

Baskerville School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Christy Wannop
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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

Baskerville School is a joint day/residential school for students aged 11 to 19 with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Children have a triad of impairments in common, that is, they have difficulty with social interactions; communications and flexible imaginative thinking. They represent a wide range of abilities from severe learning difficulties to average and above average ability. Most have additional learning difficulties such as dyslexia, ADHD, Tourettes Syndrome, Dyspraxia and Epilepsy. This means that all the students have complex learning needs and most have challenging behaviour.

There are currently 85 students, of whom 23 are residential. Children stay Monday to Friday and return home each weekend. The school also offers 'extended day' placements until 8.30pm four nights a week to four children, and extra curricular activities two days a week.

Baskerville promotes a 24 hour curriculum and has four residential family units to provide therapeutic care and education, supporting students through adolescence into adulthood. All of the young people have separate bedrooms and there are sufficient bathing facilities to meet the needs of the young people. There are extensive grounds. The school is located in Harbourne, a residential area close to the Birmingham City Centre. It is close to local amenities and public transport to the city centre.

Summary

This was an announced inspection and it covered all the key NMS in the Every Child Matters outcome groups plus Organisation. The school has taken action to meet all six recommendations made last year.

Baskerville meets all and exceeds a significant number of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. The overall judgement on the quality of this provision is very good with many outstanding features. The school has developed considerable expertise in accessible communication and in engaging children with autism through positive behaviour management.

Children are helped to develop a sense of value within society. Adults respect children and relationships are very good. The quality of communication between boarding staff and educational staff is excellent and staff make strong links, over matters such as child protection, health, home and education. This 'can do' approach supports and meets the individual needs of young people. The senior management team combines a positive vision with good strategic planning to develop the school to do the best for the children who attend.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The school was asked to make more detailed health and placement plans, update information in complaints procedure to reflect the change from CSCI to Ofsted, improve record keeping in relation to physical intervention and sanctions and to give better detail about how the residential service is staffed.

The complaints policy is now fully satisfactory, and there is a staffing policy that clearly describes how adults are deployed to meet the needs of children. Records for physical intervention and sanctions are now routinely 'signed off' by managers and there is a copy in each child's individual record. Placement plans and health plans have recently been developed and it remains only for these to be embedded in the systematic review of children's care.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children get good health care from staff with significant skills and experience. They enjoy good physical, emotional, and mental health and the school advocates for and supports children and their parents to secure health input to meet needs. Health plans have just been introduced and there is now good documentation to support the comprehensive management of medication and health care. Whilst one carer was not satisfied with the health care provided, many parents commented very positively on the arrangements at the school. One parent described their son's very complex medical and emotional requirements and said that the 'Staff are more than willing to adjust to meet his needs and nothing seems too much trouble to make sure my son stays healthy and safe'.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicine and treatment. This is safely managed by skilled staff so that children get the medication and treatment they need. A parent said, 'Robust medication monitoring was a reality' and that staff were well trained for all eventualities. The school has employed an impressive range of skilled professionals in the in-house Autism Support Team (AST) who make a significant contribution to the overall emotional health of children.

Aspects of health provision are under review: protocols for homely remedies and an improved medication procedure are in development. The Head of Care plans to extend the skill of residential staff in taking care of health and medication needs so that all staff understand or are aware of the significance of medication regimes.

Children lead healthy lifestyles and learn about health in Personal, Health and Social Education. (PHSE.) They have plenty of good food and opportunities to eat in more homely family type settings in the evenings. Young people said they enjoyed cooking for themselves and described how they planned, shopped for and cooked meals. Staff encourage them to try new foods and they learn about the ethics of food by growing vegetables in school, visiting animal farms and then making healthy choices for themselves. Baskerville has a 'Healthy School' accreditation.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are protected from harm by robust arrangements for safe personal care. Staff respect children's need for privacy and confidentiality. There is an open approach to complaints and adults encourage young people to use democratic processes to make their views known and to understand the views of others. Children have plenty of opportunities to have a say and have adults whom they trust, to sort out problems. A parent said, 'Parents and students are comfortable in raising areas for improvement knowing that they will be considered respectfully.'

Children are safe, their welfare is promoted and they are protected from abuse. Staff know what to do in the event of an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Arrangements for child protection

are good. It is a strength that adults have advocated on behalf of children about their human rights and this reflects the personal integrity of staff at the school. Not all staff have had child protection training and induction documents do not direct this as a priority, though in practice, staff say it happens.

Baskerville cares for children with complex mental health needs and challenging behaviour. Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. Adults work to protect children from the impact of bullying, anti-social or intimidating behaviour and young people are clear about their right to feel safe from this. Children are helped to talk about and understand their behaviour through planned and documented behaviour management strategies, staff talk to them about incidents using pictorial prompts. The AST provides professional support to focus excellent work around positive behaviour; staff use initiative to try strategies and affect change for children who struggle. Staff are trained to use physical intervention but the school's analysis of incidents shows that this is decreasing as positive interventions become more successful in diffusing and diverting children from angry uncontrollable behaviour. One parent described the transformation in her child from when he first started at the school, 'As a child with high anxiety and major behaviour problems. Baskerville School turned my son around and I thank them for it and for their hard work and patience.'

Staff work in partnership and engage children in an active dialogue about what they need to do to be ready to live safely, calmly and happily. A parent reported that they were satisfied that staff understand the risks their child faces and involves them in the strategies and safety procedures to ensure that the child experiences full participation and enjoyment.

Children stay in a school that provides physical safety and security because staff take positive steps to keep everyone safe from unnecessary risks. There is good proactive health and safety. Children are encouraged to experience life enhancing activities and new opportunities. Staff balance the risks and the benefit and minimise unnecessary risks so that enjoyment and personal development can be maximised. One child said Baskerville helps children to learn about keeping themselves safe by teaching about 'Road safety and stranger danger.'

Children are safeguarded by rigorous selection and vetting of all adults who may have contact with children. It is a strength that children have a say in the recruitment and interview process. Shortly all staff will be subject to a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check as the government introduces new procedures for checking existing staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

In 2007, Ofsted judged children's educational experience at this school as outstanding. Children attend and enjoy school, college and work and achieve good things, according to their ability. There is a real strength in the close and constructive child focussed links between educational and residential staff. The Head promotes creative staff deployment to maximise skills and the 'combi role' has been developed so that some staff share their time between residence and classroom. This means children experience not just consistent, but equally productive support to achieve, both in and out of school. Parents confirmed that the school has high expectations for their children and that they bring home homework every week to complete. Another described how the school was imaginative in engaging her child's rather narrow interests and linking these with the national curriculum where possible.

Children benefit from outstanding individual support. Key to this is a committed residential staff group who have excellent skills in day-to-day communication and give children additional tools to enable better participation and inclusion. An 'Independent Listener' visits the school regularly to act as an advocate if needed for children. Children are seen as individuals and staff talk to parents to make sure that they support racial, cultural or religious needs in the right way and that no one experiences discrimination. A communications co-coordinator promotes accessible information to assist children who need to augment speech in order to take part. Children are helped by the excellent autism support team and benefit from their professional approach in identifying and then making things happen to improve children's lives. Children said the school was good at keeping them busy and another said they were, 'Happy with everything.'

Adults have a real sense of encouraging children to get the most out of life and make sure that leisure is not just fun, but adds to a rounded and holistic experience of education in the wider sense. A parent described the activities as safely managed and 'excellent', and listed rock climbing, track running, cinema and skating. One said, 'I am always delighted to hear about all the different activities he's taken part in. I also receive a home school book with daily comment about his involvement in lessons, he also likes to write in the book about how he is feeling.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's views are valued and they are given choice wherever possible. They are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and the way the school is run and given the help they need to communicate. Staff facilitate children's meetings to ensure that everyone can take part, acknowledging and validating each child's unique contribution. There is imaginative consultation and involvement using accessible communication aids like Widget symbols, photographs, Makaton, and sign supported English. One parent said, 'My son is on the school council which is conducted in such a way that his peers of all ages and abilities can take part. Their suggestions are often brought before the school governors who have pleasure in supporting their enthusiasm. 'Children learn to co operate with their peers and the importance of social living is prioritised as a skill for adult life.

Children are helped to move in and on from the school with well informed, sensitive staff support. A parent said, 'I am looking forward to the future, not dreading it.' Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school. Full placement planning has recently been introduced and the school has identified areas for further development to ensure that the care planning process is firmly embedded in the assessment, plan and review of children's care. Staff make good records of children's daily, weekly and monthly progress and the Head of Care sets high standards for the quality of respectful recording about children. Risk assessments, plans for behaviour strategies and goals are also identified to make sure that all aspects of children's development are considered.

One parent described how their child was now able to do things that they previously would not have let or thought he was capable of, 'He is so independent now and helpful, I am amazed by him.' Another parent described the progress her son had made since first attending the school, 'It has met and overcome any challenges my son has given them for the better and he is a happy calm young man today.'

Children go home to their families or carers every weekend, and so staff are used to working in partnership and support children's mid week contact home by telephone or internet. One parent said she had regular weekly phone calls describing what her child has done all through the week. Another parent confirmed 'I receive regular care plans and contact both ways is established and ongoing regarding my son's needs and development.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school makes good and imaginative use of its buildings and grounds to make a safe and suitable place for children to learn and stay. Although the building is not ideal, it is well furnished and feels cared for and institutional features are minimised. The hot water system is due to be upgraded as currently young people in one unit have no hot water at the kitchen sink. The grounds provide good space for children to let off steam after school, and children also explore the wild areas as part of the Forest Schools initiative. Children have their own bedrooms which reflect their interests and tastes.

Children get excellent support when they join and leave the school and through the important transition phases. Skills are built for independence at all ages, not just post 16. Taking part and making a contribution to the school community is a high expectation. One parent wrote of what the school meant to her and the care she had taken to choose the one that would maximise life chances. 'They are teaching him skills to take him into the future so he can be as independent as possible. They started on day one. 'A young person confirmed , 'I learn life skills.'

One unit in particular focuses on the skills needed for adult life, yet young people there do not feel fully involved in negotiating and making explicit the rights, responsibilities and 'rules' for their more independent lifestyle within the school. The school is aware of these issues and plans to develop the promotion of independence further.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for residential pupils. There is not one, but four, accessible Children's Guides, each tailored specifically for the communication needs of the particular group of children. The majority of parents and carers praise the school, 'Baskerville does everything it says it will, and then some.'

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Policy, procedure and good practice helps young people to know that their individual needs on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender, age and religion are valued; and the service is able to meet their diverse needs in everyday life in the college. Training for new staff in implementing equality and diversity is an area for development, though practice on the ground is good.

A clear staffing policy works in practice to give children continuity, a mix of male and female staff, security and specific support that children need for ethnic and cultural backgrounds and disabilities. The approach to staff deployment and resourcing is an example of the imaginative response to organising the function of the school around the needs of the children rather than vice versa. The autism support team was established as part of the pro active, thoughtful

approach to preventative and anticipating children's needs rather than just increasing the numbers of adults required to manage challenging behaviour.

Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. A parent said, 'I am particularly impressed with the way the care staff work as a team always seem to strive to keep me informed. 'Affection is clear, but staff are also able to give young people good direction when it is needed. Children do have plenty of adults who actively engage and play with them, respect and friendship is evident and staff act as good role models.

Staff clearly like being at the school and see the value of the work they do, some have worked there for many years, whilst others have begun as assistants and returned as fully qualified staff. Staff have excellent skills and experience and good induction and training. Around 60% have achieved the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in working with children and young people, and more are enrolled to complete this study. Staff are themselves well supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare through regular professional supervision.

Children and staff enjoy the stability of an efficiently run school. The leadership and management of the school is imaginative, responsive and effective. The senior management team, the Head of Care and headteacher, ensure excellent management review and monitoring to drive improvement and development. The Board of Governors are active, well informed and rigorous in the termly audit of the residential provision.

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 all staff, including ancillary staff, agency staff and volunteers have induction and training in safeguarding children and the school's procedures(NMS 5.8)
- ensure that the heating (and water temperature) of all parts of the school is satisfactory and fully meets the needs of children (NMS24.14)