

St Catherine's School

St. Catherines School, Grove Road, VENTNOR, Isle of Wight, PO38 1TT

Inspection dates	11/12/2013 to 11/12/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Students are at the centre of practice. Outcomes for students are excellent. They make progress in all aspects of their lives. There is a shared ethos of mutual respect of each professional's role which permeates the culture of the school. All staff work exceptionally well together to ensure there are positive outcomes for the children in their care. Consequently students make excellent progress in developing their social and communications skills as well as daily living skills.
- A highly integrated approach across the school is a significant strength which benefits students. Exceptional collaborative working and attention to detail ensures all aspects of care are highly personalised to meet the individual needs of each student. Health, education and welfare staff work extremely well together and with external agencies. Students make excellent progress in their physical, personal and social development. They clearly grow in confidence during their time at the school. There is full inclusion within the local and wider community.
- There is a culture of safety and the school is not risk averse. Students are able to participate fully in a very wide range of activities they enjoy. Students are safe and well cared for with safeguarding embedded in the culture of the school. A point of improvement is to ensure all records show the decision making process for any safeguarding issues.
- Arrangements for health are excellent. Staff engage fully with other professionals and parents to ensure individual health needs are met. Students benefit from a healthy, varied menu with food cooked and presented to a very high standard. Students enthusiastically engage in a wide range of healthy activities, within the school and the wider community. Students have ready access to the school nurse, who is based on the school site, to meet all their health needs. The dispensary and nurse's room is currently being re-configured to improve the facility.
- The leadership and management of the school are good. The management team set high

standards for staff as well as themselves. They drive forward the positive ethos of the school. The senior management team ensure they have independent critical friends to challenge and inform practice. This is a school that strives for continual improvement. Supervision is provided but is inconsistent. This is raised as a breach of the national minimum standards.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

The school was notified of the inspection four hours before it commenced. Time was spent in all boarding provisions during the inspection. Meals were attended as well as evening activities. Observations were made of the interactions between staff and students. Meetings took place with students, the head teacher, head of care, care staff and other professionals in their specialisms. Discussions were held with parents and governors. Students' views were sought through copious time in face-to-face contact and through observation of interactions. Parent-View was also used to assess the provision. Records, policies and procedures were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Keith Riley	Lead social care inspector
Brian Mcquoid	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

St Catherine's is a non-maintained residential special school for the education of students aged between seven and 19, who have speech, language and communication needs. 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure written records of all safeguarding issues clearly describe the decision-making process underpinning the outcomes.
- Complete the reconfiguration of the dispensary and nurses room.
- **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**
 - All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (NMS 19.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for students are excellent. Students benefit from a supportive and nurturing environment where they develop communication skills, independence and confidence in their own abilities. The boarding experience enables them to develop these skills to a significant standard and develop constructive, positive relationships with others. Parents describe the outcomes in the most positive of terms. They report noticeable improvements in the speech, communication and self-confidence of their children. One parent said, 'there is a vast improvement in social skills and independence', while another parent said, 'my child has blossomed, there is a huge improvement in communication'.

Students benefit from an extremely wide range of opportunities for them to develop personal and social skills. They say that they enjoy the stimulating and purposeful activities. They are empowered because they are able to choose their favourite activities and extend their social skills through effective links with the wider community, such as engaging in fund-raising for local projects. Building up social and communication skills is positively embraced in the routines and activities offered. Students make significant progress such as being able to enjoy a trip to watch professional football from a starting point of finding it difficult to tolerate crowds of people. There are other opportunities for inclusion in the community that students take advantage of, for example by becoming junior members of national charities.

Students' opinions are valued. They have numerous members of staff to voice their thoughts and feelings to. Students are able to speak out as individuals or as a group and feel they have a voice in the school. Additionally, they have ready access to senior members of staff who are present throughout the school day and to an independent visitor who makes very regular visits to the school. This is a school where the needs of students are at the centre of practice.

Students benefit to a significant extent from the health care which they receive. Specialist support from health professionals is arranged for them if necessary. Immediate health needs are supported to an excellent standard by the school nurse. An excellent team of various professionals, such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapists, work collaboratively with education and care staff to ensure the immediate and long term individual needs of each student are being met. The quality of each student's life is greatly enhanced as a result both within the provision and outside. Friends of one student's parents made comment as to how well the student was able to engage in conversation as a result of the input from the school.

Students benefit from particularly well-planned and structured independence plans. Each student has a plan aimed at developing their life skills at a pace and level appropriate to their understanding and ability. Support for the students during this time is excellent and ensures that they receive opportunities to become independent and confident members of society. Students speak very positively of their achievements, such as planning, preparing and serving a meal in their home for the headteacher. Students engage enthusiastically with projects such as enterprise education. They learn about how to set up a small business and return a profit. Students use the proceeds to personalise their homes.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of care provided for students is outstanding. Highly individualised care and support is provided consistently by an extremely experienced and well-qualified care staff team. There is a sensitive and coordinated approach to meeting the individual needs of each student. Pastoral support offered to students is extremely supportive and nurturing. Students benefit from

consistent support, care and guidance in all areas of school life. The residential experience strongly underpins the educational achievement of students. A parent said, 'there are kind, considerate staff who are knowledgeable in their field'.

The quality of the residential accommodation is excellent. Students are able to personalise their own rooms. Accommodation is comfortable, well furnished and maintained to a high standard. There is a rolling refurbishment programme that is managed extremely effectively, for example shortfalls in the dispensary and nurse's area are identified with work underway to improve the facility.

There is a thorough approach which ensures students are as healthy as possible. Students are positive about the healthcare arrangements and engage enthusiastically with physical activities, such as football, athletics and going to the gym, on a regular basis. Staff ensure they consult with other professionals and parents to agree strategies to keep students physically and emotionally healthy. Sensitive issues, such as puberty and emerging sexuality, are dealt with extraordinarily well. Students benefit from staff who are proactive in their guidance on things such as the starting and ending of a relationship. Students benefit from having their privacy and dignity totally respected as they grow into young adults. A parent said, 'the expertise and holistic approach to my child's development is extraordinary'.

The arrangements for food are of a high standard. Meals are varied and healthy with any special dietary requirements catered for. Students benefit from a culture where they are continually learning how to stay healthy. In addition, staff demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the challenges that students on the autistic spectrum may face in regard to food. There is a meticulous approach to ensure students have the best choice of healthy options available, for example staff consider the texture of food and the impact it has on each individual. Meal-times are observed to be well-managed, orderly and social occasions where students and staff enjoy warm relationships. Discussions between students and staff were observed to be positive and full of joy.

Students do not experience discrimination in any form and are therefore able to have a rich and varied quality of life. Students enjoy a wide range of activities of their choosing such as sailing, gun-club and karate. Students participate enthusiastically with nationally recognised schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh award. There is an extremely strong affiliation with the local community, such as raising funds for local charities or doing work experience in local hotels. Students broaden their horizons in the wider world, for example through links with a school in a less developed country and participating in an overseas ski trip. Confidence, self esteem and care for others is very high. Students develop into responsible members of society as a result of the input of the school.

A significant strength of the school is that students, with communication difficulties, have a voice. A well-established, professional and competent team of therapists work extremely closely together and across the provision to ensure there is unique and innovative strategies in place to meet the immediate and long term needs of each individual student. This ensures that the views, wishes and feelings of students are made known to all and acted upon in a consistent fashion. Students learn daily living skills that underpins their academic learning and independent living goals. Likewise, communication with parents and other individuals important to the student is strongly supported.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

There is good provision at the school for ensuring students are safe and protected from harm. The culture embedded in the school ensures that students benefit from an approach which treats their emotional and physical safety as paramount. Designated staff take the lead responsibility for

child protection and receive training relevant to the role. Students report they feel very safe and happy in the residential provision. There is collaborative working with others to identify any concerns. The rigorous safeguarding policy is known to all and this is followed meticulously should any concerns arise. However, not all written records clearly show the decision-making process leading to the actions taken or not taken. This has not directly impacted on the outcomes for students.

Students benefit from the safe selection of suitable staff, for whom all appropriate clearances are taken up in advance of their employment. The safe selection of staff and confidence of students in this process is greatly enhanced by their meaningful involvement in the interviews.

Behaviour in the residential areas is exemplary. Clear boundaries, routines and expectations ensure that students know what is acceptable and what is not. Staff are readily available to help students interpret the social world around them and manage their emotions. Consequently the environment is extremely calm and there is no need for the use of any kind of physical intervention. Since the last inspection, there has been one occasion where a student has needed low level guidance. Sanctions are proportionate and appropriate. They are used effectively to enable students to reflect on any issues and make better choices next time. Sanctions are infrequent and they are not used in a punitive way.

The school operates a rigorous approach to bullying. Students are aware that bullying is not acceptable. Any hint of bullying is closely monitored and action plans to prevent it are put in place. Students say they feel safe and are confident staff deal effectively with any problems with group dynamics. Staff are pro-active in educating students about bullying, including cyber-bullying, and the actions they can take.

Going missing is not an identified issue. There have been no incidents of students going missing from the school since the last inspection. There is an excellent procedure in place should this occur.

Risk assessments of activities and the school environment are of an excellent standard and are conscientiously reviewed. Personalised risk assessments are in place where necessary to ensure that students can access those activities that are of interest to them while being kept as safe as possible.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. The residential staff team's enthusiasm is stimulated to provide care and support to a very high standard. The quality of the staff team is a significant strength of the school. The skills, experience and backgrounds among the staff team are diverse and wide ranging. There is excellent staff retention. A common ethos and drive to secure the best possible outcomes for students are shared by care, education and therapy staff. They speak most positively of the school, the support they receive and their role in securing the positive outcomes for students. The close joined up working by all the professionals involved in the students' lives, and the consistency in their support, maximises their future life chances.

Students benefit from a staff team who have good opportunities for professional development. Likewise there are good policies and procedures to support and promote excellent practice across the school. However, staff do not always have access to termly supervision. Staff are highly motivated and extremely competent and there is no immediate impact on students as a result of this shortfall. There is excellent dialogue with parents, for example through the home-school communication book. A parent said, 'I am totally and utterly impressed with the commitment of staff'.

The school has a dedicated board of governors. They undertake unannounced independent monitoring visits and produce a report about their findings. This contributes to the on-going development of the school. Governors are an integral part of the school community, who act as critical friends and continually improve standards.

The senior management team ensure there is continual reflection and challenge to practice. This includes regular visits from an independent visitor who provides a report to them. This is used to look at current issues and for future development. Development plans are realistic and achievable, such as making modifications to outdoor areas for better access and enjoyment.

There is good communication with parents and other individuals who are important to students. Students and parents know how to access the formal complaints system if they are dissatisfied in any way. There is a robust procedure that is followed in this case, with clear outcomes.

All information is appropriately and safely stored to ensure that confidentiality of records is maintained. Records kept give a good account of each student's time, experience and progress at the school.

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	118226
Social care unique reference number	SC012597
DfE registration number	921/7000

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	Non-maintained
Number of boarders on roll	37
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	12 to 19
Headteacher	Dr Brendan Carleton
Date of previous boarding inspection	09/10/2012
Telephone number	01983 852722
Email address	general@stcatherines.org.uk

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