

St Dominic's School

St. Dominic's School, Hambledon, GODALMING, Surrey, GU8 4DX

Inspection dates	16/06/2014 to 18/06/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Extremely positive, respectful and nurturing relationships with experienced and committed staff enable pupils and students to trust the adults who care for them and benefit from their support and guidance. Staff work together effectively to meet the holistic needs of pupils and students.
- Pupils and students thrive in an environment where staff recognise and value their individual strengths and unique qualities. They make excellent progress in relation to their starting points in their social skills and social interaction. They make significant personal development through increased self-confidence, self-esteem and resilience. The residential provision is central in advancing their academic, personal, social and emotional development. Pupils and students receive admirable support to become confident, independent members of their communities.
- Pupils and students make huge strides in their emotional maturity due to the close attention paid to their emotional well-being. Therapists, education staff and care staff collaborate effectively to identify pupils' and students' individual needs and specific strategies to support their development. Families recognise and report significant progress and improvement.
- Robust safeguarding practice ensures pupils and students are safe. Staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities, know each pupil and student extremely well and protect them in relation to their specific vulnerabilities whilst ensuring they have opportunities to develop appropriate life skills.
- Pupils and students benefit from dynamic, passionate leadership and a strongly committed staff team. The residential provision is continually evolving to meet the needs of pupils and students.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The school was given three hours notice of the inspection. Meetings took place with the Principal, Head of Inclusion, Safeguarding and Wellbeing, residential care co-ordinator, pupils and students, residential staff, business manager, school nurse, site manager, behaviour management leads, chair of governors and governor. The inspector ate three meals with students, observed evening activities and visited both residential areas. Documents and records were examined. Information from surveys and Parent View was considered. Four parents were consulted by telephone for their views.

Inspection team

Janet Hunnam

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The school is a non-maintained weekly boarding and day school for boys and girls aged between 7 and 19 years with special needs. Pupils can also be emotionally vulnerable or have coordination and perceptual difficulties. There are currently 21 residential pupils. Residential accommodation is provided for sixth formers within the main school building with younger pupils living in a separate house in the school grounds. The residential provision was last inspected in July 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- consider consulting parents and carers on pupils' and students' care plans

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils and students are outstanding. They thrive within a nurturing and supportive environment where they develop confidence, self-esteem and trust. A parent commented that the residential provision has 'made an enormous difference' for their son. Another stated that they 'have got their son back; he didn't believe in himself and now he has a sense of himself and is more trusting, resilient and confident'.

Pupils and students have exceptionally good quality relationships with staff and enjoy being in the company of staff who respond to them with warmth and respect. Consequently, pupils and students listen to staff and accept the support they offer, enabling them to make significant progress in relation to their starting points. Parents comment on the 'spectacular job' staff have done in supporting pupils and students to make progress and that staff are 'absolutely fantastic'. Parents are particularly complimentary in relation to the trusting and supportive relationships between staff, pupils and students, which enables them to make huge advances in their social interaction with peers and adults. A parent commented that staff 'tell the truth and give their honest opinion', building pupils' and students' trust so that emotionally they are able to discuss their feelings and learn important life skills through discussion, negotiation and compromise. Pupils and students are developing constructive, tolerant peer relationships with an understanding of appropriate social skills.

Pupils and students report positively on their residential experience. A pupil commented that 'it feels like home' and another that 'staff help us a lot'. They enjoy a wide range of enriching experiences enabling them to participate in new leisure pursuits and follow their personal interests. Staff encourage pupils and students to participate in activities in the community such as marines, sea cadets, swimming, horse riding and golf which develops their self-confidence and social engagement. On-site activities include gym sports, street dance, bicycle spinning, cooking, remote control car club and drama, which pupils and students choose to take part in.

Residential pupils and students flourish in a setting where they are valued as individuals and where their views are appreciated. All residential pupils and students have a link worker who consults with them on an individual basis but pupils, students and parents report that they can approach any member of staff. A parent commented that 'there is always someone he can talk to'. Members of staff, including senior managers, are extremely responsive to pupils and students who clearly appreciate the informal interaction from staff, which bolsters their self-confidence and sense of appreciation. They are able to put forward their views through surveys, questionnaires, residential meetings and through student voice meetings. Their views are important to staff and they have been influential in decisions regarding the evening activity programmes, choosing computer games, end of term trips and re-decorating common areas. Observation of staff's interaction during student voice meetings, residential meetings and informal conversations shows this consultation is meaningful, with staff, pupils and students discussing issues on equal terms. It is clear that the opinions of pupils and students are important, demonstrating to pupils and students that they are valued and respected, which has a huge impact on their confidence and self-esteem.

There is a strong focus on preparing pupils and students for the next stage. Developing daily living and independence skills begins at an early stage at a level and pace that takes into account individual abilities and vulnerabilities. Everyday chores are part of normal routines with younger pupils taking responsibility for helping staff around evening mealtimes. Older students focus on taking personal responsibility for themselves and developing skills vital to manage the outside world safely and successfully, such as developing confidence to travel independently. Staff provide sensitive support appropriate to pupils' and students' individual needs and opportunities

for them to move forward, however small the steps may be.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Excellent support by an experienced, stable and committed staff team provides nurturing, sensitive and highly individualised care. Parents report extremely positively on the support provided for pupils and students. Comments include 'staff go above and beyond', 'staff love and care for my son like we do', 'staff know him really well' and 'staff are absolutely fantastic'. Staff tailor the induction for new residential pupils and students to their needs, with an emphasis on each student and pupil feeling comfortable and happy in the residential environment. Education staff, care staff and therapists work closely together and communicate effectively ensuring students and pupils receive consistency and continuity of approach.

Staff know the residential students and pupils extremely well. This is reflected in thorough and detailed care plans, which specifically identify students' and pupils' needs in all areas with strategies to support their progress and development. Pupils and students are involved in their care planning process, working with staff to set their own targets and review their progress. Parents report staff are proactive in encouraging the use of consistent strategies across the residential provision and home. They comment that staff and parents work together to support progress. Staff do not send care plans to parents and carers for consultation and information, but this would further promote a consistency of approach to benefit pupils and students.

Pupils and students are enthusiastic about the activities offered and engage in a wide range of leisure pursuits both on site and in the wider community. They are encouraged to pursue their individual interests and participate in group activities, which enrich their social experiences and develop their social interaction skills.

Arrangements to meet health needs ensure pupils and students receive appropriate support. The school nurse is an integral member of staff, overseeing the well-being of pupils and students, which is at the centre of practice throughout the residential provision. Each residential pupil and student has an individual health plan, compiled in consultation with parents. This ensures staff identify all health needs with specific arrangements agreed to meet these needs. Residential pupils and students are registered with a local GP who visits the school termly to review health and medication policies to promote the welfare of pupils and students. Care staff administer medication under the guidance and monitoring of the school nurse who ensures the process is robust.

Staff give the emotional well-being of pupils and students high priority. Parents comment that pupils and students are physically well looked after but specifically comment on 'the excellent support for emotional well-being'. Staff continually address how pupils and students feel about their experiences and ensure support is available to help reduce their anxieties. A parent commented 'staff are so supportive and talk to him in a way he can understand, always explain 'why' and are totally non-confrontational'. The work of the team of therapists is central to the waking day curriculum, providing individual support for pupils and students and advice and guidance for staff on strategies to promote positive outcomes for pupils and students.

Pupils and students enjoy the food on offer, which is healthy and varied. Staff encourage them to try new food and monitor their diets to ensure they are eating healthily. Meals are well-ordered sociable occasions both within the school at lunchtime and in the residential accommodation. Staff encourage pupils and students to lead an active, healthy lifestyle, joining them in physical activities and role modelling to promote positive leisure pursuits.

Accommodation is spacious, well maintained and provides a homely and comfortable environment

for pupils and students. They are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms to reflect their own personalities and interests, giving them a sense of belonging and self-identity.

Pupils and students report they are able to contact their families easily. Parents comment that communication with staff is excellent and they receive weekly updates on progress, Staff inform them promptly of any significant event. A parent commented that it 'feels like staff and parents are working together to support my son'.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The arrangements in place to ensure residential pupils and students receive safe care and are protected from harm are outstanding. Pupils and students report they feel safe because staff protect them and parents confirm they have no concerns regarding their safety. A parent commented that their child is 'totally safe' and the child sees the residential provision as 'a second home'.

Safeguarding pupils and students is a priority. Recruitment processes are robust ensuring that only adults who have been checked as being suitable to work with children are employed. Clear policies and procedures reflect the vulnerabilities of pupils and students and these, together with up-to-date training fully support staff to provide excellent safeguarding measures. All staff, including ancillary staff, receive appropriate child protection training and know the procedures for reporting any concerns. Visitors are signed in and monitored whilst on the premises. A team of designated safeguarding leads consider all concerns and effectively liaise with local safeguarding agencies when necessary. Staff are confident in their safeguarding role and alert in recognising causes for concern and taking proper action to protect pupils and students.

There have been no allegations made against staff but procedures are in place to manage any concerns, including immediate referral to the local authority designated officer. There have been no incidents of pupils and students leaving the residential provision without permission but clear protocols are in place with the local police to respond appropriately if such a situation arises. A sex and relationships education policy is in place to ensure pupils and students develop knowledge, understanding and personal skills to make responsible and informed choices. Learning how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse is included in this curriculum area. Staff also receive training to recognise the signs of exploitation and abuse. They are vigilant in observing pupils and students and prompt in reporting if concerns arise. The head of inclusion, safeguarding and wellbeing has specific responsibility to monitor and review all safeguarding arrangements within the school and the residential provision. This is undertaken on a continuous basis with the residential co-ordinator, to ensure all safeguarding procedures are implemented and pupils and students are protected from harm.

Promoting positive behaviour is a clear strength of the school. Expectations of appropriate behaviour are clear, based on moral standards of valuing difference, justice, consideration and respecting each individual's rights to live and learn at the school. Targets such as 'we prefer polite' and 're-state that with respect', which specifically support positive behaviour, are evident throughout the school. All staff model good behaviour and interaction between pupils, students and staff is mutually respectful.

The standard of behaviour within the residential provisions is of a very high standard. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are infrequent. Staff receive training to manage behaviour and are highly skilled in de-escalating potential crisis situations. There has been only one recorded recent incident of physical intervention and this was a low-level intervention to divert a pupil from any potential harm. Individual behaviour management plans are in place where necessary, compiled with input from therapists and tutors, which identify triggers and strategies to support individual pupils and students. Staff discuss behaviour targets with individual pupils and students, allowing

them to contribute to their plans and discuss effective support strategies. Staff use consequences for inappropriate behaviour rarely but appropriately, to underline the notion to pupils and students of taking responsibility for their actions.

Pupils, students and parents report bullying is not a problem. Staff closely monitor and address any issues, including cyber bullying, as necessary with continued education for pupils and students through discussion, assembly themes and the general ethos of the school. Managers are raising awareness of the safety of pupils and students when on-line. The new e-safety policy focuses on educating pupils and students on how to be safe on-line whilst protecting them when using computers within the school.

Safety of the residential provision is monitored effectively. A range of health and safety checks and fire safety checks are carried out regularly, including fire drills for residential pupils and students. Risk assessments are kept up to date and comprehensive systems are in place to protect pupils, students and staff.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. Managers share a common understanding of the ethos of the school, which they communicate effectively to pupils, staff and parents. Led by recently appointed experienced, dynamic and committed senior managers, the residential staff team provide pupils and students with support that enables them to make significant progress, which impacts positively on their learning. Senior managers work closely together to ensure the residential provision is fully integrated into the school and is central in advancing pupils' and students' academic, personal, social and emotional development. Recent management changes have been implemented smoothly with no negative impact on pupils and students.

Experienced, well-trained staff continually strive to enhance the care and welfare of pupils and students. Pupils and students benefit from clear, well-known structures, routines and boundaries, which contribute to them feeling safe. Staff know the pupils and their families very well enabling them to provide highly individualised care, support and guidance. Staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. Communication and information sharing amongst staff is excellent, resulting in prompt interventions to support pupils and students and ensuring a consistently high standard of care.

Senior managers regularly monitor the residential provision, ensuring the service continues to evolve to provide opportunities for pupils and students to develop and make progress. The head of inclusion, safeguarding and wellbeing and the residential co-ordinator maintain a high profile within the residential provision resulting in continuous day-to-day oversight and evaluation of staff practice, records and the progress of pupils and students. Monitoring visits by the independent visitor take place half-termly, with their reports further underpinning the monitoring and evaluation of the provision to maintain high standards. Currently, all policies and procedures are under review following the transfer of the school to the Radius Trust.

Managers are continually looking at ways of developing the provision to ensure the experience of boarding allows residential pupils and students to make outstanding progress in educational, personal and social development. The waking day curriculum is being revised to ensure pupils and students have optimum opportunities to develop. Recently, changes have been made to where pupils and students are accommodated to ensure older students have access to more appropriate opportunities to develop their independence skills. Managers have addressed recommendations made at the last inspection in relation to recording pupils' and students' views following physical interventions and sanctions and recording the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies. Plans are in place to introduce a new system of recording incidents,

which will further develop the process of monitoring, evaluating and identifying patterns and trends to inform behaviour management strategies. Improved systems are in place allowing effective communication between academic and residential staff.

Parents report that communication with staff is excellent with staff routinely contacting them to share information and keep families updated on pupils' and students' progress. A parent commented that they 'always get a considered and informed response' when they speak to staff. Complaints are infrequent and any concerns raised are dealt with appropriately through the complaints procedure,

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
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

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	
Number of boarders on roll	21
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	7 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Drayton
Date of previous boarding inspection	09/07/2013
Telephone number	01428 684693
Email address	willis@stdominicsschool.org.uk

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