation practice and a good induction process ensures that pupils understand the procedure to follow in the event of a fire.

Positive behaviour is expected and promoted. Bullying is not an issue and residential pupils say they feel safe. Excellent activities take place in school to raise pupil's awareness of bullying,

including cyber-bullying, and how this impacts on the victims. Staff work closely with young people to help them improve their behaviour and understand the consequences of unwanted behaviour. As a direct result, there is improvement in behaviour. For example, some residential pupils develop the ability to make and sustain friendships, which they have found difficult in the past. This builds their self-esteem and confidence.

No residential pupils have ever gone missing. A copy of the government's statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing is available and well known by staff. The school has a comprehensive missing from home protocol in place that is individualised to meet the needs of each pupil. Written confirmation that the protocol is in line with local procedures is not available. Staff regularly review and update the comprehensive risk assessments for pupils. The risk assessments consider all aspects of individual's needs, behaviours and disabilities, with clear actions raised to mitigate risks. Pupils are encouraged to take reasonable risks, proportionate to their age and stage of development; however, their safety is paramount. A parent said: 'The staff keep our child safe. I do not worry about trips into the town for example, because the staff are always mindful of her safety.'

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management of the school is outstanding. The dedicated care staff team have high expectations of pupils, helping them to reach their full potential and develop their own aspirations. Everyday practice is underpinned by the aims set out in the statement of intent. There is exceptionally strong promotion of equality and diversity, valuing individuals and ensuring they are not disadvantaged because of their disabilities. Staff advocate for pupils and encourage them to become confident in advocating for themselves.

The well-established and experienced staff team provide routines and boundaries that help pupils to feel safe. Staff receive good levels of training and supervision to support their professional development, which enhances their effectiveness in working with children. Excellent planning and recording ensures consistency in the delivery of care.

The monitoring of the quality of care is excellent. Independent Visitor reports are comprehensive, evaluative and raise any areas for improvement. The senior management team address all actions raised immediately. The in-depth monitoring of pupil progress makes useful comparisons between progress within the school environment and progress made in residence. All records and incidents are monitored and evaluated. Consequently, the school continues to drive forward improvement in all areas.

All required policies are in place and effectively implemented. They are reviewed regularly and changes are shared with the staff team. This was raised as a recommendation at the last inspection and has been fully addressed. Residential pupils' records are comprehensive and provide a clear and helpful picture of individual's achievements.

Effective systems are in place to seek residential pupils' views of the quality of care. An independent counsellor is available to the residential pupils; they confirm she is very approachable and supportive. The vice Chair of Governors, who chairs the Governors' Care committee, also spends time individually with staff to create a picture of areas for development, giving them the opportunity to raise any issues. The complaints process is familiar to all of the pupils; however there have been no complaints. Pupils are able to raise concerns and make suggestions. One pupil commented, 'You can talk to the care staff about anything.' This makes pupils feel valued and listened to.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	108120
Social care unique reference number	SC001535
DfE registration number	383/7016

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.

Type of school	
Number of boarders on roll	47
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	4 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Bradbury
Date of previous boarding inspection	01/03/2012
Telephone number	01937 842144
Email address	info@stjohns.org.uk

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