

St Francis Community Special School

St. Francis Community Special School, Wickenby Crescent, Lincoln LN1 3TJ
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

St Francis Community Special School is a maintained school that provides residential care as part of a 24-hour curriculum for young people who have medical, learning or physical disabilities, up to the age of 19. Boarding is available from Monday afternoon to Friday morning, term-time only. There is accommodation in shared and single bedrooms for up to 17 young people each night. Young people board for two nights a week, and the boarding arrangements are made for a term at a time. The school is situated on a residential estate in Lincoln.

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 January 2019

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: 7 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Leaders and managers challenge themselves and their staff to continually improve the excellent service provided to young people.
- The established staff team is caring and skilled. Staff know the young people really well.
- Young people love the residential provision and would recommend it to others. They particularly enjoy the activities and the opportunity to socialise with friends.
- Safeguarding children is an integral part of the service.
- Young people's views, wishes and feelings are continually sought and valued.
- Research-informed practice ensures that staff are leaders in their field, demonstrating real expertise. This means that practice in the residential provision is worthy of dissemination to other residential special schools.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The residential governor's role should be strengthened in their capacity as a 'critical friend'.
- The environment could be improved to make it more homely and comfortable.
- Clear written guidance is not yet available for staff about some aspects of care.
- Independence training does not yet support young people to manage their own medication.

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

Recommendations

- Consider strengthening the residential governor's role to reflect their status as a 'critical friend'. (Linked to National Minimum Standard 20.2)
- Consider ways to make the environment more homely and comfortable. (Linked to National Minimum Standard 5)
- Risk assessments or clear guidance should be available to staff about medical conditions that involve restrictions such as splints, sharing bedrooms, young people who are at risk from social media and behaviour that challenges. Risk assessments or clear guidance should be reviewed regularly, signed and dated. (Linked to National Minimum Standards 3.12, 5.1, 6.3, and 10.1)
- Consider extending independence training for some young people to include managing their own medication. (Linked to National Minimum Standard 3.8)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff work creatively to promote positive outcomes for young people. Young people thrive in the residential provision. They clearly enjoy the experience. A parent said: 'We are very pleased with the boarding opportunities given to our daughter. It is contributing greatly to the process of building her independence from us, her parents. She obviously enjoys it.' Opportunities to develop social and independence skills are excellent. The child-centred approach is worthy of wider dissemination.

Young people are articulate and able to share their views, either verbally or through non-verbal communication methods. Young people are highly complimentary about the school and the residential provision. It is evident that their voice is central in all decisions about the service.

Young people are proud of the residential provision and would recommend it to others. They say that they particularly benefit from the social opportunities that they would otherwise not have. A young person said: 'I just tend to be in my room, listening to music, at home.'

Young people make good progress from their starting points, particularly in developing their social skills. The residential provision offers young people a clear opportunity to improve their social and emotional development, but it is also fun. Young people are also given good support to develop independence skills. An upstairs flat is now utilised for some young people who are ready to become more independent. As this flat is upstairs, leaders are considering how they can also offer the same opportunity to young people who are unable to use the stairs. Some young people could be challenged further to start managing their own medication.

The residential provision is an integral part of young people's learning and development. Residential and education staff work closely together to achieve agreed objectives for young people. A member of staff said: 'There's never a problem. There's always a solution.'

Young people enjoy a wide range of activities. As well as being fun, these help young people to learn social skills such as turn-taking. Activities also enable young people to develop friendships and grow in confidence. Young people regularly visit a local home for the elderly, and some of the residents from the home also visit the young people in the school. Other activities include sports clubs, youth club, bowling, meals out, and walks to the local park. Young people say that they particularly enjoy singing and dancing.

Close working relationships between staff and parents enable a consistent approach to young people's care. This helps young people transfer their newly learned skills into their own homes. A parent said: 'He has become more independent and now

offers to make us hot drinks.'

Staff use research-based practice to support young people throughout their stay. For example, staff use a tool developed for children with autism spectrum disorder to measure their happiness. The results of this 'happiness profiling' confirm that young people are happy and settled in the residential service.

Some young people have complex health conditions. Healthcare tasks are managed well by staff, who receive training from the resident nursing team. Nurses provide 24-hour cover to support staff with healthcare tasks. This ensures that young people get care and support from skilled practitioners.

Staff try to create a homely environment, but this is a challenge in the current premises. Plans are in place to improve areas such as the bathrooms. However, some young people commented on how uncomfortable some beds are. Also, screens to provide privacy give an institutional feel to the residential provision.

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

All young people are at ease with staff. Young people feel safe and secure in the residential provision because they have nurturing and warm relationships with staff.

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the vulnerabilities of the young people. Safeguarding strategies are very well understood by all staff. Safeguarding guidance is shared in weekly updates to the staff team. This helps to keep safeguarding at the forefront of practice. Safeguarding is strong because staff have good access to several specialist agencies that can support young people to stay safe.

Staff understand that young people need to take risks as they prepare for independence and learn new skills. Staff manage these risks very well. However, some written risk assessments could be improved because not all are reviewed regularly. Staff are provided with written guidance that supports them to reduce risk. However, this could be further strengthened by improving the clarity of information about young people who share bedrooms, and restrictive practices such as the medical use of splints.

Young people will happily talk to staff about their relationships and sexuality. Staff respond positively and appropriately. Staff will liaise with parents, when appropriate, and signpost young people to suitable local support services.

Online safety is taken very seriously. Staff support young people to access the internet safely. Young people demonstrate a good knowledge of online safety. They are safer online because of the support provided.

The behaviour of young people is mostly good. They do not report bullying as an issue at this school. Staff know the young people very well and this helps to prevent any disputes escalating.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The management team provides strong and supportive leadership. Managers ensure the best possible care for young people because they nurture their staff as well as the young people. A member of staff said: 'We are motivated to up our game to get young people to their next place. We don't stand still.'

Leaders and managers are extremely passionate about achieving excellent outcomes for young people by using individually tailored planning. Leaders are continually striving to improve the service they provide. The development plan is challenging and aspirational. It is focused on developing the service so that it can provide even better support for young people as they move into adulthood.

Detailed induction plans are in place for all staff and volunteers. These clearly outline a plan for staff to be equipped with the relevant information to undertake their roles. Members of the established staff team are either appropriately qualified or are completing a qualification. They receive excellent training and support to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to provide highly effective care for the young people.

Governors understand the strengths of the service and the challenges moving forward. Governors complete very good-quality internal safeguarding audits. This led to the identification of safeguarding training for governors and, therefore, improved their understanding of safeguarding children. However, the residential governor's role in relation to setting high expectations and providing constructive challenge could be further strengthened.

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: SC038622

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Ann Hoffmann

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01522 526498

Email address: admin@st-francis.lincs.sch.uk

Inspector(s)

Joanne Vyas, social care inspector (lead)
Beverley Allison, social care inspector



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