

# St Dominic's School

Mount Olivet, Godalming, Surrey, GU8 4DX

**Inspection dates** 10–11 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and students

### This is a good school.

- Students are very positive about the school and feel safe and well cared for. They settle quickly and make good progress from often low attainment when they start school.
- Students make excellent progress in their social communication skills. This is because therapists, teachers and support staff work closely together to plan for each pupil's needs.
- Reading and writing are taught well and students make rapid progress in these subjects. An increasing number of students gain GCSEs in a range of subjects.
- Teaching has improved and is now good. As a result, levels of attainment are rising.
- Students behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are friendly, polite and very welcoming. There is a strong culture of respect for each other.
- The sixth form is good. Students in the sixth form make good progress because the quality of teaching and the range of courses prepare them well for their next stage.
- The school is well led and managed, including the sixth form and the residential provision. Governors, leaders and managers have made sustained improvements since the last inspection.
- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is good. The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Although good, progress in mathematics is not as fast as it is in English. Teachers do not have enough opportunities to gain ideas from mathematics specialists.
- Students do not always have opportunities to share their work and find out for themselves what they do well and what they could do to improve.
- When marking, teachers do not always give students precise comments about how to improve their work or the time to respond.
- The effectiveness of sanctions given to residential students and their subsequent views are not recorded well enough. Communication between teaching and residential staff at the end of the school day is not always sufficiently detailed.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out by two Additional inspectors. The boarding provision was inspected at the same time by a social care inspector.
- Inspectors observed 10 lessons, four of which were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to students read and discussed their work with them during lessons.
- Meetings were held with a range of staff including senior leaders, school staff, school-based therapists, residential staff and members of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with one of the Trustees on the telephone.
- Informal discussions and meetings were held with students and staff.
- The team took account of the 29 parents' and carers' responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and of emails. Staff views were gathered from discussions and from the 55 staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors looked at information about students' progress, teaching and planning documentation. The school's documents on safeguarding were scrutinised together with records of attendance and students' behaviour. All documents relating to boarding were checked.
- The school has a number of awards including Autism Accreditation and the Eco Silver award.

## Inspection team

Helen Howard, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lily Evans	Additional Inspector
Liz Driver	Social Care Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Dominic's School provides for students aged eight to 19 who have a range of special educational needs including autistic spectrum disorders and speech, language and communication needs. The vast majority of students are boys. All students have a statement of special educational needs. The school offers weekly boarding and day places.
- At just over 10%, the proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students who are eligible for free school meals, those in care and those with a parent or carer in the armed services) is below average. None of the students in the school are currently from service families. Most students have White British backgrounds and come from a wide range of local authorities.
- The school is one of a group that has the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary as their Trustees. Some of the Trustees are also governors. The school is due to merge with a group of schools managed by the Grafham Grange Special Education Trust and final arrangements are currently being made.
- There are no Key Stage 2 students currently on roll.
- Some sixth form students attend college placements part time. The school does not enter students early for examinations. At the time of the inspection, Year 11 students had left school and sixth form students were on visits as part of their final week of school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all groups of students make outstanding progress by:
  - giving students more opportunities to look at their own and each other's work to see what they do well and what they could do to improve
  - making sure that when teachers mark work, they consistently give precise comments about how to reach the next level and give students time to respond to advice.
- Accelerate progress in mathematics by giving opportunities for teachers to gain ideas from mathematics specialists.
- Improve the recording of residential students' views and opinions in relation to sanctions, incidents and physical interventions.
- Improve the recording of the effectiveness of sanctions given to residential students and the behaviour management strategies used.
- Further improve communication systems between the teaching and residential staff at the end of the school day.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress over time from their starting points. Most join the school with levels of attainment that are very low for their age. This is due to their special educational needs and sometimes as a result of poor attendance at previous schools.
- Although attainment is affected each year by the very high rates of students joining or leaving the school part-way through their education, increasing numbers achieve GCSE grades. This year, just over a third of students are on track to gain five or more A\* to C grades.
- Many students have low levels of literacy and numeracy when they start school. They make rapid progress, especially in developing social communication skills, because they have individual plans to meet their particular needs. Therapists and support staff work in lessons alongside teachers to help students develop language skills and this approach is having a very positive impact on students' progress.
- The school has improved its use of information to check how well students are doing and this has resulted in teachers measuring progress more accurately and identifying gaps in students' understanding. A wide range of support is planned to help students catch up and this is accelerating progress.
- Reading is taught well across the school and students make good progress as a result. Students who need extra help are offered an individual reading programme and older students are encouraged to read aloud. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, students were reading about the sailor Ellen MacArthur. They were given different ways to pick important points from the text and as a result, could begin to express a view about her character, using quotations.
- The school promotes equal opportunities well. Groups of students, including girls, make similar good progress to other students. Those who are eligible for the pupil premium funding make good progress because the school provides equipment, subsidises trips and gives resources to ensure that they are not disadvantaged.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form because the range of courses offered changes each year to meet the needs of different year groups. This approach results in all students achieving accredited qualifications, either at school or in part-time places at local colleges. Some students are on track to gain Level 3 awards.
- Achievement is not outstanding because students do not make the rapid progress in mathematics that they do in English.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching across the school is typically good and parents and carers agree. Students are carefully assessed on entry to the school and teachers use this to plan work that matches their needs. This ensures that students make good progress from their starting points.
- Therapists set targets for students in lessons so that students can practise communication skills. For example, during a quiz about Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the therapist encouraged Year 9 students to put up their hands and wait to be invited to speak, as one of the key things to think about. This very effective joint planning helps students to make rapid progress in developing social skills. Additional adults support students very well in lessons. They have excellent relationship with students and know how to keep them on task.
- The use of 'key words', which give students the technical language they will need for the lesson, is a strength of the school and supports students' language development well.
- Teachers have well-rehearsed routines in lessons and these, together with visual symbols, help students to prepare for the day. A number of students find change difficult and the school uses a warning triangle sign to let students know that there may be change ahead. Students say that this helps them to adjust. The school has been awarded the Autism Accreditation in recognition of its success in supporting students.

- In the better lessons, teachers encourage students to think for themselves and check their own and others' work to see what they have done well and what they could improve. Consequently students make fast progress and are able to reach the next levels or grades more easily. This is not consistent across the school.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly. They do not always give students precise comments about how to improve their work or give them time to respond. This means that some students do not make as fast progress as they could.
- While good, students' progress in mathematics is not as rapid as in English because some teachers do not have the specialist knowledge required to support the most able students. The school has begun to address this with visits to gain ideas from specialist teachers but this is not yet available to all staff who need it.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Students' relationships with each other, with staff and with visitors are extremely positive. They are very tolerant of each other's differences and support each other well.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because some students do not work as independently as they could do. In a few lessons where teaching is not as strong, students lose interest and do not behave to the high standard seen in most lessons.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. With support, they become increasingly able to work on their own. As one sixth former said, 'I used to always be in trouble but I can sort things out for myself now.' Boarders are encouraged to have a say in how their House is managed and students have opportunities to make suggestions and have their views heard in meetings known as 'Student Voice'.
- Staff manage students' behaviour very well. They are very positive in their outlook and students respond well to the frequent praise. Many enjoy working out how many House points they have earned for good work, effort and punctuality.
- Residential staff enable residential students to make good progress in overcoming their difficulties with ideas to manage anger, communication and social difficulties.
- Students, including residential students, say that they feel very safe. They know about the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and say that although it is very rare, if it did happen, they would all have an adult they could trust to go to. The school tackles discrimination robustly.
- Residential staff are very suitably trained to manage challenging behaviour so that potentially tense situations are diffused swiftly and they rarely physically intervene. As a result, the number of physical interventions is extremely low.
- Sixth form students enjoy a number of responsibilities as part of learning to work on their own without constant adult supervision, including organising fund raising events and running a tuck shop at break times for younger students. Students are very aware of how to look after the environment and the school has been awarded the Eco Silver award in recognition of this.
- Attendance has risen since the last inspection. Most students attend regularly and arrive punctually to lessons. There is good evidence to show that students' behaviour has improved over time. As one pupil said, 'This school has changed my life.'
- Residential staff carefully record incidents including the sanctions they give. Records are not yet focused well enough on students' views or the effectiveness of actions taken.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Strong leadership by the Principal and senior leaders and managers has resulted in many improvements since the last inspection, including in achievement, behaviour and attendance. This demonstrates strong capacity to make further improvements.
- A whole-school focus on the quality of teaching has included regular monitoring, training and

support for teachers. This has resulted in improvements in teaching over time, with most being good and none that is inadequate.

- The school is highly regarded by local authorities and by the community. It works very well with a range of partners including health and social services, local schools and organisations such as the local horse riding school.
- As a result of robust arrangements for managing teachers' performance, only those teachers who meet the required high standards, as judged by the headteacher, are able to move up the salary scale. They have challenging targets based on students' outcomes, their own skills and the whole-school improvement plan. Leaders and managers provide opportunities for training and sharing of best practice.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure in the school, which works well with other agencies to provide a safe environment for students.
- Parents and carers engage well with the school. As one parent or carer wrote, 'My son has gained in confidence and self-assurance over the past couple of years, largely as the result of the dedication of the staff.'

The Principal encourages informal communication and the school provides a range of information through newsletters and on the website.

- The curriculum provides many opportunities for a range of experiences including trips, visits and clubs. Students especially enjoy practical subjects such as design and technology and sports. Art is a strength of the school, with several students achieving the highest grades at GCSE. There are good opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.
- The sixth form is well led and managed. The range of courses offered in the sixth form includes accreditation at all levels. Students also have the opportunity to attend college placements to study courses such as childcare and horticulture that would not otherwise be available to them. This results in all students reaching the grades and awards that they are capable of. All of the students leave to move on to education or work.
- The residential provision runs smoothly and is well led by the residential care coordinator. Students feel well supported and cared for, with clear and high expectations.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors and Trustees support and challenge leaders and managers well. They use the information they have about students' performance to question leaders and managers. They know about performance data and how the school performs in comparison to other special and mainstream schools. Trustees have direct responsibility for teachers' salary progressions. They manage teachers' performance well and know about the quality of teaching. They make sure that teachers are rewarded appropriately. They have tackled underperformance rigorously. Members of the governing body ensure that resources are used appropriately, including the pupil premium and know what difference it has made. Regular training ensures that they keep their knowledge up to date.

<b>Outcomes for boarders/Outcomes for residential students</b>	<b>are good</b>
<b>Quality of boarding provision and care/Quality of residential provision and care</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Residential students' safety</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Leadership and management of the residential provision</b>	<b>are good</b>

- Outcomes for residential students are good. Through their residential experience students make good progress in their education, social skills and self-awareness. Students are aware and proud of the progress they have made and the impact the school has had in preparing them for adult

life.

- The quality of the residential provision is good. Residential staff meet individual needs and offer very good support including pastoral care. Academic and residential staff work closely and communicate regularly. However, the handover at the end of the school day does not always provide enough information to residential staff.
- Accommodation is very good and students enjoy a warm and comfortable environment that is well resourced. Students receive a very good provision of food with clear emphasis on healthy eating and protecting the environment.
- The school is actively recruiting for a leadership post that will include head of care. Current cover arrangements are very effective. The residential staff team is stable, trained and experienced. Staff recognise the diverse needs of students and plan well for them so each individual pupil is enabled to develop and achieve well.
- Staff receive very good support and regular supervision to enable them to develop their practices. All required policies are in place and regularly reviewed. Records are, in general, detailed and stored securely. Monitoring is robust with good evaluation systems in place that drive forward improvement.

## What inspection judgements mean

<b>School</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its students' needs. This ensures that students are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its students' needs. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

<b>Boarding/Residential provision</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	125455
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC013937
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	406311

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision 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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of students</b>	8–19
<b>Gender of students</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of students in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of students on the school roll</b>	69
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	15
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	26
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ken Cowdery
<b>Headteacher</b>	Angela Drayton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2–3 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01428 684693
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