

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

10/03/2014 to 12/03/2104

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

51

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

- Rigorous, effective management ensures high standards of care and a continuous focus on improving the residential provision. The residential provision is an integral part of the school and makes a significant contribution in advancing pupils' academic, personal, social and emotional development.
- Residential pupils thrive in an environment where staff recognise their individual strengths and vulnerabilities. They make significant personal development and progress in their social skills, confidence and self-esteem. Diversity is respected and any disability is not seen as a barrier to residential pupils developing their potential and experiencing a more enriched lifestyle.
- Residential pupils are extremely positive about their school experience which provides stimulating and challenging activities. This extends and enriches their social experiences and provides opportunities for them to develop new skills and interests. Daily routines and working practices actively promote and guide all residential pupils towards a more independent lifestyle regardless of disability.
- Excellent safeguarding procedures ensure residential pupils are safe. Pupils' individual health and welfare needs are extremely well supported by staff ensuring all their health needs are addressed.

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

Inspection team

Simon Morley

Lead social care inspector

Fiona Millns

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 four main residential areas including 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 the time of inspection 46 pupils used the school's residential facility. The school's residential provision was last inspected in February 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use the new assessment framework of residential pupil's progress to cohesively integrate individual pupils' separate care, education and health plans and where appropriate speech and language plans and multiple sensory loss profiles.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding, they speak very highly of their residential experience, often referring to it as 'like a family'. They thoroughly enjoy their time at school and have on occasion returned early after the school holidays, eager to get back.

Residential pupils benefit from the excellent relationships they have with staff. Across the whole school the needs of residential pupils and their welfare is clearly at the centre of practice. Staff provide residential pupils with sensitive, nurturing care as well as challenging them to develop their skills and independence. Along with actively listening to residential pupils' views, this helps pupils develop trust in the staff who help them achieve their potential. The school's values are clearly seen in the excellent behaviour of residential pupils who are considerate, tolerant and respectful of each other, staff and visitors. As one pupil commented, 'They teach you good values here.'

Residential pupils make excellent progress in developing their communication and problem solving skills as they benefit from the inclusive ethos of the school and commitment to improving the socialisation of pupils. Specific, tailored approaches help pupils overcome their own individual challenges and enjoy life experiences not previously considered such as trips abroad. Parents commented that residential pupils 'make lots of friends and have achieved so much; speech has developed really well.'

Residential pupils learn to shop, cook, clean and take care of themselves in preparation for more independent living in the future. They enjoy a wide range of activities and take part in various sporting and social clubs. As a result, residential pupils grow in stature, confidence and self-esteem; as one sixth former commented, 'The journey here has been good.' Parents commented that residential pupils 'enjoy the after school clubs, are more independent and grow in confidence.'

Residential pupils have a strong voice and are able to make their views known through the Care Council. Residential pupils also have weekly informal meetings where they can comment on school life and put forward suggestions for activities, menus and resources. Therefore they actively contribute to community life within the school as their views are taken seriously and acted upon.

Pupils' health is excellent considering their starting points on admission to the school, their individual needs, disability and sensory impairments. There is excellent support from the school nurse and specialist health professionals such as speech and language therapy, mental health service and multiple sensory impairment.

Residential pupils take regular exercise and their diet improves while at the school.

The attention to detail and respect for residential pupils' individual needs has a strong impact on their ability to make substantial progress. Residential pupils won awards for their creativity in film making, achieve well on work placements and all students leaving the sixth form go on to further education, training or employment.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. An experienced and committed staff team provides residential pupils with excellent nurturing, sensitive and highly individualised care. Prior to admission, prospective pupils have good opportunities to visit the school before choosing to stay there. This ensures thorough assessments of their needs take place which contributes to placement stability. The majority of the sixth form pupils have been at the school for many years.

Staff are particularly sensitive to the needs of residential pupils new to the school. There is effective liaison with families to help pupils settle into residential life. Pupils can build up their stays starting with one or two nights a week before staying full-time. Parents report that they are 'kept well informed and it is an excellent school and boarding provision.'

Pastoral and academic staff work closely together with a range of health professionals to ensure a continuity and consistency of care. This ensures that residential pupils, whether they are in lessons or their residence, achieve a wide range of positive outcomes. There is exceptional use of social stories and planning material to help residential pupils make significant personal and academic achievements.

The health care arrangements are rigorous and robust. Health and care plans are detailed and comprehensive and contain clear and relevant information to ensure pupils' health and welfare needs are met. These cover specific needs in relation to diet, religion, disability, sensory impairment and emotional well-being. The school employs speech and language therapists, a qualified nurse and staff qualified to assess and promote needs of residential pupils with multiple sensory loss. In addition, residential pupils have very good access to a local mental health service including support via digital links with psychologists based further afield. This thoroughly promotes and maintains residential pupils' health and well-being. Residential pupil's health is further safeguarded by the improved and effective arrangements for administering medication.

Staff encourage residential pupils to be involved in their care plans as appropriate to their age and understanding. There are robust arrangements for consulting residential pupils, who know how to complain.

Support and targets for residential pupils are strongly focussed on individual needs. For example, flexible times for getting up so that behaviour in class improves, various independence skills and diets that meet individual cultural needs. The care and school routines for residential pupils are regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to meet individual needs, reflect progress and any changes in individual circumstances. A new assessment framework has recently been introduced to better evidence the impact the school is having on individual outcomes for residential pupils. It is recommended to further improve that this takes account of separate care, health, education, speech and language and multiple sensory loss plans to cohesively track individual progress.

Residential pupils engage in a wide range of social and leisure pursuits at school and in the wider community. This includes youth clubs, Brownies and Guides, football, art clubs and driving lessons. They choose what to take part in and individual interests such as film making are fully supported. Residential pupils mix socially and develop new skills which enriches their social experiences. Taking part in the school's Care Council also helps residential pupils develop their leadership and inter-personal skills.

Residential pupils enjoy the food on offer. There are wholesome, nourishing meals with plenty of variety.

Special dietary requirements are catered for and pupils are regularly consulted about food. These arrangements are more formalised as recommended at the last inspection, supporting pupils to have a more robust input to catering arrangements.

Accommodation for pupils is spacious, well-maintained and furnished to a high standard. There are colourful and vibrant displays of pupils' activities, achievements and artwork which adds to their sense of belonging and promotes their self-esteem. Pupils report they are very happy with their accommodation. They can contact their families and friends and speak to them in private.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The arrangements in place to ensure pupils are safe and protected from harm are outstanding. Residential pupils report they feel safe and parents confirm their safety when staying at the school. Safety is taken very seriously with a proactive approach to staff learning from incidents in other schools. This keeps safeguarding high on the agenda and reinforces regular staff training. Policies and procedures are thorough and robustly implemented by staff confident in their role.

Staff recruitment is robust with rigorous vetting procedures for new staff, which ensure only suitable people are employed to work with vulnerable children and young people. All staff receive appropriate child protection training. The head of care is the lead child protection officer, supported by an experienced and able staff group. Staff ensure excellent safeguarding measures are in place that address the individual needs of residential pupils.

A whole school approach ensures staff are alert in recognising causes for concern and taking appropriate action to protect residential pupils. There is a robust comprehensive approach to minimising risk of harm to residential pupils. This includes teaching pupils about internet safety as part of the school curriculum, reinforced by care staff. Staff know and understand the assessed individual risks to residential pupils and consistently use effective strategies to keep them safe. At the same time residential pupils are able to develop their independence and take appropriate risks as part of growing up. This is based on individual needs and includes residential pupils' activities, pursuits, independent living skills, travel and going to a local college. The school use an effective, positive risk-aware approach to promote independence rather than being risk-averse.

Residential pupils do not leave the grounds without permission and where they have in the past the school's approach has ensured this no longer happens. Residential pupils enjoy being at the school and report there is very minimal bullying which is dealt with effectively by the staff. Residential pupils feel comfortable talking to staff about any of their concerns and are confident they will be listened to. The school is very aware of cyber bullying and staff are vigilant in preventing this.

Promoting positive behaviour is a key strength of the school. Residential pupils respect each other, staff and the school environment which is seen in their excellent behaviour. Staff develop individual strategies to support residential pupils with clear targets and incentives for residential pupils to take responsibility and improve their behaviour. The strong ethos on respect and understanding is consistently applied. Physical intervention is only used as a last resort in behaviour management to prevent harm to individual pupils or others. Behaviour strategies are effectively monitored and reviewed to support individual development.

Safety of the school and residential provision is monitored effectively, keeping the physical environment very safe and secure. A range of health and safety checks and fire safety checks are carried out regularly including regular fire drills for residential pupils. Risk assessments are rigorous and regularly reviewed and updated. There are regular checks of electrical, gas and fire safety equipment and the school has invested in making improvements to fire safety arrangements. Overall there are comprehensive systems in place to ensure that the safety of pupils is promoted to an excellent standard.

Leadership and management of the residential provision **Outstanding**

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The head of school is supported by a committed and experienced management team. Senior managers in care and education work closely together to ensure the residential provision lies firmly at the heart of the school community. Leaders and managers have high expectations of the contribution the

residential provision makes to residential pupils. All staff are aspirational for residential pupils academic, personal, social and emotional development. The staff are fully committed to ensuring residential pupils are well cared for and benefit from the organised and smooth running of the residential provision.

The head teacher regularly evaluates the schools performance and the impact on residential pupils. The school governors effectively challenge performance and strive to ensure the best for residential pupils. Routine monitoring of policies, practice and record keeping as well as regular independent scrutiny contributes to the continuous drive for improvement. The head teacher is proactive at examining practice in other schools and using this to challenge and pursue excellence. Development of the residential provision has a high priority within the school's development plan with detailed strategies to ensure national minimum standards are fully met and the school continues to drive forward improvements.

Since the last inspection, there has been a number of improvements including meeting previous advisory recommendations. This includes a new framework for assessing residential pupils progress, recruiting a new school nurse, better consultation and more after school clubs. All of which contribute to maintaining excellent standards of care.

Well-trained, experienced staff continually strive to enhance the care and welfare of residential pupils who benefit from highly individualised care, support and guidance. Staff know the residential pupils and their families very well enabling them to provide clear, individual routines and boundaries. Good staffing levels allow for individual and group needs to be fully met. Staff are very effectively supported by enthusiastic managers who constantly seek to improve the residential provision for pupils.

Staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. This system has recently been reviewed to focus more on how staff fulfil and can improve their roles. Communication and information sharing among all staff is comprehensive, which contributes to proactive interventions to support residential pupils. This helps provide a consistently high quality service.

Residential pupils have a wide range of highly diverse and complex needs. Staff receive regular training aimed at meeting the individual needs of residential pupils such as sensory loss and autism. As a result staff have the skills and competencies to deliver excellent standards of care. Staff are acutely aware of the specific vulnerabilities of residential pupils and work hard to ensure that all pupils feel valued and respected.

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	
Gender of boarders	
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Bradbury
Date of previous boarding inspection	25/02/2013
Telephone number	01937 842144
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