

# St John's Catholic School for the Deaf

Church Street, Boston Spa, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 6DF

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

St John's School for the Deaf is a non-maintained day and boarding school for pupils aged three to 19 who have hearing impairments. Accommodation is in the main school building and is arranged in separate groups according to the ages and needs of pupils. The school's ethos is based on Christian values. There is great emphasis on supporting the development of pupils' spoken language. The school has 48 pupils on roll. At the time of inspection, 21 pupils used the school's residential facility, 18 of these were post-16 students. These students attend local colleges in the York area. Residential pupils are supported by the national deaf child and adolescent mental health service (NDCAMHS) based in York.

**Inspection dates:** 27 to 29 November 2018

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

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

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:** 5 February 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- There is a thriving school community and the residential pupils make significant and sustained progress in their development.
- School leaders ensure that there is a thoroughly integrated approach in the support of residential pupils. This approach includes professionals who have different specialisms.
- The residential pupils are safe and secure. Their emotional well-being is given high priority.
- All the pupils transition successfully into further training, higher education and/or employment.
- The residential pupils have a strong voice and influence the running of the school.
- There are systematic and proactive safeguarding arrangements in place that protect residential pupils from harm.
- School leadership is confident and ambitious for the residential pupils to succeed in life.
- School leaders ensure that the care of residential pupils is bespoke and contributes to their achievements and progress.
- The residential pupils and their parents all rate the school highly.

## Inspection judgements

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

The residential pupils thrive due to the high levels of care, nurturing support and promotion of their independence. Their relationships with the staff are extremely trusting, which helps them to feel safe and secure. The residential pupils learn that positive relationships need respect, and they develop their skills of negotiation and cooperation.

The staff ensure that the care afforded to the residential pupils is creative, thoughtful and reflects the diverse needs of the pupils. The whole-school experience gives residential pupils significant and sustained educational, linguistic and social development. Pupils comments included: 'The staff protect me'; 'They are friendly and do not give up on me'; and 'We have life lessons and grow and mature.'

The residential pupils have a widespread influence in the running of their school. Their voice is strong and there is an active school council. School leaders facilitate question and answer sessions. The residential pupils reflect on their lives and the lives of others who are less well off, wanting to help them. The school is active in encouraging the pupils to become responsible citizens.

There are purposeful opportunities for the residential pupils to build on their personal interests and to develop their independence. This boosts the pupils' social skills, self-esteem, confidence and resilience. Parents' comments included: 'Our son absolutely loves it' and 'The staff are very good in understanding the students' needs and how to progress learning. They are also very encouraging, promoting independence in both learning and life skills.'

The residential pupils' achievements include learning to drive, developing kindness and compassion and receiving awards and outstanding reports from the college. Collaboration with college is excellent. The post-16 students learn that they can be anything that they want to be. They are motivated and driven to succeed.

On leaving college, the students progress to university, continue training and gain employment. This is a consistent and successful trend that the school achieves with the pupils.

The residential pupils benefit from the comprehensive promotion of their health. This includes physical health, such as exercise and diet, and their mental health. They learn about positive relationships and how to keep safe on social media websites.

The residential setting is welcoming and homely and is like an extension of the pupils' own family home. This was commented on frequently by some pupils and their parents. There is a thriving school community with positive values that supports

the residential pupils to become well-rounded individuals.

**How well children and young people are helped and protected:  
outstanding**

The residential pupils feel safe. They enjoy excellent relationships with each other and the staff. They do not go missing and there are no issues of alcohol misuse.

There is excellent practice founded in research and evidence about promoting the mental health of the pupils. With support from the school nurse, the incidents of self-harm have been fully eliminated. This has been recognised with an award from the National Association of Residential Special Schools.

The residential pupils are happy and relaxed. Their behaviour is exemplary and they like the rewards system that is in place. There are thorough systems in place to track and monitor any behavioural incidents and to check for any patterns.

The school leaders ensure that there is a proactive and persistent approach to managing risk. The school environment is physically safe and any falling out between the pupils is promptly resolved. Individual risks from the pupils' behaviour and vulnerabilities are assessed and regularly reviewed. The school leaders maintain a meticulous oversight of how well staff support pupils and reduce risks.

The head of care ensures that comprehensive safeguarding systems are in place. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and report any concerns about pupils' welfare. The head of care follows up any concerns with the appropriate agencies and ensures that the pupils are protected from harm. Safeguarding practice, including recruitment, complies with statutory guidance.

Staff undertake a range of safeguarding training, including training around child exploitation, radicalisation and e-safety. Their learning and understanding is assessed and evaluated. Consequently, they are well equipped to promote the safety of the residential pupils.

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

The school leaders are successful in their ambitions for the residential pupils to achieve well and to succeed in life. Accomplished and confident leadership ensures that there is a thoroughly cohesive whole-school approach to giving residential pupils the best levels of care.

There is a comprehensive development plan that is pupil-focused and is implemented in practice. Continuous improvement is driven by the senior leadership team and challenge from the governing body. This process is thoroughly supported by professional independent monitoring and consultancy.

The school's leaders ensure that residential pupils' needs are prioritised through

individualised approaches to care and learning. The residential pupils benefit from structured small group living, their own individual areas to relax and feel safe in, personalised care and targets and opportunities to develop their independence.

Residential pupils benefit from proactive healthcare support. This includes on-site speech and language therapy, audiology, health promotion from the school nurse and support from the national deaf child and adolescent mental health service team in York. The school's leaders ensure that this comprehensive multi-agency support, individual pupil assessments and regular reviews provide residential pupils with the best all-round care.

The extensive and integrated care informs the school's leaders about the residential pupils' progress and development. This allows for bespoke targeted care and support for residential pupils who may need extra help.

Staff receive regular supervision and undertake a range of training that is focused on meeting the needs of residential pupils. There is minimal staff turnover. Consequently, the residential pupils receive care from experienced, skilled and familiar staff.

The school's leaders, as well as having good working relationships with partner agencies, will also challenge any agency that they feel is not providing pupils with high standards of care. Recently, the school reorganised the provision of occupational studies, which was previously outsourced, to ensure that pupils were getting the best provision.

There is widespread promotion of tolerance and equality and diversity. This includes training in relation to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues for staff and pupils, visits from diverse role models and visits from a school in Rwanda. This increases the residential pupils' knowledge of protected characteristics and improves their awareness of other disadvantaged groups. The residential pupils grow in their respect for individual difference and are eager to raise money for charitable causes.

## **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:** SC001535

**Headteacher/Teacher in charge:** Ann Bradbury

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01937 842144

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## **Inspector**

Simon Morley, social care inspector



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