

# St Bernard's School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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<b>Inspector</b>	Paul Clark
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<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Leanda Mason
<b>Nominated person</b>	Gary Nixon
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	08/12/2009

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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 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

St Bernard's School is a day and residential school for pupils with severe learning disabilities aged between 2 and 19 years of age. The school also provides a respite service to children with disabilities over weekends and holidays.

The residential facilities comprise of two lounges, a dining area, sensory room and a kitchen. Young people have single bedrooms on the ground and first floor although the first floor bedrooms are not currently being used because they are not suitable for the needs of the residents. The residential area is equipped to meet the needs of young people with mobility difficulties. 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 School 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. Five young people were present during the inspection.

### Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This announced, key inspection of the welfare provision for boarders at this residential special school found that children receive a good level of care.

The school has taken appropriate action to address most of the recommendations contained in the previous inspection. The living environment has been improved. The care and teaching staff now work well together and provide an integrated approach to the complex social, medical and educational needs of the students. Parents highly value the service and children enjoy their time in the residential unit.

The provision could be improved by: locating bathrooms, showers and toilets in positions that are designed to take account of the children's needs for privacy, dignity and safety; by ensuring that children have a person independent of the school and/or the child's placing authority to whom they may contact directly about personal problems or concerns about the school; by ensuring that staff rotas have time scheduled that allow team meetings to occur at least once every half term; that one-to-one supervision occurs at least once every half term and is of at least one and a half hour's duration; and that children live in well designed and pleasant premises by adjusting the loud and intrusive telephone ring in the lounge of the residential unit.

## Improvements since the last inspection

There are now full written authorisations in place for every application of invasive medication for individual children. There are effective arrangements in place to secure specialist medical services including appropriate levels of physiotherapy and nursing support. These include access to an allocated school nurse, an allocated physiotherapist and the services of general practitioners at a local surgery. A monthly paediatric clinic is also held at the school.

The physical, emotional and mental health care needs of each child are now clearly identified in children's care plans. These plans are appropriately reviewed and provide staff with information about the day-to-day care needs of individual children.

The dining room has been remodelled and refurnished to ensure that it is suitable for the numbers and needs of children and staff dining in it. There is now a separate bound and numbered book to record any physical intervention on a child by an adult.

A practice guidance protocol is now in place about the use of the 'blue room' to temporarily restrict the liberty of an identified young person and parents have signed a written agreement to this practice. During the course of the inspection, the school arranged for a written agreement from an educational psychologist endorsing the use of this room when adopting the agreed protocol for the safe care of the identified young person.

The school now has in place a record of risk assessments of the school's premises and grounds. Residential and teaching staff now work much more closely together to identify each child's personal, social and educational development and achievement. This is achieved by care staff spending the last 45 minutes of each school day in the classroom of the individual child and by being involved in the construction of children's individual education plans.

The residential accommodation and facilities for pupils have been appropriately decorated and furnished to an acceptable standard which creates a pleasant and homely residential environment. All areas of the residential provision are now sufficiently heated and this has been achieved by no longer using the first floor bedrooms.

The school's staffing levels have been increased to ensure that there are now sufficient numbers of staff on duty to provide levels of supervision for children that are safe for children and staff. The school now has a written behaviour management policy in place which emphasises the positive reinforcement of good behaviour. The Registered Manager reviews the record of physical interventions to identify any inappropriate practice. A school governor carries out monitoring visits to the school each half term and writes a report about the conduct of the school.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The arrangements in place for meeting the health needs of children accommodated at the school are good. All children boarding at the school have a statement of special educational needs. This statement includes a description of their health needs and this information is added to a care plan which the school constructs. The school nurse along with school staff, consult with parents in the construction of a health summary. All children boarding at the school remain registered with their family General Practitioner, optician and dentist and parents remain responsible for ensuring that routine health checks are carried out. All children placed undertake a medical examination conducted by the school's medical consultant. The consultant also conducts a monthly paediatric clinic at the school. The school now has access to a physiotherapist who will attend to children's needs when required. Staff are appropriately trained in the application and administration of medication. The storage and recording systems for medication are good. There are well stocked first aid boxes positioned at key areas around the school. A sufficient number of care and teaching staff have been trained in first aid to ensure that there is always a member of staff on duty with these skills. The residential unit keeps records of accidents occurring in a designated accident book which the headteacher monitors.

The school's medical consultant refers a child to the local children and adolescent mental health services team if a psychiatric or psychology assessment is required. The school can also access the services of an educational psychologist as well as speech and occupational therapists via the medical consultant. The provision of these additional health services ensures that children receive an excellent level of health care.

Staff are trained to support those children who may be incontinent. This support is given in a safe, discreet and sympathetic manner. There is suitable equipment in place to safely launder clothing and bed linen. The boarding house has a suitably equipped kitchen which is kept in a hygienic condition. Children are consulted about their food choices and two week menu plans provide a varied and nutritious diet often containing items of international cuisine. One child requires a special diet which the staff are able to provide. Staff are trained in food hygiene.

The school has a personal, health and social education (PSHE) programme which provides children with age appropriate information about independent living, smoking and alcohol misuse and sexual health. The programme also provides children with an understanding of equality and diversity issues including gender and race relationships.

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

The provision is good.

The school has policies and procedures in place which help ensure children's safety and well-being. There are written policies on safeguarding children, dealing with complaints, anti-bullying, behaviour management and the use of physical restraint. Staff acquaint themselves with these policies as part of their induction programme. There is a written policy in place on action to be taken in the event of a child going missing from care. Staff receive training on safeguarding children and this training is updated at appropriate intervals. The school has a designated child protection officer to whom staff will refer any safeguarding concern. No safeguarding concerns have been raised within the past 12 months. Within the Statement of Purpose there is advice for children and parents about the way that they may make complaints. No complaints have been received within the past 12 months. No evidence of bullying was apparent from the observation of the children's interaction or from communicating with them directly or by survey return. The behaviour management policy emphasises the positive reinforcement of good behaviour. All staff receive training in physical intervention and this training is appropriately updated. The Registered Manager reviews the record of physical interventions to identify any inappropriate practice.

The school carries out effective staff vetting and recruitment practices according to Local Safeguarding Children's Board recommendations. All staff and other professionals having contact with the children at the school have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check and this is updated every three years. School staff have at least two professional references which are followed up verbally, and complete a 'self-disclosure of health' questionnaire. All of this information is effectively captured on a single central record.

The school has two specially equipped minibuses used for transporting children to social and recreational events. Staff who drive these minibuses are appropriately trained and their driving licences are effectively checked. Rigorous vetting and checking of staff helps to ensure that children are safeguarded from the potential dangers of institutional living.

The school carries out and effectively records its fire safety measures including evacuation drills, alarm and equipment checks. Staff are trained in basic fire safety measures. The head of care acts as the designated fire safety officer responsible for coordinating fire safety within the school. All parts of the premises and external areas with a potential for harm have been appropriately risk assessed. The school has a swimming pool. All staff overseeing swimming have been trained in pool safety and have achieved the National Rescue Award.

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

The provision is good.

The residential provision positively supports children's educational progress. The school has improved the communication systems between care and teaching staff. Care staff now attend teaching rooms during the last 45 minutes of the school day where information about individual children's progress throughout the day is transferred. Each child has an individual education plan which identifies their learning objectives. They also have a personalised learning programme which contains guidance on the way that care staff can assist children's social and educational progress. Good systems are in place to keep parents informed about their children's educational and behavioural progress. There is a school/residential/home communication book which is used to transfer written information. Parents are also kept informed by email and telephone.

The school has also devised a children's 'communication passport' which is a document kept by the child. It also provides information about a child which they may not otherwise be able to convey to others. These excellent communication systems help to ensure that children's education and social development is well supported.

Children's care plans clearly outline the way that their overall care needs are met. A range of additional services are accessed through the consultant paediatrician whenever necessary. These may include the local children and adolescent mental health services, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy.

Children enjoy a range of activities and leisure activities during the evenings and weekends. The school has a hydrotherapy pool on site and those children who are able can also go to a local swimming pool. A programme of planned activities takes place which includes trips to the coast and other places of local interest. There is a television, personal computer and plasma touch screen within the residential unit which the children enjoy. The school has extensive grounds and well laid out play areas and equipment which are appropriately risk assessed.

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

The provision is good.

There are good systems in place which support children in contributing to the way that the school is run. The school conducts suitably formatted questionnaire surveys of students where they may make suggestions about the activities programme, food choices and their living environment. There are school council meetings each half term where students can express any views on their care.

Each young person has an appointed 'key' or 'one-to-one' worker who has a specialist knowledge of a young person's care plan, their personal circumstances and their ongoing needs. They will also ascertain a child's feelings about their life at the



school. Care plans are appropriately reviewed. The school does not have an arrangement in place to ensure that children have a person independent of the school to whom they may contact directly about personal problems or concerns about the school.

Children who board are encouraged to keep in regular contact with home and they can ask to use the unit telephone to ring home at anytime. Similarly, parents can ring at any time and can speak to their child. Parents can also call into the unit at anytime. There are effective means of communication in place between home and the unit. Parents are consulted and contribute to care plan reviews.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is satisfactory.

The furnishing and décor in the living areas in the residential unit have significantly improved since the time of the previous inspection and now provide a more homely environment. Boarders who use the bedrooms four nights a week have their rooms taken over by children who use the accommodation for short breaks and at weekends. Therefore rooms are not personalised as much as they could be. However, the school has tried to address this by making room names and some other personal effects interchangeable and this works to a certain degree. The living environment in the residential unit lounge could be improved by adjusting the loud telephone ring which residents and staff find to be intrusive and disruptive. The residential unit no longer uses the bedrooms and bathrooms on the first floor. The Registered Manager stated that this is because of several reasons. Firstly, there is no access lift. Therefore this area would only be available to those boarders who are ambulant. Secondly, lack of fire escapes and night time staffing levels are insufficient to safely evacuate the first floor in the event of a fire. Lastly, the heating in the residential unit is unreliable and staff say that sometimes the first floor bedrooms can be cold.

The downstairs bathroom which is used specifically for children with physical disabilities, is still not fit for purpose. The entrance to the bathroom and the position of the bath do not promote the boarders' safety, privacy or dignity.

The younger children wear school uniform during the day and change into their own clothing during the evening. The school has an effective laundry system for clothing and bed linen and parents label their children's clothing. Parents provide their children with personal requisites, sanitary and continence products and the school keeps emergency stocks of these products.

The unit does not operate a pocket money system and boarders' ability to manage money is individually assessed. Children are given small amounts of money from the school fund to spend during out of school activities and external visits. Children are prepared for the transition for leaving the unit by the personalised learning programme and the school's PSHE programme.

## Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is evidenced by clearly written policies on equality standards for staff, pupils and premises, race equality and anti-racism. The PSHE programme includes giving children the opportunity to understand and respect racial and gender differences. The menu plan actively promotes international cuisine. The school's practice in addressing issues of special needs among the young people further evidences the commitment to meeting the individual and diverse needs of the children accommodated.

The residential unit has a Statement of Purpose for all stakeholders which clearly identifies its aims and objectives. The statement is available in a suitably formatted version to assist young people with a range of reading abilities. There is also a school brochure which further details the aims and values of the school. All young people who board have clearly written and well organised case files which detail their assessed needs. These include a care plan which is appropriately reviewed.

There are team meetings and all care staff receive supervision from the head of care. However, staffing rotas do not always ensure that team meetings and supervision occurs at least once every half term and supervisions are often less than the recommended one and a half hours duration. All newly appointed staff undertake a comprehensive induction programme which introduces them to all key policies and core skills areas. At least 80% of the care staff group have achieved the National Vocational Qualification award at level 3 in working with children and young people. All staff complete an annual personal development appraisal which identifies their ongoing training and development needs. Staff personnel files are clearly written and well organised and detail staff qualifications and training attended. There are a sufficient number of well trained staff on duty at all times to meet the care needs of the young people accommodated. The headteacher and head of care have the appropriate professional qualifications and have many years experience in the care of children with disabilities.

A school governor carries out monitoring visits to the school each half term and writes a report about the conduct of the school outlining areas for improvement and development. The school produces a three year development plan which includes identifying necessary improvements to the residential provision.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that bathrooms, showers and toilets are sited and designed to take account of the children's needs for privacy, dignity and safety (NMS 25.5)
- ensure that children have a person independent of the school and/or the child's placing authority to whom they may contact directly about personal problems or concerns about the school (NMS 22.8)
- ensure that staff rotas have time scheduled that allow team meetings to occur at least once every half term and that one-to-one supervision occurs at least once every half term and is of at least one and a half hours duration (NMS 31.5)
- ensure that children live in well designed and pleasant premises by adjusting the loud and intrusive telephone ring in the lounge of the residential unit. (NMS 23)