

# St Catherine's School

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

<b>Inspection dates</b>	30/11/2015 to 02/12/2015	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Students are cared for by a range of skilled professionals including care staff, nurses, speech and language therapists and occupational therapy specialists. They make excellent progress across all areas of their lives. They flourish in the development of their communication, self-esteem confidence and independence.
- Staff form remarkable relationships with parents who are able to discuss freely the immediate and ongoing needs of their child.
- Staff work closely and collaboratively with other professionals, internally and externally. There is a holistic approach with students at the centre of practice.
- Students live in a culture where they are safe. Students, with communication needs, identify adults and peers they can talk to about any concerns.
- Staff give meticulous consideration to the assessment of risk. They agree individual control measures so students engage in a wide range of activities while being kept safe.
- Effective and efficient leadership provides a role model and stimulus for top quality care. Students have the maximum opportunity to achieve their full potential.
- An active, well qualified and inspiring governing body act as a critical friend to the Principal and an additional listening ear to students.
- Care staff are dedicated, motivated, supported and well trained. They fully support, underpin and implement the strategies recommended by their colleagues, such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapy specialists.

## **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

Ofsted carried out this inspection with three hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of boarding practice over two evenings; formal and informal discussion with a wide range of students who board; sharing mealtimes; discussions with the Principal, head of care and the governing body; boarding and ancillary staff were consulted; the therapy team, nurse, catering manager and bursar were spoken to; contact was made with the local statutory safeguarding authority; a tour of all the accommodation was undertaken; a wide range of documentation concerning boarding was scrutinised; the responses on Parent View were considered.

## Inspection team

Keith Riley

Lead social care inspector

Trish Palmer

Social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

St Catherine's is a non-maintained residential special school for the education, therapy and care of students aged between seven and 19, who have speech, language, communication and other associated 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 a short walking distance from the school campus. The residential accommodation is currently provided in two houses on the St Catherine's school site. There is additional capacity in another house on the campus that is not currently used as residential accommodation. Sixth form students reside in two residential units very close to the school and in a house in the local town. At the time of this visit, there were 36 residential and 18-day pupils, aged 9-19 years.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Outstanding**

Students make outstanding progress in their speech and language, social presentation, personal care and independence. Their self-esteem and confidence blossoms. A parent stated, 'Our child has been making excellent progress due to the speech and language, occupational health and care provision' and, '(Name of child) has managed to try out new activities, participate and express his views, interact better and have conversations with his peers.' Another parent said, '(Name of child)'s speech has improved so much, he is clearer and able to have conversations now.' Another student was able to gain enough confidence to sing solo in a public carol service.

The care provision underpins the academic success. Care staff work well with their education colleagues. Students have gained more entry-level certificates across more subjects than ever before.

Leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They do a self-evaluation on a regular basis that feeds into a development plan. An example is the accommodation, parts of which are excellent with investment planned for the other areas identified for improvement.

There is excellent monitoring of the progress that students are making. Staff keep daily records that provide reliable and meaningful data. The head of care captures data for analysis. She keeps a close oversight to ensure that students are progressing, and reviews targets and work with education, therapy and care professionals to secure the best possible outcomes.

All staff give safeguarding top priority. Governors oversee the robust policies and review their effectiveness. Senior staff are the designated leads. They have the right training and engage with other safeguarding professionals to keep students safe. They are up to date with the most recent legislation and guidance.

School staff form excellent relationships with parents and professionals. Students describe how they have made friends and present as most respectful of each other. Parents describe the trust they have in the school. They are able to share any concerns they have, confident in the advice given by staff. Professionals also speak in the most positive of terms about the care, communication and outcomes of students at the school.

Staffing is exceptional. A caring and established team of care staff work closely with their therapy, health and education colleagues to identify and implement strategies to meet the individual needs of the students. Young people are physically and emotionally healthy. They have confidence to engage in a wide range of activities, some of which they have never tried before.

The progress students make toward independence is noteworthy, especially concerning travel. They are able to use public transport to access activities around the island. They develop the confidence to go to the mainland independently to meet parents for their trip back to the family home. Older students are able to obtain their driving licence.

Students have formed a 'young enterprise company.' They learn how a business runs, appoint students in key positions, such as company director, and finance director. They make items to sell to the public. This gives them the opportunity to meet others, form relationships and develop work and life skills.

### The quality of care and support

**Outstanding**

Staff understand the individual needs of students. They use a variety of methods to speak and listen to students who have speech and language challenges. Students are able to express their choices and concerns. Staff listen to the students' clear, strong voice and take it seriously. For example, the Principal provides a written response within days to any issues raised by the student council. Students are encouraged to use the complaints procedure to raise any issues more formally. Senior staff investigate them swiftly and provide feedback to the student who is able to say whether they understand the reason for the outcome.

Staff ensure there are an extensive range of activities available to students such as sea cadets, karate, a 'lobster safari' and cycling. Students are able to make their choice of an activity and suggest anything they want to do. One student said, 'We get to do lots of things, I am always busy.' They engage with the wider community, such as winning an award for litter picking. They engage with the wider world, such as raising money for a school in Ghana.

Meal times are an ordered social occasion. Behaviour is exemplary. Senior staff, such as the Principal and governors, regularly join the students at mealtimes and engage in meaningful conversation. The catering is excellent, offering a variety of healthy choices with meals cooked on the premises from locally sourced ingredients. Sixth-formers spend part of their time cooking with staff to develop their independent skills. They speak most enthusiastically of this experience.

There are excellent arrangements for students to have contact with their family and other individuals who are important to them. Students, who previously were only able to communicate by text, are able to have conversations over a telephone. Staff ensure they have access to the latest technology, such as video conferencing. They plan for students to have contact at an appropriate time if their parents are living overseas. Students say they are very happy with the contact they have.

Students keep themselves fit and healthy. They engage in a variety of sports and healthy exercise, such as using the school gym. Detailed health care plans guide staff for any specific health needs, some of which are complex. Staff show a detailed knowledge of the plans and the health professional available for consultation in the event of a decline in a student's well-being. Welfare plans guide staff to meet their emotional well-being. Two qualified nurses are part of St Catherine's staff, based on site five days a week. A counsellor and psychotherapist are also available for students. Staff can access other specialist services, such as child and adolescent mental health services when necessary. Students spoke most positively of their relationship with their key-worker and that they can discuss anything that worries them.

Students enjoy communicating with staff who fully understand their particular language, method of communication and idiosyncrasies. Staff treat them as mature young people and with dignity and respect. They ensure any needs relating to culture or religion are met.

## **How well children and young people are protected**

**Outstanding**

Students are safe. They say they feel safe and secure. They have a range of adults they can speak to, both within and outside the school, about any concerns. Of particular note is the appointment of a sixth former who acts as a point of contact for any student who finds it difficult to talk to an adult in the first instance. Students were upbeat about this approach and feel they can raise any concern.

Staff are not risk adverse. The risk assessment process is robust with every conceivable risk considered and control measures put in place. Consequently, students are able to engage in a

wide range of activities. Access to the community is carefully risk assessed. Vulnerable students are able to travel independently into the surrounding areas, including transport on and off the island on their own. The head of care, in consultation with others, carefully considers the sleeping accommodation so students feel safe, comfortable and well cared for.

Staff understand and respond to any indicators a student is at risk of harm. They demonstrate a thorough knowledge of safeguarding procedures. The designated safeguarding leads have excellent training, approved by the local safeguarding children's board. They work closely with others when any concerns become known. This includes the local authority officer responsible for safeguarding. The designated safeguarding leads keep excellent records to enable them to comment on historical events. They have a thorough audit trail illustrating the reasons why decisions have been made.

Governors provide a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the safeguarding procedures. They regularly ask key questions to staff and students to ensure they have the relevant knowledge and know whom to turn to for help and support.

Behaviour is exemplary. Staff have training in physical intervention. There has been one low level incident since the last inspection. Staff carefully document all incidents. They cross-reference them to other documents. The Principal and other senior leaders review them and ensure that the reflection informs practice. Positive behaviour is encouraged and recognised. Students take pride in their positive behaviour books that affirm their excellent conduct.

Bullying is unknown. Students say they know what is acceptable and are confident staff will take swift action if there is any inappropriate behaviour. One student said, 'If I think someone is not being nice to me I will tell staff and we will sit down and talk about it.' Students are courteous and respectful of each other as well as adults. Manners are impeccable.

The senior management team ensure staff are well versed in the latest information on child sexual exploitation and extremism. Staff are alert to the risk and know the routes to voice any concerns or obtain advice, such as through the local authority experts. There are no current risks identified.

Staff keep students as safe as possible in the cyber world. Software and security systems provide an initial filter. Student education and supportive relationships provide additional safeguarding. Students feel able to approach staff about any concerning messages or 'friend requests.' Staff guide them how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet via a wireless connection outside of the school's own network. A student said, 'We don't post personal things about us because that will mean people know where we live.' Another student said, 'If I get a text from someone I don't know I show staff.'

Students live in safe environment. All necessary health and checks are in place. Key staff address maintenance issues promptly. Recruitment staff follow safer recruitment practice. They only employ adults deemed to be suitable to work with children. Students are fully involved in the selection process, forming a panel that asks pertinent questions at interview.

## **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

## **Outstanding**

The senior management team provide effective and efficient leadership. They are a role model and stimulus for promoting first class care. They show a thorough knowledge of recent updates to legislation and statutory guidance. They ensure the comprehensive training package encompasses the latest research and information. Staff say they feel equipped to meet the needs of the students they care for. They speak highly of the integrated work they do with their

therapy and education colleagues. Care staff are fully involved in developing the care, for example, they do an exercise reflecting on how they can meet and exceed the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Care staff speak highly of their senior leadership team. They describe how they are an inspiration to them and the students, for all to achieve their maximum potential. Staff are motivated and dedicated to meet all the individual needs of the students they care for. They can discuss any issues in formal supervision as well as in the day-to-day interaction with their manager. Their length of service is incredible; a very consistent and established staff team know the students exceptionally well and secure extremely positive outcomes for them.

A qualified, experienced and active governing body underpin all the work. They are regular visitors to the school, they mingle with the students and staff, and they provide regular scrutiny and monitoring. The senior leadership team welcome their critical friends, they respond positively to the constructive criticism and challenge.

A real strength of this school is the close and collaborative working between the professionals involved in the students' lives. The care provided is top class. A large therapy team consisting of speech and language therapists and occupational therapists provide guidance and strategies for care staff. Care staff are diligent at implementing and following the strategies and providing feedback. Therapists describe them as their 'professional, skilled colleagues'.

Staff communicate exceptionally well with parents. They develop trusting relationships. Parents feel free to discuss anything in their child's life that may affect their care or education. They seek advice and guidance to support and underpin the strategies adopted in the school when their child is at the family home. A parent said, 'They are a very caring, thoughtful school with caring and dedicated staff, always willing to listen and help with any problem.'

Other professionals speak in the most positive terms about the school. One said, 'If every school were like St Catherine's my job would be a lot easier.' Another said, 'I can't fault the school. (Name of child) has thrived since being there, I can see a marked difference in his social presentation.'

The management team have acted on the previous point of improvement about medication. There are now excellent arrangements in place for the management of controlled drugs.

## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118226
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC012597
<b>DfE registration number</b>	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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	36
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	7 to 19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Brendan Carleton
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	18/06/2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	01983 852722
<b>Email address</b>	general@stcatherines.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)." If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk) or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

if you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.co.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.co.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2015

