

# St Catherine's School

St. Catherine's School, Grove Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 1TT  
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

St Catherine's School is a non-maintained residential special school for the education of students who have speech, language and communication needs and associated conditions, such as autistic spectrum disorders and attention deficit disorders. 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. The residential accommodation is currently provided in three houses on the St Catherine's school site. Accommodation for sixth-form students is in a residential house close to the school. An additional two small cottages are utilised by students who are following post-19 programmes at the local college. At the time of this inspection, there were 35 residential and 28 day students.

**Inspection dates:** 7 to 9 March 2018

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of previous inspection:** 27 March 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Young people make excellent progress through staying in the residential provision. They develop socially and emotionally and learn independent living skills and how to live with others. Young people are enthusiastic about the residential provision and say that they enjoy their time there. They are comfortable in their surroundings and were keen to show inspectors their newly decorated bedrooms.
- The school's therapies and nursing team works closely with residential staff to ensure that they have comprehensive plans to care for young people's health and emotional well-being. Young people continue to make progress in their communication and life skills through joint working and detailed plans.
- The school's independence programme is a particular strength. Plans are highly individualised and allow young people to learn skills at their own pace. Successes include being able to make meals and to travel independently via public transport and ferry to the mainland.
- Young people feel safe in the residential provision. They are confident to approach staff when they are upset or angry. Staff are skilled in supporting young people and know how to calm and support them when young people are unhappy.
- The senior team identifies well the strengths and areas for development across the school. They have completed detailed evaluation of the residential service against the national minimum standards and Social Care Common Inspection Framework to ensure that the best possible service is provided for the young people.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The school has not yet updated the complaints policy, despite it being a recommendation as a result of a complaint investigation in November 2017.

## **What does the residential special school need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendations**

- Update the complaints policy and procedure.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Young people make excellent progress educationally and socially as a result of accessing the residential provision. They are enthusiastic about their time in residential provision and inspectors observed them to present as comfortable and confident in their surroundings. Students' progress includes two who were struggling with routines at the time of the last inspection and are now going to bed much earlier. Last year, they were in their own area of the residential area as they were not settling well; now other students are sleeping in the same area as them. Some older students are keen to move on to the post-19 provision, to continue to have help and support from staff while they attend the local college.

Parents are consistently positive about the support their children receive and about the progress their children are making, in particular in their social and independent living skills. For example, a parent said that being in residential makes their child feel 'grown up'. The parent complimented the individualised travel plans that had been 'carefully worked out with my son's involvement'.

Young people are made to feel welcome in the school and those who have transitioned this academic year have become part of the group quickly. Some initial settling-in issues have been worked through and explored through the school's multidisciplinary meetings, where action plans and approaches are agreed. Meetings have also identified that some students are struggling with attendance through illness or home issues. The school is actively seeking to improve attendance by contracting their own education support member of staff via the local authority to work with young people and their families; for example, to support a young person who wants to move on to a college closer to his home location, but is struggling to wait until the end of the school year and is acting in a way that suggests he is seeking to be excluded.

Physical and emotional well-being is promoted throughout the school. The professionals who make up the on-site nurses and therapies team work closely together and with staff to ensure that clear plans are in place to manage medical conditions and emotional well-being. A psychotherapist is employed directly for students who require this. The nurses also attend medical appointments to support young people and their parents to ensure that appropriate treatment is sought. Young people are assessed to see if they can administer their own medication to increase their independence whenever possible. Medication was noted to be in an envelope for a day student, and the nursing team rectified this during the inspection.

Young people are guided to understand healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. Since January, the houses have been working on healthy eating and exercise. Young people who would not usually opt for a physical activity, such as the range of sports on offer, have been engaging in the walking club. Some young people were

very excited to tell the inspector about their healthy choices and the amount of weight they have lost.

Young people's opinions are shared through the student council. They are also able to share their views individually as they hold the ethos that all students are important in all that happens within the school and residential provision. Young people have been involved in recycling and thinking about waste and how to reduce it, as well as consultation on bedroom colours and the food served in the dining room.

Young people are engaged in a wide range of activities, including the school's own Scout troop, attending the gym and external sports clubs. The school rock band played at a well-known music festival last summer and has been invited again for the coming summer. Other young people have a sweet stall at another festival to raise money for charity, as chosen by the student council.

The school's independence programme is detailed and is commendable. All aspects of young people's independence are considered, from being able to get dressed to travelling home independently via public transport and ferry to the mainland. Records of achievement are easily understood by young people and use coloured blocks to show how they are succeeding at given tasks. Dependent on individual needs, tasks are split into each aspect of how to complete it. This may be as simple as being able to get a drink of water, but may be broken down into how to turn a tap on and place the glass underneath. Excellent joint working with the occupational and speech and language therapists ensures that each plan is bespoke. Targets are regularly reviewed, and may include social skills, such as how to manage social situations being in a pub for those over 18, and completing 'think it' and 'say it' tasks to consider what is socially acceptable during conversations, as well as practical skills such as cooking and cleaning.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Young people's actions and demeanour show that they feel safe in the residential provision. Observations by the inspector showed them approaching staff when upset or angry, and this is being managed sensitively and effectively.

Staff are confident in their skills and knowledge of what to do if they are worried or concerned about a young person's safety or welfare. They benefit from regular safeguarding training and key topics are also covered in team meetings. Referrals to children's services by the head of care are extremely detailed, to help assessment teams in the local authority to determine the level of need. Staff also follow up referrals to ensure that they have been received and to find out what is happening in response to the concerns they have raised. Two concerns have been forwarded to the designated officer within the local authority; he told the inspector that he is confident in the knowledge of staff who work in the residential provision and in the actions taken with regard to safeguarding and child protection. A protracted complaint was managed extremely effectively, with close liaison with the designated officer to ensure impartiality; the investigation was conducted by an experienced

external professional. Apart from the updating of the complaints policy, which is under way, all of the resulting recommendations have been acted upon.

Staff are skilled in noting any changes in young people's behaviour and are alert to exploitation in all forms. They report any issues or concerns, such as unexplained sweets or cigarettes, to the safeguarding team. Joint working with the police and social workers ensures that concerns are managed effectively. Staff and young people have been trained to understand 'mate crime', recognising when someone is taking advantage of them, while pretending to be their friend. Young people are also supported to understand how to say 'no' and what to do if they are not listened to.

Young people have been engaged well in activities to understand how to keep safe online, and even those with weaker communication skills were able to tell inspectors what they had learned about not sharing information or passwords. Sixth-form students are undertaking an OCR-accredited course in keeping safe online. The speech and language team supports young people through 'sexual slang' and have had their work in this area published in professional journals. Young people are supported to understand swear and slang words and their meanings in different contexts so that they can understand the situation and how to respond.

No young people have been missing from the residential provision since the last inspection. Those who are likely to use this as a coping strategy have agreed safe places they can go to, such as to a therapist or nurse or to a specific area in the school.

Behaviour management focuses on de-escalation and redirection. Young people are supported to understand how their 'inner engine' is at certain times and indicate to staff on interactive charts how they are feeling, such as that they are anxious or excited or feeling calm and at ease. Staff recognise that behaviour is communication and have had specific training from the speech and language team in relation to this. The residential staff are also completing a CACHE certificate in understating behaviour that challenges. As a result of this greater understanding, restraint is rarely used. Sanctions focus on the behaviour in the immediate timescale and do not continue beyond the young person's understanding or perception of what they have done.

Young people are protected from avoidable risks through clear risk assessments and checks of the environment and safety procedures. All said that they know what to do if the fire alarm sounds and to report any strangers on site to staff. A chicane has been added to the public road which runs through the site, although vehicles were seen to be speeding down this road. Young people are confident in crossing the road and those who need extra help are supported by staff. Staff recruitment follows safer recruitment guidance to further protect young people from inappropriate adults.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

Leadership and management are very strong. Leaders have extremely high aspirations for the young people in the residential provision and want them all to have the best outcomes possible. They value each young person as an individual and take steps to ensure that their package of education, therapy and care is bespoke. The recently appointed chair of trustees has many years' experience as a headteacher in a challenging school. She takes her role very seriously and is seeking to develop the quality of care and teaching to improve the outcomes for young people even further. The head of care is a central figure within the residential provision and the school. Young people know where to find her during the school day and her office is a hub of activity at all times, with students and staff dropping in with any worries or concerns, or just to say hello as they pass.

Staff say that they are happy in their roles and enjoy seeing young people progress. They feel well supported and can approach the head of care and other senior staff at any time. They feel listened to and that they have access to the right training in order to carry out their roles effectively and provide strong support to the young people whom they care for. They say that they are an effective team and work cohesively to provide a stable environment for young people. Newer staff say that they were made to feel welcome and that the induction package was particularly good. They welcomed the opportunity to observe lessons and work with the therapies team so that they developed a whole-school understanding. All staff agreed that joint working across the school was embedded in practice and a key component in why young people succeed.

The senior team recognises the strengths and areas for development across the whole school and have completed an evaluation of the residential service against both the national minimum standards and Social Care Common Inspection Framework. Areas identified as requiring development have been acted upon and the evaluation is regularly reviewed. Termly reports by the trustees provide effective evaluation of the residential provision and challenge leaders where necessary. There have been some delays in maintenance and improvement works due to the inconsistency in the quality of tradespeople. The school has recently appointed a site manager who has developed links within the community and the required works are now being done more efficiently.

The head of care has formed strong links with partner agencies and remains in close contact with parents, social workers and health professionals as needed. She is effective in challenging professionals whom she does not believe are providing the service that the young people need.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.



## **Residential special school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC012597

**Headteacher/Teacher in charge:** Rachel Weldon

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01983 852722

**Email address:** [general@stcatherines.org.uk](mailto:general@stcatherines.org.uk)

## **Inspectors**

Jennie Christopher, social care inspector



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 and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018