

# Baskerville School

Inspection report for residential special school

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC017168
<b>Inspection date</b>	10 February 2010
<b>Inspector</b>	Christy Wannop
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

---

<b>Address</b>	The Baskerville School Fellows Lane BIRMINGHAM B17 9TS
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 427 3191
<b>Email</b>	rosemary.adams@baskvill.bham.sch.uk
<b>Registered person</b>	Birmingham City Council; Children, Young People and Families
<b>Head of care</b>	Rosemary Adams
<b>Head / Principal</b>	
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	18 March 2009

---

© Crown copyright 2010

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

## 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 day and residential school for students aged 11 to 19 with autistic spectrum disorder. Students attending have particular impairments which involve difficulty with social interactions, communications and flexible, imaginative thinking. They have a wide range of abilities from severe learning difficulties to average and above average ability. Many have additional learning difficulties such as dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, Tourettes syndrome, dyspraxia and epilepsy. This means that all the students have complex learning needs and many have behaviour which presents a challenge within a residential environment. 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, each with a different aim according to children's needs. 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. There are currently 94 students, of whom 22 are residential.

### **Summary**

This was an announced inspection and it covered all the key national minimum standards in the Every Child Matters outcome groups, plus organisation. The school has taken action to meet two recommendations made last year.

This is a school with exceptional strengths that meets all, and exceeds a significant number, of the national minimum standards for residential special schools. 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, behaviour, health, home and education. There is a positive approach to making things happen for the benefit of children. The senior management team combines a creative vision with good strategic planning. There is a long-term plan for expansion of the school to provide flexible short break care and 52 week residential school provision.

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 improvements in safeguarding, and to provide an effective hot water supply. All staff have now had child protection training from the local safeguarding board, as well as autism specific safeguarding training delivered by the headteacher. The school's

heating system has been replaced with an efficient gas system, so all parts of the school are warm and water is of a good temperature throughout.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and met. Children benefit from staff skills and experience and enjoy good physical, emotional, and mental health. Good documentation supports the comprehensive management of medication and health care. Children's welfare is safeguarded by new 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. The school has employed an impressive range of skilled professionals in the in-house autism support team who make a significant contribution to the overall emotional health of children and a range of external health staff also have input at the school. The school advocates for, and supports, children and their parents to secure health input to meet their needs. Staff are keen to develop further links to secure better information about how medical diagnosis relate to autism and behaviour.

Children lead healthy lifestyles and learn about health in personal, health and social education and there are developments in school to promote this further through a special 'wellbeing' programme. Children say they have plenty of good, nutritious food. Well trained staff prepare meals to a high standard of food hygiene; and they make sure that children's cultural, dietary and religious requirements are catered for. Staff are sensitive to children's feelings about food and encourage them to experiment and learn about food by growing vegetables in school, visiting animal farms and then making healthy choices for themselves. Baskerville has a 'Healthy School' accreditation and is aiming for the higher award. One parent said their child 'has developed a very positive outlook and knowledge of things like healthy eating, portion sizes, exercises, healthy choices.' Some children have opportunities to eat in more homely, family-style dining areas in the evenings. They enjoy cooking for themselves and plan, shop for and cook meals as part of the approach to life skills. Staff would like to extend these learning opportunities as part of individual placement plan aims for more children.

## **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, and staff respect children's need for privacy and confidentiality. There is an open approach to complaints from all sources. The headteacher encourages young people to make their views known and to understand the views of others. Children have plenty of opportunities to have their say with trusted adults, to think about and talk things through, and sort out problems.

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, and have a strong lead from designated senior staff. Arrangements for child protection are good. All staff have child protection training at induction, which is regularly updated, plus autism specific safeguarding input from the head teacher. Staff are encouraged to take their responsibilities to children very seriously and act to safeguard where children cannot act for themselves.

The school's ethos values whistleblowing, personal responsibility and integrity amongst staff, and the headteacher takes action if staff put children at risk.

Staff 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. Staff are sensitive and attuned to individual needs, and good planning and close supervision ensures a supportive response. Baskerville cares for children with increasingly complex challenging needs, and many have additional mental health issues too. The autism support team provides professional support to focus excellent work around positive behaviour. Children are helped to talk about and understand their behaviour through planned and documented behaviour management strategies. Staff show initiative and try different ways to affect positive change for children, and they talk to them about incidents using pictorial prompts and social stories. They work in partnership with children and their parents, and engage children in an active dialogue about what they need to do to be ready to live safely, calmly and happily. Staff are trained to use physical intervention as a last resort. The school's analysis of incidents shows a steady reduction, as positive interventions become more successful in diffusing and diverting children from angry or uncontrollable behaviour. A parent says the approach to behaviour works well because their child, 'knows what to expect and likes to know where he stands'.

Children stay in a school that provides physical safety and security because staff take positive steps to keep everyone safe from unnecessary risks. The school and residential accommodation are good environments for children and regular checks, maintenance and risk management keep them safe. Children have thorough individual risk assessments which help to keep them secure. This year there has been reorganisation of systems for health and safety. This is to be further strengthened by advanced training for the new site manager, extension of risk management documentation to the residential environment and better evidencing of checks on emergency lighting and fire-fighting equipment.

Safe recruitment is managed to a very high standard. There is rigorous selection and vetting of all adults who may have contact with children to ensure that they are properly safeguarded. It is a strength, and sense of achievement for them, that children have a say in the recruitment and interview process.

## **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 have good attendance and they enjoy school, college and work. Staff recognise and celebrate achievement according to ability, whether in achieving university entrance, or in a breakthrough in understanding in the skills based curriculum. The close and constructive child-focussed links between educational and residential staff is a real strength. The headteacher deploys staff creatively to maximise their skills, and the 'combi-role' has been developed, so that some staff share their time between residential and classroom areas. This means children experience consistent and equally productive help to achieve, whether in the classroom or in residence.

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. A range of self-advocacy opportunities are available for children in their regular unit meetings and at the school council. Children are seen as individuals, and staff really value the opportunity to visit and talk to parents at home to share ideas and support development at home. Staff show parents how to use pictorial schedules and this helps children transfer the skills they learn in school to the home. Staff also support

racial, cultural or religious needs in the right way to ensure that no-one experiences discrimination. A communications co-coordinator and speech and language therapist promote accessible information to assist children who need to augment speech in order to fulfil their part and be included. 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 are encouraged to experience life-enhancing activities and new opportunities. Staff balance the risks and the benefit and minimise unnecessary risks whilst ensuring that opportunities for enjoyment and personal development are maximised. One parent appreciates the 'very good firm handling' that has enabled her child to be 'able to cooperate and enjoy lots of outings safely'. Staff have a real commitment to encouraging children to get the most out of life. They make sure that leisure is not just fun, but adds to a rounded and holistic experience of education in the wider sense. Parents say they are delighted that their children have so many opportunities, and that they 'love to visit, and enjoy all the social events throughout the year.'

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

The provision is outstanding.

Parents recognise that children have access to a range of activities and opportunities which they would not be able to introduce their children to. One parent said, 'His horizons have definitely broadened'. Staff particularly value and reward effort and achievement when children take part in social and inclusive activity. Throughout the school children are treated with respect and are encouraged to participate quite literally in the world of opportunities, through work experience, foreign travel, links with overseas charities and other schools.

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. Staff facilitate children's meetings with great patience and perseverance 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 picture exchange communication schemes symbols, photographs, Makaton, and sign supported English. 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. The school has established excellent preparation for children coming to the school and staying in residence for the first time. Improvement is being sought in the processes for moving children on either at the end of their school career or to more suitable placements. One parent said 'My son has grown so much and has an amazing time here.'

Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school. Staff make good records of children's daily, weekly and monthly progress. Care practice is excellent. Risk assessments, plans for behaviour strategies and targets, are also identified to make sure that all aspects of children's development are considered. The purpose of creative placement planning is not yet shared and embedded in the residential systems for assessment, plan and review of children's care, and some young people say they are not involved in what staff write about them, in care planning or in decisions. Staff at all levels throughout the school talked about the scope for placement plans to demonstrate the 24 hour and personal, health and social education curriculum in everyday learning opportunities. The management

team are keen to identify expectations for individual independence opportunities much earlier; to make clear the impact that medical diagnosis and autism has on each child's daily experience; and to widen the health and well-being agenda to include personal daily living goals.

Children stay only four nights of the week at school and go home or to carers every weekend. There is weekly contact from key workers with parents and they support children's mid-week contact home by telephone or internet. Staff really enjoy their contact with families and see the benefit for all, of their recent involvement in home visits. They very much want to continue this aspect of partnership working. Parents report that the 'school is excellent at keeping me informed' and 'my thoughts and wishes are sought and respected.'

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Children are achieving their full potential, they develop skills for adulthood, and have opportunities to develop the skills they need in life. The school works hard at points of transition to identify the best place for children when they leave school and supports college placements and university applications. Young people get support to handle money and learn its value. Daily life in the school provides opportunities for learning and practicing independent living skills so children are ready for leaving the school. Staff are seeking to extend individual opportunities to promote independence further at an earlier stage. Taking part and making a contribution to the school community is a high expectation. One unit in particular focuses on the skills needed for adult life, and young people there now feel much more involved in negotiating and making explicit the rights, responsibilities and 'rules' for their more independent lifestyle within the school. One young person said, 'Staff help me to learn to be more independent.'

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 grounds provide safe play space for children to let off steam, 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 can bathe and take care of their personal needs with privacy and dignity. A parent says 'Issues such as personal hygiene are no problem now' because her child is 'now very capable.'

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management of the school is imaginative, responsive and effective. Parents say 'the school is brilliant,' and that they feel lucky to have found the 'right' school.'

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Policy, procedure and good practice helps children 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.

Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for residential life. There is not one, but four, accessible Children's Guides, each tailored specifically for the communication needs of the particular group of



children. There is strong partnership working between staff of different disciplines within the school, and with parents to support the individual needs of children and young people.

Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. One parent expressed confidence that staff are, 'warm, friendly, clearly enjoy what they do and most importantly for me, work as a team'. A clear staffing policy works in practice to give children close supervision, continuity, a mix of male and female staff, security and the specific support that they need. 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 proactive, thoughtful approach to preventative work and anticipating children's needs, rather than just increasing the numbers of adults required to manage challenging behaviour. 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. One child said 'I like it-yes'

Staff are well supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare. Induction, training and career development is well established. The senior management team, the deputy head of care and headteacher, ensure excellent management and monitoring to drive improvement and refine systems for quality assurance and review. Feedback, views and contributions are valued and the headteacher has a clear vision of future expansion and development at the school. The governing body is active and well informed and plays a crucial role in monitoring the welfare of the children in the school through insightful and rigorous 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
----------	--------	----------

### Recommendations

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

- continue to take positive steps to manage health and safety, including extending the risk assessments to include residential accommodation (NMS 26.3)
- ensure that, where feasible, children are involved in development of their placement plan, and that it specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day to day basis, covering all elements of the standard. (NMS 17.2)