

# Baskerville School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC017168
<b>Inspection date</b>	25/11/2010
<b>Inspector</b>	Christy Wannop
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Key

---

<b>Setting address</b>	The Baskerville School, Fellows Lane, BIRMINGHAM, B17 9TS
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 427 3191
<b>Email</b>	rosemary.adams@baskville.bham.sch.uk
<b>Registered person</b>	Birmingham City Council; Children, Young People and Families
<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Rosemary Adams
<b>Nominated person</b>	Rosemary Adams
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	10/02/2010

---

© 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 Crispins, 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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

## 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. 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 extra curricular activities two days a week.

Baskerville promotes a 24 hour curriculum and can accommodate children in four residential family units, although only three are in operation currently. Each unit has a particular focus and aim, according to children's needs, providing therapeutic care and education, supporting students through adolescence into adulthood. All of the young people have separate bedrooms and there are sufficient bathing facilities for all. There are extensive grounds with play areas for children. 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 93 students, of whom 18 use the residential service. 12 students stayed at the school and took part in the inspection.

## **Summary**

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This inspection was announced at short notice and covered all the key national minimum standards in the Every Child Matters outcome groups, plus organisation. The school has taken action to meet two good practice recommendations made at last year's inspection, when it was judged a good service with outstanding features. 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. The senior management team combines a creative vision with good strategic planning. The headteacher promotes innovative good practice and combines theoretical and practical knowledge to continually drive improvements to make a difference in children's lives.

Staff help children to develop a sense of their worth within society. Respect between staff and children is highly valued and relationships are excellent. The quality of

communication between boarding staff and educational staff is very good 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.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The action taken by the school to meet two previous recommendations, exceeds the requirements of the national minimum standards, and demonstrates their commitment to excellence. The school was asked to make improvements in documentation to evidence the safe management of risk across all school buildings and areas used by students. Risk assessments are now comprehensive. They have been extended to the residential accommodation and children take part in thinking about risk reduction as part of any activity they do and as part of a learning process.

Placement plans did not previously show how children had been involved or consulted. The care manager has improved placement plans to demonstrate how children are included in the 24 hour and personal, health and social education curriculum in everyday learning opportunities. Children now draw up part of their placement plan and are actively consulted about their welfare on a day to day basis. This new 'All about Me' documentation reflects an inclusive process that engages children in planning and thinking about life in residence.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

There is an increasingly holistic picture of how the service helps students to experience a healthy lifestyle and feel good about themselves. 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. Staff arrange activities that give students opportunities to develop physically and emotionally, and experience positive well-being. One mother talked about the pleasure her overweight son got from going swimming with the school, and the all round healthy lifestyle he has taken on willingly. Students themselves make the link between the range of sporting and fitness activities they do in the community and developing positive self image. One child wrote about going to the gym; 'we use lots of energy at the gym, which burns off calories which is good for our hearts helping us to feel healthy and fit'. Another wrote about the particular equipment he liked to use: 'rowing machine and doing some sit ups, I like to do this activity every day so I can get a six pack'.

Staff are skilled and knowledgeable about children's health and intimate care needs. They plan effectively, in collaboration with parents, to ensure they are met. Health professionals say standards of health promotion and hygiene are 'very high.' Good documentation supports the comprehensive management of medication and health care. Children's welfare is safeguarded by effective policy 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 health and therapeutic 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.

Baskerville has a 'Healthy School' accreditation. Students in surveys report 100% satisfaction with food and with how they are helped with health. 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. Students have increasingly good opportunities to eat in more homely, family-style dining areas in the evenings. Parents say their children are 'involved in thinking up menu's, buying ingredients, and cooking and presenting meals for themselves and others.' Staff have extended learning opportunities as part of individual placement plan aims for more students as part of the creative approach to life skills.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The school and residential service make excellent arrangements for ensuring children are safe and sound while they learn and stay at Baskerville. Students report unequivocally, that they feel safe, consulted, able to complain, listened to, and respected. No one reported any bullying or issues with behaviour management and fairness. They are protected from harm by robust arrangements for safe personal care, and staff respect their 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 whistle blowing, personal responsibility and integrity amongst staff, and the headteacher takes action to ensure professional accountability of all staff.

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 and from other dominant behaviour which may impact on more vulnerable children. 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. There is constructive, professional and imaginative working across residential, teaching and support staff to find solutions for the difficulties faced by children. Children are helped to talk about and understand their behaviour through planned and documented behaviour management strategies. Staff are trained to use physical intervention as a last resort. The school has increasingly sophisticated analysis of incidents to explain, precedents, patterns and ensure responses are successful. Positive interventions diffuse and divert children from angry or uncontrollable behaviour. 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. Parents like the constructive approach saying, 'staff give lots of rewards when goals are achieved.'

Students in surveys said unanimously that they felt safe with the adults who care for them and in the school. Staff take necessary steps to keep everyone safe from unnecessary risks and this means children stay in a school that provides physical safety and security. Systems for health and safety have now been strengthened by extension of risk management documentation to the residential environment and better evidencing of checks on emergency lighting and fire-fighting equipment. The school and residential accommodation are good environments for children and the regular checks, maintenance and risk management keeps them safe. 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.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children have outstanding opportunities and receive a highly individual service that is tailored to their needs and promotes their strengths. In 2007, Ofsted judged children's educational experience at this school as outstanding. One parent wrote of their confidence that the school will take their child, 'to the very top of his abilities. This is something that is priceless to me'. Children have excellent 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. 'Parents say communication with them is excellent. 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. 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. A communications co-coordinator, speech and language therapist and occupational therapist promote accessible information and skilled interventions to assist children to fulfil their part and be included. Health professionals confirm good multi disciplinary working arrangements. Another parent wrote their child, 'is so happy, he often gets upset he cannot go on Saturdays and Sundays'.

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. Children have thorough individual risk assessments which help to keep them secure. 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.

### **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. Parents say if their child is ever upset the staff work together with parents to overcome this. One mother said that when staff ring about any issues it is to explain how well they have managed this and to ask for involvement. Parent feels included and that the school has a very positive attitude to overcoming difficulties that arise.

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. One parent said their child has, 'learnt so much about respecting others and making good decisions, because he has been given the opportunity to learn these things in his own time.'

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. Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school. Young people are involved in what staff write about them in care planning and in decisions.

Creative placement planning is now shared and embedded in the residential systems for assessment, planning and review of children's care. Documentation fully supports each child's development and gives a good picture of the daily aims, likes and dislikes for each child. Staff make good records of children's daily, weekly and monthly progress. Last year staff sought to extend individual opportunities to promote independence further at an earlier stage. Daily reports show that this is a daily consideration for them.

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. 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. Parents say staff, 'are fantastic at listening to pupils and parents'.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

There are excellent arrangements to ensure that children learn the skills they need for adult life and achieve their full potential. Parents say that staff encourage safe independence and choice with students. They see each activity and opportunity as a learning experience. 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. Professionals report effective transition planning because of the excellent communication with parents and professionals. Young people get support to handle money and learn its value. Parents say they appreciate when their children learn to take responsibility for clothes, hygiene, pocket money and choices over behaviour issues. Daily life in the school provides opportunities for learning and practicing independent living skills so children are ready for leaving and moving to greater independence. The promotion of independence at an earlier age is now

embedded in routines and expectations across all three operational units. Staff really see the benefit of this and taking part and making a contribution to the school community is a high expectation.

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. In surveys, students were emphatic in their positive view of how they are helped, enabled and encouraged at the school.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Professionals describe this as, 'an exceptional school'. Leadership is highly effective. The headteacher is creative, resourceful, well organised, and tenacious. The strong senior management team consistently strive to improve the service.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. 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. Professionals working with the school say they would recommend it to any potential student and their parents. They say it is 'a happy, pleasant school, also a successful school and it is a pleasure to work with them'.

Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. 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. Students confirm that the staff, and the care they get is great.

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. Parents say staff 'are patient, positive and encouraging'.

Staff are well supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare. Induction, training and career development is well established, and a very high proportion of the staff have achieved NVQ at level three in working with children and young people. The headteacher and senior staff team motivate and inspire the staff team to deliver a great service to children. All staff who play a role in residence are committed, keen and energetic. The sharing of skills and support is a recurring comment from staff, and they say they love working at the school.

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.