

# St Bernard's School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	21 November 2006

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

St Bernard's School is a day and residential school for pupils with severe learning disabilities. Children and young people attending the school are aged between two and 19 years of age. At the time of the inspection there were four weekly boarders. The school also provides a respite service to children with disabilities over weekends and holidays. The residential facilities provide a single bedroom for each young person, two lounges, a dining area and a kitchen. Resources such as the swimming pool and other educational facilities are available outside school hours and provide varied opportunities for recreational pursuits. St Bernard's is located in Louth with access to local shops and community facilities. The school provides appropriate transport to access these facilities and the wider resources in the surrounding areas of Lincolnshire.

### Summary

This announced inspection was conducted as part of the planned inspection programme. All standards were inspected. The residential provision at the school actively contributes to young people's educational progress, enabling them to gain social and independent living skills and experience living in a small group setting. Young people receive individualised support according to their wishes and needs. Some have communication difficulties and staff use a variety of techniques to enable young people to communicate effectively. They are protected by good procedures for child protection and the prevention of bullying. Young people are helped to gain skills in preparation for adult life. They have a good relationship with staff who promote a warm and friendly atmosphere. Staff set reasonable boundaries and expectations of behaviour, but the behavioural management policy lacks detail. Staff are well trained, but are not receiving regular formal supervision or appraisal. Documentation relating to the monitoring of the residential wing are not available. There are good arrangements to meet young people's health needs. Staff have made the best use of the accommodation in the residential wing to ensure that a homely style atmosphere is created. Four young people were present during the inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### Improvements since the last inspection

The previous inspection was conducted by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. The provider has taken action to address issues relating to child protection training, the use of quiet areas in classrooms and ensuring privacy in bedrooms. However, further action is required to update the Statement of Purpose and to ensure that written reports are available following visits from a representative of the governing body.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Parents retain responsibility for healthcare arrangements and young people will return home if they become unwell during their stays. However there are good arrangements with a local surgery to provide emergency cover if required. The school has regular input from physiotherapists, occupational therapists, a speech and language therapist and a consultant paediatrician. Issues relating to drugs, alcohol and sexual health are covered as part of the school curriculum and young people are encouraged to lead a healthy and active lifestyle.

Health needs are clearly identified in young people's care plans and all care staff receive first aid training. St Bernard's has gained the Healthy School Award. There are good arrangements to ensure that medication is administered safely. Staff receive training in the safe handling of medication. Training is also provided by nurses from the local health trust who cover complex and invasive procedures. This enables young people with complex health needs to access the service. Young people bring their own medication with them during their stays and the necessary consents for administration have been obtained from parents. Staff sign medication administration sheets prior to administering medication. This could cause confusion if medication is refused by young people. Young people benefit from a healthy and varied diet. Healthy eating is encouraged and individual tastes are catered for. Midday meals are provided from the main school kitchen and breakfast and tea are cooked in the residential wing. Staff encourage fluid intake and fruit and yoghurts are always available for snacks. Cooking is a regular part of the young people's activity programme. Specialist aides and adaptations are available to enable young people to eat independently. Staff consistently encourage choice and use objects of reference to enable young people with communication difficulties to choose their preferences.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is protected by staff who have a good knowledge of their responsibilities. Some young people using the service require high levels of personal care and staff provide this in a way that maintains privacy and dignity. Staff have clear policies covering confidentiality and young people's records are securely stored. Young people have severe communication difficulties and staff rely on observations and their knowledge of young people to judge if they are unhappy. There have been no complaints from young people or their parents since the last inspection but an internal complaint was investigated by the governors. The complaints procedure is outlined in the school brochure and contains the contact details for Ofsted. Young people are protected by good procedures for child protection and the prevention of bullying. The previous inspection identified that some staff had not received child protection training. All staff have now attended training. The Head is the designated person for child protection and has attended extended training together with the Assistant Head (residential). There have been no notifications of significant events since the last inspection and the Assistant Head is aware of which events must be notified to the appropriate authorities. There have been no issues relating to young people being absent from the school and staff provide high levels of supervision to ensure that young people are constantly monitored. Staff deal calmly and consistently with difficult or challenging behaviour. Staff receive training in the positive management of young people and try to defuse incidents before they occur. Sanctions are not used and physical interventions are rarely used. However, the school's policy on positive behaviour management does not clearly state which control, disciplinary and physical intervention measures may be used, or the circumstances where physical interventions can be used. Protocols are now in place for the use of quiet areas in some classrooms. Procedures are in place to protect young people from the risk of fire and other hazards. Some hazardous materials were left in an unlocked cupboard in the kitchen of the residential wing. These were removed promptly to a locked cupboard. Fire alarms were not routinely tested for a period prior to Christmas due to a misunderstanding about the frequency of testing. Maintenance and servicing records are up to date. Only one member of staff has been recruited recently. All checks necessary for the protection of young people had been obtained prior to them commencing employment on the residential wing.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

The residential provision at the school actively contributes to young people's educational progress, enabling them to gain social and independent living skills and experience living in a small group setting. There are presently four teams of Educational Care Officers (ECO's) with two teams working on the residential wing and two teams working in school at any one time. Current arrangements ensure that there is close liaison and good continuity with the teaching staff. This arrangement is due to change shortly with a dedicated team of ECO's working in the residential wing. There is effective communication between the two areas by means of daily handover logs and the ECO's say that they feel an integral part of the school team. Ofsted gave the educational provision at the school an overall rating of 'good' following the education inspection last year. Activities are planned to enhance educational opportunities. The timetable is planned every half term and includes swimming, art and craft, household activities and community outings and clubs. Young people have access to vehicles with wheelchair access. They enjoy the activities offered and some participate enthusiastically. Young people receive individualised support according to their wishes and needs. Because some have communication difficulties, staff use a variety of techniques to enable young people to communicate effectively such as the Picture Exchange System (PECS) and Makaton signing. Staff respond promptly when young people are trying to communicate their needs. They also ensure that all young people are included and offered the opportunity to participate in group activities.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Young people are fully consulted during their stays and supported to make decisions about their lives as far as they are able. It is not feasible to hold formal house meetings, but a representative of the residential wing attends school council meetings. Recent discussions have been about school activities and equipment, with the residential wing receiving a keyboard, games and puzzles. Young people have a good relationship with staff who promote a warm and friendly atmosphere. Staff set reasonable boundaries and expectations of behaviour. Young people are encouraged to behave respectfully to each other. There have been no new admissions to the residential wing for educational purposes in the past two years and no new admissions are planned. The school brochure states that young people are recommended by the Education Authority's Special Needs Service, usually after residential education has been identified as a need in the young person's Statement of Educational Need. Care plans are of a good quality and clearly identify young people's needs. Parents are involved in their preparation and agree the contents. Care plans are written in a style that is easy to read and give staff good information about the young person's likes and dislikes. There are detailed moving and handling plans for those young people that require them, with clear descriptions and photographs of the techniques to use. Parents are welcome to visit the residential wing or to contact by telephone. Young people also have use of a telephone on the residential wing. Young people have diaries which travel between home and school to facilitate good communication.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people bring their own clothing and requisites with them during their stays. School uniform is optional and consists of a sweatshirt and polo shirt. Young people that wear school

uniform are encouraged to change when they return from school. Young people are helped to gain skills in preparation for adult life. The school's 14 to 19 curriculum aims to develop young people's decision making skills, giving them the opportunity to decide on courses and targets. There is an emphasis on developing pre-vocational and life skills in preparation for college, training or employment. The school makes use of the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and the EQUALS Access and Moving On curriculum. There is good liaison with local businesses and colleges to develop future opportunities. The residential wing enables young people to develop skills in a safe and supervised environment. Staff have made the best use of the accommodation in the residential wing to ensure that a homely style atmosphere is created. Communal accommodation is spacious allowing young people the opportunity to socialise or be on their own. Only two of the five bedrooms downstairs are used for educational boarding. Two upstairs bedrooms are also used. The previous inspection identified that one downstairs bedroom not used by boarders has a double bolted gate which would prevent a young person from leaving the room. There are now clear protocols in place for its use. The door to another bedroom has been replaced to ensure privacy. Staff have separate designated sleep-in accommodation. Bathroom and toilet facilities are suitable for the needs and number of young people using the service.

**Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The previous inspection identified that the school brochure does not accurately describe what the school sets out to do for those young people it accommodates. This has not been updated. The brochure contains information about the school and also contains some policies and procedures. The residential wing is closed for two weeks at Christmas, bank holidays and training days. Young people have permanent records of their history and progress which are securely stored. Other records relating to young people and the staff group are kept electronically. Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of young people and enable individual needs to be met. Staff are well trained with a rolling training programme which is co-ordinated by the two Assistant Heads. Staff are up to date with all essential training. Although staff say that they are well supported by the Assistant Head (residential), there are no formal arrangements for supervision each half term and annual appraisals. Regular staff meetings are held and all school staff meet together during training days. The Assistant Head (residential) is suitably qualified and experienced for the role. She monitors the operation of the residential wing but there are no written records of how often this occurs. There is no evidence of the Head carrying out and recording in writing a review of the schools welfare provision for boarding pupils. Although school governors visit the residential wing, there are no written reports available from these visits.

**What must be done to secure future improvement?**

**Statutory requirements**

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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## Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that medication records are signed only after medication has been administered. (NMS 14)
- ensure that the policy on positive behaviour management clearly states which control, disciplinary and physical intervention measures may be used, and the circumstances where physical interventions can be used. (NMS 10)
- ensure that young people are protected by adequate fire precautions. (NMS 26)
- ensure that the school brochure accurately describes the purpose of the residential provision. (NMS 1)
- ensure that staff receive formal supervision each half term and receive an annual appraisal. (NMS 30)
- ensure that the operation of the residential wing is adequately monitored with written reports available from monitoring visits. (NMS 32 & 33).



## Annex

## Annex A

### National Minimum Standards for residential special school

#### Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

**Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.**

#### Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

**Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

**Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

**Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.**

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

**Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.**

## **Organisation**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

**Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.**