

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 on the same site. The school caters for pupils between the ages of five and 18 years. It provides residential places for up to 22 pupils on weekdays in term time. There are a wide range of residential options available, depending on the individual needs of the child.

There is a suitably qualified and experienced head of care in post.

Inspection dates: 31 January to 2 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 1 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children who stay in the residential unit enjoy good relationships with staff and other children. Staff have incredibly detailed knowledge of the needs of children and their likes and dislikes, as well as their individual needs and personalities.

The number of evenings that children spend in residence each week varies, depending on their needs. Other children stay for 'extended' stays into the evening. This enables them to spend time socialising with their peers as well as enjoying activities that they may not otherwise be able to access.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities such as swimming, arts and crafts, meals out and socialising with each other. Staff also take time to arrange individual activities for children, in line with their individual interests. One child enjoyed a trip to the airport to practise making airport announcements, which he thoroughly enjoyed. The other children also enjoyed listening to his tales of this day out.

Children said that they enjoy their time in residential group and that staff help them and keep them safe. Parents also spoke positively about their child's experiences in the residential group and of the difference it makes to their child. One parent said that her child loves going to school and looks forward to going. Another parent said, 'We don't worry about anything.'

Children who stay in the residential group make good progress, for example, children's independence skills have improved, as have their social skills. One child who attended residence progressed to university to study sports. Although children make good progress, it is difficult to see the input of staff in achieving this progress or to see the progress that children are making termly or annually.

Staff ensure that children have good bedtime routines, to ensure they are ready for school the next day. Staff also help children with their homework and consult with school staff to make sure that any concerns are dealt with promptly.

Communication between residential staff and school could be better, to ensure that any educational targets are clear for staff to follow and monitor together.

Staff are provided with specialist training to meet the individual health needs of children before they are admitted to the school or residential provision. Safe and well-documented medication administration procedures promote children's health needs, and children are provided with healthy balanced meals. An experienced health care coordinator provides advice and guidance to children and staff as and when needed.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Staff receive training to meet the needs of the children in their care. Although staff receive training in safeguarding, a recent safeguarding incident demonstrated that staff, including leaders, are not fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in line with safeguarding legislation such as 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.

Although children have risk assessments in place, these documents are not always kept up to date and do not always contain strategies to minimise risks to children. Furthermore, risk assessments are not monitored and reviewed following serious safeguarding concerns. Because risk assessments do not reflect the current needs of children, they do not help staff to safeguard children effectively.

A recommendation was made at the last inspection regarding the standard of accommodation in the residential provision. Although some progress has been made to address this, the work has not been completed and a further recommendation has been made at this inspection.

Despite staff being trained in safer recruitment procedures, some gaps were identified in recruitment procedures. Steps were taken to address these during the inspection.

As a result of the positive relationships between staff and children and staff's detailed knowledge of the children in their care, few consequences are used and there are few incidents of physical intervention. However, records of serious incidents showed that there had been one incident of physical intervention, which should have been appropriately recorded.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The residential provision is managed by a head of care who is appropriately qualified and experienced. Inspectors observed her child-centred approach to standards in the residential provision. She acts as a role model to staff, who follow her values and practice.

Staff vacancies have impacted on the head of care's time for management tasks since the last inspection and this is reflected in the shortfalls identified in the oversight and review of records. The staff vacancies have now been filled, which will allow the head of care time to focus on managerial tasks and to drive forward standards in the residential provision.

Although care staff receive regular supervision, this is not used to reflect on the needs of children. Staff said that they feel supported by the head of care and that she is always available for support and assistance when necessary. In addition, they have an on-call rota for assistance out of hours.

The head of care has not received regular supervision since the last inspection. This has not provided her with the opportunity to discuss any matters she may wish to raise about her post, standards in the residential provision and areas for further development. In addition, it does not provide the principal with the opportunity to reflect on the standards of practice and progress in the residential provision.

A new independent visitor has visited the residential provision since the last inspection. However, these visits are not completed in line with the national minimum standards.

Staff know children very well and this was reflected in the calm and relaxed atmosphere observed throughout the inspection. Children were also seen supporting and helping one another and enjoying spending time with each other.

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

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- Monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:
 - conversations with parents/carers where relevant; checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, bullying, restraint (including restrictive interventions), risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children including in relation to residential provision;
 - assessment of the suitability and physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the residential provision and the external environment.
- Written reports are provided to the head teacher and where applicable the governing body. The governing body should record a formal response to each written report. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 3.2)
- All staff have access to relevant support and advice for their role. They also have at least termly supervision and a formal annual appraisal of their performance. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 26.6)

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure that staff understand their roles and responsibilities in respect of statutory guidance.
- School leaders should ensure that accommodation is appropriately maintained. Specifically, ensure children stay in a well-maintained, well-decorated and homely environment.
- School leaders should ensure the records specified in Appendix A are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. In particular, in relation to records of child protection allegations or concerns, risk assessments and care plans.

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

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Inspectors

Catherine Fargin, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Julia Toller, Social Care Inspector

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