

St John's Catholic School for the Deaf

St. John's Catholic School for the Deaf, Church Street, Boston Spa, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 6DF

Inspection dates	17/10/2016 to 19/10/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Residential pupils benefit greatly from their time at the school and thoroughly enjoy their residential experience.
- Outcomes for pupils leaving the school, pursuing their education, training and finding employment are very good.
- Staff understand residential pupils' diverse needs and vulnerabilities and implement bespoke care plans effectively so that pupils receive the support that they require.
- Strong collaborative multidisciplinary working across the whole school ensures that there is close support for each pupil to achieve their potential.
- The managers and staff are a very experienced team and are determined to achieve the best for the pupils in their care.
- There is good oversight and monitoring by the governors, supported by an independent visitor who regularly assesses the quality of residential care.
- Shortfalls in meeting all the national minimum standards relate to the efficacy of the leadership team's oversight of all practice and in comprehensively addressing

concerns as efficiently as possible.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- 6.2 The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured.
- 6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 13.2 There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Undertake a review of the perimeter of the school grounds in consideration of promoting the safety and welfare of residential pupils.
- Keep all risk assessments up to date and in line with staff practice and the needs of all residential pupils.
- Use monitoring and review processes to ensure that records are up to date, that residential pupils' views are responded to robustly and that leaders are sufficiently knowledgeable about current staff practice to be able to evaluate it.

Information about this inspection

The headteacher was given three hours' notice of the inspection. The inspectors spoke to a range of residential pupils, boys and girls, across different year groups, individually and in small groups, including the sixth form. Time was spent observing routines at lunch, teatime and evening activities and the ways in which residential pupils and staff interact. Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy head, head of care, deputy head of care, chair of the governors, the child protection governor and residential staff. Parents' views were collated from the Ofsted Parent View website and parental survey forms returned directly to the school. Inspectors consulted with a representative from the local authority safeguarding team and examined a range of records, policies and procedures in relation to the safeguarding and care of residential pupils.

Inspection team

Simon Morley	Lead social care inspector
Jamie Richardson	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 pupils aged 3 to 19 years, who have hearing impairments. 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 the ages and needs of pupils. There are three main residential areas, including one for a post-16 group. Each group has its 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 56 pupils on roll. At the time of inspection, 28 pupils used the school's residential facility. The school's residential provision was last inspected in November 2015.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Residential pupils benefit from the very positive emotional stability, nurturing care and effective boundaries and structure provided at the school. This is a firm basis for their meaningful experiences and significant and sustained growth, and is reflected in their maturity, academic achievements, well-developed social skills and ability to succeed after leaving school. Residential pupils significantly boost their life chances by developing their communication skills and independence, increasing their knowledge and improving their resilience.

All pupils continue with their education, undertake training and/or find gainful employment when they leave the sixth form. This is an excellent feature of the school. The leadership team maintains a successful track record in empowering pupils to be prepared for their futures and to achieve well. A parent commented, 'My child has just re-joined post 16, settled well and [is] developing independence in a very safe environment while accessing local college.' Pupils have gone on to achieve in a range of ways: completing degrees, holding their own photography exhibitions, working as a painter and decorator and becoming the deaf champion for the local police authority.

The leadership team keeps the progress and well-being of pupils at the centre of their practice with an individually tailored approach to their care and education. The progress made by residential pupils is carefully monitored and evaluated. Staff adapt care and education plans as individuals develop. Managers and staff know the difference that they make, and their focus is on the strong impact that the school has on the lives of its pupils and on empowering them to become successful citizens. One parent commented, 'My son has bloomed since attending. He has matured, relaxed, is more confident, and [has] turned into a gentleman.'

A good understanding by the staff of each residential pupil in their care ensures that any pupil's need for additional support is fully met and their successes are celebrated. The staff team is very experienced and committed. Supported by an on-site professional audiologist, speech and language therapists and a multiple sensory impairment therapist, there is a very strong integrated approach to pupil care that is a positive force in the pupils' lives. The dedication, commitment and specialist care empowers young people to feel valued, be confident and appreciate that staff want the best for them.

Other evidence from residential pupils themselves, parents and members of staff, demonstrates the positive impact of living at the school. A pupil, echoing the view of many, commented, 'This is a good school for people who are deaf. They help you learn.' Parents' comments include, 'Excellent level of care and education,' and 'My son has done amazingly well. Cannot recommend the school highly enough.'

Residential pupils like the school. They make friendships with their peers, form positive and trusting relationships with staff and enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They benefit from work experience opportunities in the community and links with other schools and community organisations.

Residential pupils are able to express their views and feelings, contributing to their care and the running of the school. Their views are actively sought, and there is a strong

focus on promoting good communication. This helps all children to have a voice, even those who have difficulty in verbal communication. There is good support to help individuals using different techniques and specialist input to talk about sensitive issues, feelings and concerns about relationships and health. The warm, trusting relationships that residential pupils enjoy with staff facilitate open discussions about difficult or embarrassing topics.

The staff are aware of the vulnerabilities of each residential pupil in their care and strive hard to keep them safe. Care staff work closely with pupils, parents, on-site specialists, teaching staff and other stakeholders, such as the local children and adolescent mental health service and safeguarding agencies. This provides a protective and supportive environment to promote emotional well-being and to protect pupils from harm.

The quality of care and support

Good

The quality of support that residential pupils receive is good. Each residential pupil's specific needs are accurately assessed and met. Their identities and backgrounds are valued and promoted. Care plans reflect their needs and wishes and take account of their backgrounds and experiences prior to admission to the school. As a result, support is tailor made to nurture and encourage personal growth. Subsequently, residential pupils make very good progress, especially bearing in mind that starting points frequently include limited speech, low levels of attainment, poor self-esteem, lack of social skills and vulnerabilities from being deaf.

Effective collaboration between the professional disciplines in the school provides each residential pupil with a bespoke package of care. The on-site audiologist and speech and language and multiple sensory impairment therapists directly support residential pupils and give professional advice and guidance to staff to help them to support pupils. The school nurse plays a key role in promoting health and provides pupils with some excellent support about relationships and sexual health. Classrooms and, wherever possible, residential areas are acoustically treated with specially designed sound systems that support pupils' hearing. In combination, these different aspects of support provide wrap-around care and contribute directly to pupils making substantial personal and academic achievements.

Members of residential staff work closely with their education colleagues in supporting residential pupils to achieve realistic targets. High levels of staff integration across school ensure that there is close and fluid communication about pupils and provide the capacity to promptly meet any changing needs or crises that may occur.

The residential accommodation is maintained to a good standard and regularly inspected by school governors who play a key role in keeping standards high. Accommodation is comfortable and spacious, providing residential pupils with a relaxing and homely environment. The leadership team makes full use of the school's resources and space to give individual pupils who need it their own areas for play, time out away from others and, in one case, individual living accommodation. Creative use of accommodation helps to meet pupils' individual needs. Each residential pupil has their own room, which they are encouraged to personalise and can keep locked.

Residential pupils benefit from varied and enriching activities on site and in the local and

wider community. Pupils enjoy chess, using the school gym and playing football. Some competed in a soccer tournament at the Deaf School's Festival. Individual hobbies and interests, such as taekwondo, photography and Rainbows are promoted. Pupils have donated books to a school in Africa and gave money raised from a talent show to a local children's hospice. There are regular trips to places of interest and holidays abroad. These wide-ranging experiences help residential pupils to develop their confidence and social skills. Along with varied work experience, pupils increase their knowledge of the wider world and are better prepared to become responsible adults.

Residential pupils' health is promoted to a very good standard. There is a culture of healthy living embedded in daily routines, including exercise and healthy eating. The arrangements for giving pupils their medication are robust. In addition, the school nurse very effectively coordinates support for any health needs. External specialists, such as child and adolescent mental health services, give advice and provide direct individual support to pupils. Staff give particular attention and excellent support to promote and protect pupils' emotional and psychological health.

Residential pupils have access to the internet and mobile telephones and they can contact their families and friends easily. The vast majority of parents report that communication with staff is very good and they are kept up to date with any important information. At the time of inspection, there was one exception to this.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Safeguarding practice has improved since the last inspection. The levels of safety and supervision at night are much better and are supported with a system of door alarms. There is regular evaluation and assessment of this system that helps to protect residential pupils and promotes their privacy and independence. New locks are in place on bedroom, toilet and bathroom doors, further protecting and respecting residential pupils' dignity and privacy.

A new risk assessment policy is in place and implemented across the school. Staff pay particular attention to the diverse individual vulnerabilities of residential pupils, such as child exploitation, presenting challenging behaviour, misunderstanding of appropriate relationships and running away from staff. The school nurse and speech and language staff facilitate excellent one-to-one and group work with residential pupils. This promotes residential pupils' knowledge about relationships, sexual health and e-safety and complements the curriculum taught in school.

For all but one residential pupil, risks to their safety have reduced. In one recent incident, a vulnerable residential pupil who has additional sensory impairment managed to run out of school and across the road. Although staff were quick to follow, there was a heightened risk of accident. During other attempts to leave school, staff have always kept this pupil safe. The management team swiftly took steps to improve safety measures at school following this incident. A review of the perimeter of the school grounds to assess whether such risks to residential pupils can be further reduced is recommended. Staff practice with regard to supporting vulnerable pupils out in the community is robust and based on professional multi-sensory impairment input. This ensures that residential pupils access their favourite activities and participate in the local

and wider community in a safe manner.

The head of care is now the designated safeguarding lead. The school's child protection policy has been amended, and procedures take account of new government guidance. There is an effective system for reporting concerns about any pupil, which the head of care acts on promptly. If necessary, the head of care will refer concerns to relevant safeguarding agencies and any allegations about staff to the local authority. He is developing stronger links with the local authority and has arranged for the local authority to deliver training directly to staff. He has also ensured that all staff receive training in relevant safeguarding matters, such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. The governor responsible for safeguarding oversees the local authority's audit of the school's safeguarding systems. These arrangements contribute to the effectiveness with which the school keeps all pupils safe. Procedures are in place to report any pupil that is missing, but, as residential pupils enjoy being at school and feel safe there, these have not had to be used.

Pupils' behaviour across school and the residential provision is very good. Pupils are polite, respectful and courteous. A very small minority of pupils display challenging behaviour. Staff are effective at managing this sensitively and consistently according to multi-agency behaviour management plans. Staff understand the individual vulnerabilities of residential pupils and take appropriate action to keep them safe in their day-to-day lives at school. Staff communicate well with them, know their triggers, are aware if they are distressed and are able to help them to manage their emotions.

Record-keeping has improved, with better detail of incidents, de-escalation techniques and use of physical intervention methods. The communication of the views of residential pupils is also stronger. Support from the speech and language therapists in using talking mats and social stories helps residential pupils to communicate their views and feelings about their behaviour. There is good management oversight of incidents and robust analysis to identify trends and explore different strategies. One residential pupil, in particular, has made significant improvement, without an incident this half-term, and is integrating far more into the daily social life of the school.

Residential pupils are able to make their views known, are consulted about their care and are represented on the school council and care council. They feel listened to, but their views are not always responded to in a timely manner. Despite this, residential pupils have effected improvements, including having iPads, new privilege cards and access to wi-fi. They helped to run the talent show and arranged the school disco. In the post-16 provision, a pupil helped to compile the consultation survey. This shows that the school is keen to promote the voice of residential pupils. In addition, the vast majority of feedback about the school from parents is positive, as reflected by these comments: 'Staff are the best, and I appreciate all the help and support that [X] has received,' and 'Staff are not just staff. They really care and, if you ask, they go out of their way to help. They seem to want the best for every student.'

There is good management oversight of the physical environment, keeping it safe and well maintained. There are regular checks of fire equipment and fire safety procedures. There are suitable individual evacuation plans in place for residential pupils who do not respond well to the fire alarm. There are regular health and safety checks and a thorough approach to assessing risks in school, on trips out and for activities. The recruitment process for new staff is robust and ensures that the school only employs

people who are suitable to work with vulnerable children.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

This area requires improvement as action planning in response to a recent safety incident and to residential pupils' views of the school is not comprehensive enough. Furthermore, in one case, there is insufficient oversight of both care practice and of keeping a residential pupil's care plan and individual risk assessment up to date to match the good care practice that takes place. This potentially compromises the responsibility of leaders in ensuring that any concerns about the school are robustly addressed and reduces the accountability of staff actions. The headteacher took prompt action to remedy these deficits.

Other areas of leadership and management are stronger. There are high expectations of performance embedded throughout the school, with leaders and staff having strong aspirations for all pupils to have positive experiences and succeed. This high setting of standards is backed up, in the most part, by robust working practices to ensure that residential pupils make very good progress.

The leadership team ensures that the residential experience is effective in making a robust contribution to pupil development and that it helps form a strong sense of community. Residential pupils learn to self-advocate and trust that staff will also speak up on their behalf and support them. Pupils feel safe in confiding in staff about personal and sensitive issues, which reflects their feelings of belonging and safety.

A stable and experienced staff team provides residential pupils with stability and consistency. Staff turnover is low, which helps pupils to form strong bonds with their adult carers and develop lasting and trusting relationships over the years when they are at school. The staff receive regular training, support and supervision to ensure that they have up-to-date skills and knowledge to carry out their roles. Leaders review and evaluate practice and have taken steps since the last inspection to make a range of improvements. Staff meetings are more effective. There has been additional training for staff, policies have been reviewed and a better system of monitoring residential pupils' progress is in place.

Leaders are committed to a process of continuous improvement. The head of care networks with other schools and receives external supervision from an experienced consultant. The governors take an active role in monitoring the school's performance and initiate improvements, such as in the quality of accommodation and the curriculum for sex and relationship education. This is supported by regular, suitable monitoring from an independent visitor. Leaders report that this external scrutiny is helpful in reviewing practice, and evaluation reports have improved in quality since the last inspection. Action plans are implemented if any shortfalls are identified, and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met.

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 exceed the standard of good and result 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 their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	108120
Social care unique reference number	SC001535
DfE registration number	

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	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	56
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	3 to19
Headteacher	Ann Bradbury
Date of previous boarding inspection	17/11/2015
Telephone number	01937 842144
Email address	info@stjohns.org.uk

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