

St. John's School (Seaford)

Firle Road, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2HU

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

St. John's School (Seaford) is a non-maintained specialist school that works with children who have complex learning disabilities, including some children who may have difficulties resulting from autism spectrum disorder, Asperger syndrome, pathological demand avoidance syndrome and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Currently there are 28 children on the school roll. Of these, 10 are residential. One residential area is currently not in use.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 June 2019

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 5 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people enjoy their experience in the residential provision. They form friendships with other young people and build rapport with staff. They develop their social skills as well as their independence skills, such as shopping and cooking. They learn to follow a healthy-eating programme.

Young people enjoy a wide range of activities, such as visiting local places of worship, yoga, swimming and going to the cinema. Young people have access to the school facilities outside of education time. Senior leaders have some plans to improve the site, for example by planting a sensory garden.

Young people are in good health. Staff work with parents to ensure that responsibilities are clear. For example, staff ensure that young people who find some routine appointments difficult, receive regular dental check-ups.

The effective work done by care staff underpins young peoples' education. Young people make good progress. Some are above their reading age and one young person is now a published author. Staff see young people's abilities and not their disabilities. They aim to support young people to achieve their dreams, such as getting a place on a film production course.

Staff demonstrate a sensitivity to the emotional well-being of the young people. For example, staff wrote a social story for a young person with an attachment to a member of staff, to explain why she was not going to be present due to extended leave. Education staff may support young people on activities during care time so that there is a familiar face, for example when there are staff shortages.

Staff use bespoke communication methods to talk to young people and get their views. This ranges from communicating with young people who are verbal, to talking with young people who use picture exchange communication systems. Young people are able to communicate with their parents, and others who are important to them, using digital technology.

Young people have targets in their placement plans and are making good progress. Such plans would benefit from having better links with education, health and care plans.

Staff encourage young people to think about the wider society. One example was planting 10 trees and commemorating local people who lost their lives during the First World War.

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

Key staff have addressed fully the previous health and safety concerns. Young people live in a safe residential provision that has regular audits and monitoring to ensure its ongoing safety. Senior leaders have obtained a building control certificate for the loft conversion in one of the homes. Some bedrooms have additional safety features in place, such as protective covers on electrical sockets, to fully safeguard young people. A young person said, 'I feel safe, as well as I do at home.'

The care manager has been meticulous in her approach to demonstrate the risk management process around sleeping accommodation. She assesses each young person's needs, the potential impact of others on that young person and the potential impact of that young person on others. From this information, she makes decisions about which bedrooms and houses young people are accommodated in.

The designated safeguarding lead uses the new computer software to manage safeguarding concerns effectively. The system enables all staff to record any safeguarding concern, safe in the knowledge that they have been prompted to record all relevant information and that the designated safeguarding lead has been automatically notified. The designated safeguarding lead works with other safeguarding professionals to ensure there is a thorough investigation if necessary, and that clear outcomes are recorded.

Staff are well versed in de-escalation skills to minimise the need for physical intervention. They adopt strategies that enable them to manage young people's obsessive behaviour effectively, so that young people do not need to resort to challenging behaviour. The key staff who are responsible for positive behaviour support collect statistics and analyse incidents to ensure that there is learning from these. There are worthy goals, for example to eliminate supine restraints from the setting. This aim is currently successful, as there have been no supine restraints since October 2018.

Risk assessments provide a picture of the needs of each young person. Staff understand assessments, and consistently implement the control measures. Staff are aware of the risks in the cyber world. Senior leaders have recently rewritten the policy on social media to make the boundaries clear.

Key staff adopt safer recruitment practice. This includes observing candidates with young people and assessing applicants' mental health.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The senior leadership team took swift and decisive action to address the shortfalls found at the last inspection. None of the young people currently living in the residential provision have been accommodated for more than 295 days and there is no intention to accommodate young people for more than 295 days. They produced a strategic plan that they have successfully implemented to bring about the other necessary changes.

The school has been through a period of staff changes and there are several new staff, some of whom have no childcare qualifications or experience. This is balanced by key staff acting as mentors. New staff spoke in the most positive of terms about the support and guidance they receive, including the formal supervision process. The care manager has identified in detail the level 3 training needs. The school is on the right trajectory for all staff to gain the qualification. The care manager has a management qualification and recognises the need to gain further childcare qualifications herself.

Staff are positive about the new management arrangements. Staff said that they feel supported, listened to and well trained to do their role. Morale has improved significantly. Staff said that managers have a visible presence in the homes.

Senior leaders introduced a comprehensive training plan to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about the individual needs of young people. Staff spoke in the highest terms about their training and support. Senior leaders are aware of the need to ensure that training is embedded in practice. For example, carrying out autism specific audits to assess if the environment is 'low arousal' for young people with sensory impairment following training in this area.

Senior leaders have reviewed the medication policy in conjunction with a health professional. They ensure that all staff receive accredited training so that young people receive their correct medication at the right time. The school nurse analyses any medication errors and ensures that there is learning from incidents.

Senior leaders review behaviour management records to ensure that they are of a high standard. Staff and young people alike now have a debrief after a significant incident. Key staff analyse each incident to consider the triggers and themes. They consider how to prevent recurrences. There are plans to introduce additional software to aid this task.

Key staff have developed systems for monitoring the approach to statutory reviews. Staff ensure that they are actively chasing the minutes of formal meetings while carrying out the agreed actions. Currently, staff contribute verbally to statutory reviews.

Senior leaders welcome complaints from various sources and view these as a tool to drive forward improvement. Communication with parents is improving. For example, staff agreed a short (two-day) break from residential to disrupt a behaviour pattern for one young person.

Maintenance staff keep the premises in good condition. They have a rolling refurbishment programme to decorate the young peoples' areas. Senior leaders recognise that one area is not currently fit for purpose. This is currently closed and out of bounds for all young people.

Governors are closely involved as critical friends of the school, offering senior leaders professional challenge and accountability. They are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and have improved their procedures for holding senior leaders to account. An independent visitor adds another level to the monitoring of the school.

There have been no new young people admitted into the school since the last inspection.

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

Recommendations

- Provide written reports on the progress of young people for use at statutory reviews.
- Consider how to further embed training into practice, such as creating more structure in evening timetables and using bespoke ways to communicate with young people who have autism spectrum disorders.
- Use education, health and care plans to inform targets in placement plans.
- Consider how to further develop outdoor activities in the garden and on the site.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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: SC050366

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Fran Pass

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

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