

St Dominic's School

St Dominics School, Hambledon, GODALMING, Surrey GU8 4DX

Inspection dates

07/02/2017 to 09/02/2017

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good **2**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement 3

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good 2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Children enjoy excellent relationship with the stable, experienced and highly committed staff team.
- Children in the residential setting make more progress in some studies, including English and mathematics, compared to non-residential children.
- Children make good progress in developing self-help skills, their communication and behaviour management, and in their ability to build relationships.
- Healthcare is outstanding and children show progression in their physical and mental development.
- Parents say that the experience of residential care has contributed significantly to their children's development. One parent said, 'He [her son] has improved his confidence, his life skills, independence skills and most of all his behaviour. I cannot praise staff too much. The care he gets is outstanding.'
- Staff are responsive to children's needs and apply effectively their comprehensive training in all aspects of safeguarding to provide a protective, nurturing environment. Staff investigate incidents thoroughly, speedily and where necessary involve other professionals in a timely manner.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special

schools

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

- 6.3 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.
- 7.1 The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 19.4 The learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and is updated if necessary.
- 20.4 The head teacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to: its statement of purpose; its staffing policy; the placement plans for individual children; and an internal assessment of its compliance with these standards. Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Include a chronology at the front of investigation files.
- Review and update the school and trusts documents, policies and procedures ensuring that they accurately match the enhanced staff practice. In particular update the statement of purpose and policies and procedures in relation to behaviour management, safeguarding and restraint.
- Ensure that the record of restraints includes the staff debrief with children when completed.
- Consider inviting the head of residential to governors' meetings. In particular those directly relevant to the residential setting.
- Review the organisation, analysis and storage of complaints to ensure that it leaves a secure record of the thoroughness of investigation and response.

Information about this inspection

The lead inspector made contact with the principal at 08:00 on 07 February 2017. A monitoring inspection conducted by an education HMI occurred on the first day of this inspection. During the inspection, the inspector met on several occasions with: the senior management team; the head of residential; the chair and deputy chair of governors; children; residential staff; a team of designated safeguarding leads; leaders with responsibility for recording and analysing behavioural incidents; staff responsible for health and safety; catering and staff recruitment; the independent visitor; and the nurse. Activities undertaken included a meal with children, two evenings in separate residential houses and observation of recreational time. Three parents completed telephone interviews. Records scrutinised included: Parent View results; medication records; recruitment files and the single central record; children's records; residential policies and procedures; and records of safeguarding issues, investigations, complaints and concerns.

Inspection team

Angus MacKay

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

- The school is a non-maintained weekly boarding and day school for children irrespective of gender aged between 7 and 19 years who have special needs. Pupils can also be emotionally vulnerable and /or have coordination and perceptual difficulties. There are currently 21 residential pupils. Staff provide residential accommodation for sixth formers within the main school building with younger pupils living in a separate house in the school grounds. Ofsted last inspected the residential provision in November 2015. The inspector was aware during this inspection that a serious allegation of a child protection nature was being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegation were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform the inspectors' judgements.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Parents and children talk glowingly of the experience of boarding. Children enjoy coming here, and parents, including those who have complained about aspects of care, seek additional time in residential. One parent said, 'Residential has been fantastic. Our son has progressed beyond our expectations. It has been a truly life-changing experience.'

Children who have complex issues and special needs make progress in education which is known to and tracked by residential staff. Staff monitor performance in school and note the benefit of the residential experience to children's academic progress. Children make expected progress or better than expected in most cases and outperform day pupils in some subjects including English and mathematics.

Children in the residential setting make excellent progress in their improved behaviour, having less incidents and serious sanctions than day pupils. They say that staff are strict but friendly. Parents say that the benefit is transferrable to home and they experience radically improved behaviour. One parent said, 'Before going there he was aggressive, attacking us and self-harming. He has stopped all of that since being there. He talks highly of the staff. It has just been fantastic.'

Children are knowledgeable about their personal learning plans and care plans saying they and their parents contribute to them each term. Children say they make progress in the school and particularly in the residential setting. One child said, 'being in residential has definitely improved me. I have grown up here. Before coming here let's say I was a bit naughty. I'm more mature now. I feel that being in boarding has helped me.'

Children develop life skills and independence at their own pace in the residential setting. They aid in simple chores and many work diligently on self-help targets. Staff carefully monitor their actions, adjusting care plans and targets to aid the pace of change in their progress. Parents confirm that the improvements made in school continue at home. One parent said, 'His improvements in life skills have been great. It has been the best thing ever. He was helping me to peel potatoes just a minute ago. He can transpose things from the school to home. He would never have done anything like that before.'

Many children have no friendships in the community but have learned how to interact positively with others in the residential setting. They develop friendships during their time here, which many of them then continue outside of school. One parent said, 'Socialising has been fantastic for him. He has made friends that he now sees out of school and he gets invites to their houses and goes to parties. We were worried about sending him to a boarding setting but it has transformed all of our lives; the changes have improved things for all of us.'

Children join in a wide range of activities. These range from group games, such as football, to community activities of which swimming, theatre trips and social events such as trips to local coffee shops are particularly popular. Therapists and teachers work during the evening, providing additional clubs both aiding the breadth of activities enjoyed and improving their understanding of children through these activities. Staff

monitor children's progress in developing functional independence through this and other relevant targets.

Children love being in the residential setting and their parents confirm this as a positive, life-changing experience for them. However, staff have not reported fully on the management of the residential setting to the board of governors, including their compliance with national minimum standards. In addition, the health and safety risk assessment of the building is incomplete, compounding slack adherence to monitoring fire doors as recommended in risk assessments.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Staff produce contemporaneous risk assessments and well-constructed care plans for residential children. Staff are knowledgeable about the children and use the plans and risk assessments positively to enhance their progress. One parent said, 'Staff have been outstanding from day one. They give him the kind of care I would give at home. They are fantastic!'

Staff plan movements into the residential setting carefully. The early engagement of the school nurse in planning admissions ensures that staff successfully address all health issues. Where staff lack experience in managing a particular condition or health need, the nurse organises training prior to the child's admission. This structured and careful approach means that managers have not refused any admissions on the grounds of health.

Staff meticulously plan progressions within the school. These often take months to implement due to the difficulty that change presents to many of the children. This careful planning for transitions fully involves parents and the children. Staff use this consultation in planning their interventions. Subsequently they conduct everything completely at the pace of each individual child. This patient and child-focussed approach helps these transitions to be successful and enjoyable experiences for the children rather than the stressful and anxiety-provoking times that transitions have become for them in some other settings. One parent said, 'Because staff know the children so well they are always forward thinking and they anticipate potential problems before they happen. They think outside the box and make things happen successfully.'

Staff make excellent use of the fantastic facilities in the school and neighbourhood. They ensure that children can choose activities some of which are included in their care plan targets. These include trips into the community developing skills in socialising and gaining confidence in social situations. The activities include a good mix of physical ones, encouraging fitness and team building, and more relaxed ones in the residential setting. Residential staff can use the sophisticated online data bases to comment on children's progress with school and therapeutic targets achieved through these activities. One parent said, 'My son really enjoys the fantastic activities and is so busy there.'

Staff provide a suitably furnished and well-maintained living environment for children. The living accommodation is bright and decorated with positive images that reinforce

key messages in the curriculum or which have arisen from discussions in the school. Staff have placed notices advertising appropriate supports, including the independent visitor and how to raise concerns or seek external help. During the inspection the head of residential updated information on the office of the children's commissioner.

The school nurse provides excellent healthcare and advice. She actively participates in key meetings about the children, including all handovers from school to residential, safeguarding meetings and reviews. This central role facilitates her contribution to effective and comprehensive care planning and risk management for children. She maintains and implements comprehensive health assessments and healthcare plans developed with the children and their parents. To improve the effectiveness of healthcare she liaises with external healthcare professionals, ensuring that they meet all health needs effectively. Aided by her dedicated work, children thrive in the residential setting. The coordinated approach to addressing health targets with the therapy team, children and adolescent mental health teams and residential staff ensures well-planned and carefully monitored progress in children's health and well-being.

The nurse leads the excellent arrangements for managing medication. She maintains rigorous audits of the receipt, storage, issuing and return of medication. To ensure that staff issue medication safely she provides residential staff with strictly enforced competency training in the management of medication. She carefully records complex reductions in medication, tracking any changes carefully and ensuring effective outcomes for children.

Staff make regular contact with parents, ensuring that they are aware of all issues occurring in their children's lives. There are formal and regular processes for doing this such as weekly feedback emails from the residential staff and school, and the weekly newsletter. Staff seek parents' views through the parent forum and parent voice group. Staff aid children in contacting parents either using landlines or through controlled access to mobile telephones. One parent said, 'Staff do not forget what happens in the school has an impact at home, and think ahead and communicate with us. It can often be a small aside about another pupil but they make sure I know about it in case it bothers him at home.'

Staff work closely with parents to gain a profile of children before they come to the school. They gather detailed information about cultural, health and personal food preferences and plan how they will meet these for children prior to admission to the residential setting. The chef maintains an excellently managed kitchen which has a number of awards including a recent five-star hygiene award. He ensures that meals are healthy, balanced and produced from ethically sourced food. Children have access to fruit, drinks and healthy snacks in the residential setting. They prepare some meals with staff and the chef prepares others which residential staff and children cook in the evenings. Children have a monthly food meeting with the chef planning cultural evenings and making changes to the menu. Children say the meals are delicious, plentiful and reflect their requests from the food meeting.

Staff aid children to follow their personal religious beliefs and meet all cultural needs. Residential staff aid children to productively discuss issues which arise in school, or that they hear on the news or from following their own personal interests. One child

requested bible study classes during the inspection. He said, 'I find it reassuring to have a person of faith I can talk to about my beliefs.'

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement

Children say that they feel safe in the residential setting. They get on well with each other and say there is no bullying, and that if there was staff would stop it immediately. Parents are confident in the staff and believe their children are safe in the residential setting. One parent said, 'My son is absolutely safe there.'

Staff maintain appropriately detailed risk assessments on individual children. These provide staff with clear guidance on how to manage risks and seek a long-term reduction in risk. Staff review these at set periods or if something is seen to have changed. One child has a personal emergency evacuation plan to aid staff in the event of a fire or other emergency. Staff use incidents and their review of complaints and child protection investigations to advise changes to individual's risk assessments. For example, during a recent investigation staff reviewed risk assessments and immediately put in place enhanced monitoring and supervision to ensure all parties' safety. Risk assessments are suitably constructed, reviewed and maintained providing an effective structure and rationale to staff interventions.

Staff have good guidelines on procedures to follow if a child goes missing from their care. However, due to good staff supervision and the quality of relationships no children have gone missing from the residential setting.

Staff recruitment is in line with guidelines on keeping children safe in education. Staff files are well organised and evidence the rigorous application of all checks. Staff induction includes providing staff with a copy of the most current version of keeping children safe in education and providing comprehensive training in key aspects of safeguarding including radicalisation and extremism.

Governors, managers and all staff complete appropriate training in all aspects of child protection. This is regularly refreshed and enhanced with specific training in new or emerging threats. Staff effectively implement their training enhancing the safe care of children and others. Examples of this include early identification of risks and appropriate actions occurring. Visiting speakers provide guidance and advice to staff and pupils on key safeguarding areas including e-safety and the prevent agenda. The school is part of a trust which provides their policies and procedures. However, staff practice is more thorough than the trust's policies and procedures, which require upgrading to match this enhanced implementation. For example, guidance on radicalisation is less clear than the highly effective staff practice and reviews of safeguarding issues are more appropriately frequent in practice than as advised in the trust's policy. Managers have embedded safeguarding practice in all departments in the school and work positively with the local authority safeguarding children services. Managers approach the local authorities' designated officer for advice and make appropriate referrals immediately and effectively. Staff maintain thorough recording of investigations, tracking the completion of all actions before the designated safeguarding lead formally closes each issue. However, the lack of

a chronology in formal investigations makes it slightly difficult to follow staff's detailed responses. Managers ensure that they thoroughly review practice following any formal investigation, sometimes using independent persons to conduct forensic reviews, enhancing learning and progress. The school operates thorough child protection and safeguarding procedures, which provide safe working practices with children.

Staff and children have detailed guidance and education on e-safety. Managers constantly review practice and report regularly to the governors on initiatives to enhance safety in the school. The safeguarding team regularly review practice and have given this high priority in response to the rapidly changing threats posed to children. A new monitoring programme enhances the detection of inappropriate usage of telephones and closer controls on access to 4G telephones is in place following a recent investigation. The safeguarding team has increased staff monitoring of the use of the internet and telephones following this investigation revealing weaknesses in their controls.

Children behave well in the residential setting. The atmosphere is pleasant with lots of positive interactions between staff and children. Staff maintain positive behaviour through a combination of rewards and sanctions. Their training focusses strongly on the anticipation and de-escalation of incidents, and residential staff rarely use restraint. Analysis of incidents of restraint shows that they occur less frequently in the residential setting than in school. As with other trust guidance, the policies and procedures for behaviour management are not as clear and unambiguous as the training given to staff and their effective application of this. In particular, the guidance on situations where restraint is permissible or what incidents to refer to the local authority designated officer is not as clear as staff understanding which is in line with national guidelines. Managers have recently developed a comprehensive system for collating and reviewing incidents. Managers are developing reports from the system and recognise they have not yet fully realised its full capabilities. However, the analysis of data has aided them in making improvements to practice and to individual risk assessments and behaviour support plans. During this familiarisation phase some information has not been accurately recorded, such as the debriefing of children following incidents. This hinders the effectiveness of the system in fully identifying factors such as triggers to behaviours.

The premises officer maintains good records of health and safety checks evidencing the frequency and effectiveness of most tests. There is a health and safety policy which outlines how the managers maintain this appropriate level of safety. In addition, there is a whole school risk assessment supported by a separate fire risk assessment. However, the site risk assessment is incomplete and does not assess the risks in corridors or stairwells. The fire risk assessment identified hazards in corridors and recommended fire safety work to make doors compliant with fire safety regulations. A separate independent health and safety audit reminded managers that this risk was unaddressed. During the inspection the site manager checked all doors and found them to be compliant. However, managers had not addressed these potentially significant hazards in a timely manner. In addition, staff had wedged open a fire door at the foot of the stairs rendering it ineffective. The lack of a complete site risk assessment and poor adherence to fire safety measures weakens the otherwise good health and safety controls and pose a degree of risk to the safety of children and staff.

The school is one of three schools provided by the Radius Trust. The trust provides all policies and procedures. However, the school has its own board of governors. The school benefits from this highly motivated, skilful and engaged set of governors. Governors are knowledgeable about the residential provision and show a keen interest in its development. Governors have regularly visited the residential setting and one of them discusses compliance with standards with the independent visitor. However, the head of residential does not attend any board meetings and there is no annual review by governors of the operation and resourcing of the residential setting in relation to: its statement of purpose; its staffing policy; the placement plans for individual children; any internal assessment of its compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The manager sends regular reports via his line manager to the board commenting on aspects of this standard. However, it is not possible for the governors to properly interrogate this information without his presence at meetings.

The residential setting is well organised and effectively managed. One parent said, 'The school is very well managed. They are very clear about the management structure and keep us informed about this and about whom to contact. Knowing the structure of the school enables us to know whom to contact with any issue. This excellent communication about any change in the school is very helpful.' Staff receive good support and have confidence in the leadership of the residential setting and the overall leadership of the school. They feel engaged in the whole school and able to contribute to all aspects of the development of children in their care through direct work and using the sophisticated shared on-line programmes. They have supervision, appraisal and comprehensive training specific to their role. However, the management team has not annually evaluated the learning and development programme for effectiveness. Trainers check staff competency in some courses and there is evidence of the effectiveness of safeguarding training in staff's good practice. However, there is no formal review and updating of the programme which checks the impact of training on staff performance. All residential staff have a suitable level three qualification, or better, and the good appraisal and supervision ensures that staff can meet children's care needs effectively.

Managers keep the statement of purpose under continuous review, ensuring that it comments on the current ethos and practice in the school. They have completed a review in January 2017 removing some misleading comments about the locking of doors. However, information on staffing in the document does not mention the school's requirement that all residential staff must have, or gain, a suitable level three qualification. All staff have read this document and work in line with the ethos described. Managers plan to upload the new statement of purpose onto the website when governors have completed their review of it.

Governors have appointed an independent visitor who conducts at least six visits per annum to the school. He produces reports on these visits which comment on all required areas and additional aspects of practice as agreed with the governors. There are posters throughout the school advertising the visitor and his role. His reports include interviews with children and evidence of the visitor acting as an advocate for them. The visitor is striving to improve the quality of reporting as previous reports lacked sufficient data, analysis and comment on some areas. The newly formatted reports provide governors with valuable evidence of the quality and effectiveness of care and that staff safeguard

children when in the care of the school.

Parents and children know how to make a complaint and most have faith in the school's robust approach to their concerns. One parent praised the principal's personal and creative involvement in resolving her son's issue saying, 'She got personally involved and took a highly innovative approach to sorting out his difficulty. It was treating him as an adult and not belittling his concern and anxiety. It was a huge success and reinforced my confidence in the school.' Governors, managers and staff take complaints and concerns seriously and maintain a detailed data base of these. Parents praised the good communication from the school and records evidence regular and helpful updates to all involved. One parent said, 'Communication is fantastic, they respond within half an hour to any concern.' Managers comply with the complaints policy and procedure meeting timescales for investigation, conclusion and communication. Managers do not match the thoroughness of investigation and meticulous attention to the complaints process in their organisation and storage of complaints that have been dealt with. In addition, managers are not fully analysing the comprehensive record of issues and there is no separate identification of those relating to residential.

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

Unique reference number	125455
Social care unique reference number	SC013937
DfE registration number	936/7010

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	21
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	7 to 19
Headteacher	Angela Drayton
Date of previous boarding inspection	23/11/2015
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