

St Vincent's School

CBI Building, St Vincent's School, Yew Tree Lane, West Derby, Liverpool L12 9HN

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

St Vincent's School for children with sensory impairments and other needs is a registered charity governed by the board of trustees of the Catholic Blind Institute. St Vincent's has specialist school status and offers a curriculum for children with all levels of visual impairment, as well as additional needs. The school is in a residential area, with the accommodation split into two separate areas. The school caters for pupils between the ages of five and 18 years. The school provides residential places for up to 22 pupils on weekdays in term time, with a maximum of 18 staying per night. There is a wide range of residential options available, depending on the individual needs of the child.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 March 2022

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: 11 June 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The residential group and the services provided are highly valued by children, parents and carers. Despite the challenges that COVID-19 brought, staff were innovative in still providing good activities and safe care. Children remained in their class bubbles within the residential group and this lessened the risk of infection between them.

All children who access the school's residential provision make good progress, taking account of their starting points, in all areas of their development. Transitions into the residential provision are good because a multi-disciplinary approach is taken. Therefore, staff understand the complex needs of the child and can build a support package of care. Several children are moving on to adult colleges. Staff are working closely with educational providers and the children's parents to ensure that there is a seamless transition.

Children help to plan and inform their own care. Children comment on their own progress and this is reflected in their records. However, children's records require further improvement. For example, in January 2022, the head of care asked staff to update parts of some children's records and this has not been done. This does not indicate that children's records are updated regularly and that staff have the most up-to-date information available to them.

Children said that they enjoy staying in the residential group and look forward to seeing their friends, taking part in activities and learning new things. Quotes from children include:

- 'This is my second home. I love staying here.'
- 'St Vincent's has changed my life.'
- 'Staff are brilliant and funny.'
- 'Staff help me but encourage me to do things for myself first.'
- 'I love staying with my friends and going out on activities.'
- 'Staff called me regularly throughout COVID and this helped me to get through lockdown.'

Staff focus on children being able to socialise with them, with each other and with people in the local community. Staff support children to develop their social interaction skills, their communication skills, their mobility and to express themselves positively. As a result, children have built strong relationships with staff and have developed friendships with their peers.

Children's mental health and well-being was the focus throughout the pandemic. Children and parents received additional support from health professionals and staff

to ensure that they were coping with the situation and the restrictions. Some parents chose to keep their children at home and staff remained in touch with them on a weekly basis.

Partnerships between staff and children's families are excellent. Parents and carers spoke with passion and positivity about the impact that the residential provision has on children's growth and development. One parent said, 'The routines and structure have a good impact on him.' Another parent said, 'The progress he has made is amazing.'

An outstanding feature of the residential setting is how children are prepared for independence. The residential provision provides a stimulating and exciting environment for children, where staff consistently encourage them to work on their independence targets. For some children, this may mean learning basic independence skills such as making drinks and snacks. For other children, this means improving their hand-eye coordination, allowing them to help with their personal care. Managers and staff make sure that children's visual impairment and complex needs do not curtail their ability to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Children are immensely proud of their achievements.

Children are supervised in all areas of the residential provision, without taking away their independence. They are encouraged to mentally map out the environment by trailing and exploring objects of reference. Therefore, children can navigate their environment safely.

Previously, children stayed in separate groups in different parts of the school. Due to COVID-19 this was changed, as children were supported in bubbles. Since then, the two groups have come together in one main living area. However, the environment looks worn and tired. There is some plastering that requires attention and some new plastering that needs painting. Also, the walls were bare, so the environment did not look or feel homely.

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

Children are safe and protected from harm. Staff are competent in assessing children's risks and identifying strategies to reduce them. As a result, children have not been held, for their safety or the safety of others. Likewise, children have not been missing from the residential setting.

Staff are very mindful of children's individual anxieties. Staff use a multisensory approach to communication, involving tactile and auditory stimuli. As a result, the children become more confident.

Staff recognise that children's behaviours may be reflective and symptomatic of their often-complex health needs. A collaborative approach is taken if pupils are demonstrating challenging behaviour. The staff have regular meetings with specialised practitioners to discuss ongoing or new strategies.

Generally, safeguarding practice is good. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) works closely across the school and residential setting to make sure that children are safely looked after. However, on the day of inspection, a member of staff did not follow safeguarding procedures when he was alerted to a potential safeguarding concern. The DSL took effective action upon being informed of this. In contrast to this, strong and consistent governance by the DSL, senior management team and safeguarding governor means that safeguarding practice is monitored effectively. This helps to keep children safe.

Staff have received safeguarding training, but this has mostly been completed online during the COVID-19 pandemic. The DSL has provided the head of care with a questionnaire to assess staff's knowledge in safeguarding, however, this has not been used effectively. Further to this, staff have not received additional training that relates to safeguarding matters, such as e-safety, child sexual exploitation and county lines. This limits their knowledge and understanding in these areas.

A school nurse safely administers medication to the children. The approach to managing medication that is brought into the school and residency and later taken home by children is fully understood by staff.

The members of the maintenance team ensure that they regularly carry out all relevant health and safety, fire safety and environmental checks. They quickly address any known hazards or risks to children's safety. This means that children live in a safe and secure environment.

All residential and school staff are subject to robust recruitment processes. Recruitment records include verified employment references and a range of suitability checks. This ensures that staff are safe to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is a new head of care since the last inspection. She received a good handover from the previous head of care. Therefore, she understands the ethos of the school and the residential setting. With the support of the headteacher, they continually review the positive impact the residential service has on all outcomes for children. Leaders and managers prioritise children's progress. They encourage children to be independent and to be the best that they can be. There is a long-standing staff team who embrace this ethos and they have high aspirations for all children using the service. Parents and carers appreciate this.

Residential staff are suitably qualified and experienced. Staff say that they receive excellent support through staff meetings, supervision and the appraisal process. Staff say that these processes give them time to reflect on their practice.

The head of care's self-evaluation clearly demonstrates a continuous drive for improvement. She understands the areas of strength and areas that she would like to

develop in future. Alongside this, leaders, managers, staff, governors and independent visitors continually assess and evaluate the residential provision. This ensures that they have a clear understanding of the service's strengths and any areas for development.

Partnerships between leaders and managers and support services are strong and effective. These relationships are further supported by an active governing body. The members of the governing body fully understand the positive impact that the residential provision has on children's progress and development.

The head of care has acted on the recommendations made at the last inspection. Staff have completed their level 3 in caring for children in a timely manner and children's records now show how children have progressed.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that accommodation is appropriately maintained. Specifically, ensure children stay in a well-maintained, decorated and homely environment. (NMS 5.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the school ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school. Specifically, ensure that staff understand and implement safeguarding procedures. (NMS 11.1)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children. Specifically, ensure that staff receive bespoke training around specific safeguarding elements, such as e-safety, child sexual exploitation and county lines. (NMS 19.1)
- The registered person should ensure that every child has an accurate, permanent record of their history and progress. Specifically, enhance the monitoring and review of records outlined in Appendix 2 of the national minimum standards 2015. (NMS 22.1)

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: SC040724

Headteacher/teacher in charge: John Patterson

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 0151 2289968

Email address: office@stvin.com

Inspectors

Pam Nuckley, Social Care Regulatory Inspector (lead)

Catherine Fargin, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children’s social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022