

St Bernard's School, Louth

Wood Lane, Louth, LN11 8RS

Inspection dates

13-14 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The dedicated and ambitious executive headteacher makes sure the school keeps moving forward.
- The drive for continual improvement is shared by senior and other leaders and this thread runs right through the school.
- Effective ways of checking teaching keeps it good and rapidly improving.
- The school sets challenging targets for all pupils and an increasing number achieve them. Careful recording of pupils' progress shows this is improving all the time.
- Pupils' smiles when they arrive at school each morning show they feel safe and happy.
- Parents agree with this wholeheartedly, one saying they would like to come to the school too, if they could.
- Membership of the Lincolnshire Wolds Federation has opened up a whole new range of opportunities for pupils.
- Staff in the residential and education parts of the school work well together.
- Behaviour in lessons is usually good and often outstanding. Staff are well trained and manage any difficult behaviour effectively and sensitively.
- There are frequent opportunities for pupils to practise things they have learnt on their own.
- The sixth form is good and gives students a variety of useful experiences both within the federation and further afield.
- Governors know the school's strengths and areas for improvement, so they can support senior leaders well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Very occasionally advice for staff to manage some pupils' very difficult behaviour has not been quite as clear as it could be.
- The school must ensure that it meets the national minimum standard for residential special schools that has not been met.

Information about this inspection

- This was an integrated inspection with a social care inspector who judged the quality of the school's residential provision. The inspectors worked alongside each other and with school and residential staff. The findings from the residential inspection can be found in this report.
- The lead inspector observed eight lessons and also listened to pupils read. All these observations were carried out with senior staff. She also spent time with pupils at lunch, registration and break times and watched them arrive at school and go home.
- Both inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, head of site, the school's educational psychologist, governors and the 'teaching and learning leaders'. The social care inspector also spoke with residential staff, the CAMHS (Children and Mental Health Service) nurse specialist and nurse trainer. The lead inspector held a meeting with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at documents and records concerning attendance, safeguarding, behaviour, health and safety as well as pupils' progress and staff performance.
- There were 11 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and inspectors also looked at the school's own questionnaires for parents for both residential and day pupils. Inspectors spoke to parents by telephone and in person. They also took account of questionnaires that staff filled in.

Inspection team

Debra McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Hylton

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St. Bernard's is a small special school for pupils with moderate, severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex needs. Some also have autism-spectrum disorders or social, emotional and behavioural problems. Every pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There is term-time residential provision available for pupils for four nights a week. Currently two pupils attend.
- The school became part of the Lincolnshire Wolds Federation with the Horncastle St Lawrence School in September 2012. They share a newly formed governing body with an executive headteacher in overall charge of both schools. There are two deputy headteachers within the federation, one in charge of each site.
- Pupils regularly visit the other federation school and some attend lessons at St Michael's Primary, Eastfields Infants and Monks Dyke Secondary Schools. Sixth formers may attend Boston, Lincoln, Grimsby or Linkage Colleges as well as 'SENSE' or 'Welfare to Work', plus a range of work experience links.
- A higher-than-average number of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra funds for pupils known to be eligible for free school needs, looked after by the local authority or with a parent in the armed forces).
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The school employs an outreach teacher for local mainstream schools and helps to assess pre-school children with special educational needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching across the school by:
 - regularly checking all teaching includes activities that enable every pupil to do work that is planned especially for them to be as successful as they can.
- Make sure that positive, consistent behaviour strategies are fully in place across the St Bernard's educational and residential communities, that are regularly and carefully checked so that:
 - the use of the 'blue room' is fully assessed so it is consistent between school and residential provision
 - behaviour plans are always up-to-date, regularly reviewed and provide very clear guidance to staff in both settings about how to manage very challenging behaviour.
- The school must meet the following national minimum standard for residential special schools.
 - A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any physical intervention. Records may include the information in Appendix 2 (use of physical restraint). The record is made within 24 hours of the sanction being applied and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of physical intervention restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice (NMS 12.6)
- Ensure that care plans fully reflect the religious and cultural needs of residential pupils.
- Ensure the school's child protection policy contains signs and indicators of possible abuse.
- Make sure the head of care forms and makes links with specialist services used in education so as to provide consistent care to pupils in the residential provision.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupil progress records show all pupils and groups of pupils make the same good and sometimes outstanding progress towards challenging targets. This compares well with pupils in other similar schools nationally. Pupils in the school's residential provision make exceptional progress in their personal and social development.
- Effective changes have been made to how children learn in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The new way staff record progress shows more clearly that they all make at least the progress they should. Often this is better and sometimes outstandingly so.
- Staff across the school are skilled at helping pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties use different switches to communicate. Very occasionally, opportunities are missed to use other kinds of technology, but the school is tackling this.
- Teaching reading using phonics (sounds and letters) has got off to a good start. There are plenty of books around school and many pupils are keen early readers, particularly those with moderate learning difficulties. When pupils take reading books home this helps even more.
- Some pupils, especially those with severe learning difficulties, use pictures or symbols to tell staff what they want or to help them understand daily routines. This especially helps pupils with autistic- spectrum disorders or complex communication difficulties learn to use symbol timetables on their own. Where these routines are less well established, pupils sometimes find it harder to understand what is expected of them.
- Sixth formers access a range of courses at local colleges. Their progress in basic mathematics and literacy skills in school is now much easier to track because staff have changed how they record this. The students practise these skills during the work experience organised with local businesses or through enterprise opportunities in the community.
- The school carefully checks how well pupils are doing in different subjects so they can spot any difficulties. The new way of writing pupils' personal learning plans means the steps are a lot easier to measure and is helping pupils achieve even better and more quickly.
- The way senior leaders allocate extra help to those eligible for the pupil premium is done very individually. It is used for extra staffing to give pupils more help with literacy (or communication), numeracy or computer skills, or to help them improve their behaviour so that they are able to achieve as well as other pupils in the school.

The quality of teaching

is good

Good teaching was observed across the school during the inspection. Senior leaders' checks show that teaching can often be outstanding. The development of a team of 'teaching and learning leaders' to support staff through the school is helping teachers improve even more quickly.

- Pupils learn especially well when teachers check how much they have learnt by asking questions that make them think and avoid questions that are too easy. They use what they find out to decide what to teach next and then plan work for each pupil in turn. However, very occasionally work is planned that is the same for each pupil in the class so that it is either too hard or too

easy.

- The school makes sure teachers think carefully about pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by making it part of their planning. Pupils learn to be reflective during quiet times, to work together in groups, and to recognise the difference between right and wrong. They have opportunities to visit the theatre and take part in dance festivals and drama events. Older pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Senior leaders seize every chance they can to give pupils opportunities to learn about other cultures, for example by hosting the Egyptian Paralympics' team last summer.
- The topic-based approach to teaching subjects helps pupils enjoy their lessons. In one mathematics lesson during 'police week', pupils were seen counting out pictures of robbers that the policeman on their worksheet had caught. Others practised their speaking and listening skills to ask police community support officers questions about when it was appropriate to use their blue lights and how speed cameras worked.
- Pupils have ample opportunity to practise their reading and are encouraged to think carefully about the storyline. 'Cats can't play football' suggested one pupil when reflecting on his new reading book. Teaching assistants play an important role in helping pupils develop their reading and writing skills, although very occasionally they might jump in a little too quickly with the right answer because they are so keen to help.
- Residential pupils benefit from opportunities to use their numeracy and literacy skills in a practical way, for example following instructions to measure out and cook the ingredients for an evening meal.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils show obvious delight when they see familiar adults on arrival at school. There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Parents are confident their children are very well cared for.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good and sometimes outstanding. They are polite and welcoming to visitors and show care and concern for each other. They share in each other's successes, for example one pupil was observed patting his friend on the back when he had done well.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunity to attend other schools and colleges when their behaviour allows, as well as trips to the local leisure centre or further afield to attend drama workshops at Linkage College or residential experiences in Wales.
- Pupils respond enthusiastically to incentives to behave well, working for tokens that earn them a 'dip in the bag' to find an extra special treat. Pupils who have particular difficulties managing their own behaviour have their time broken down into very short time-slots so they can collect tokens on their reward card to earn a favourite activity.
- Bullying is not an issue and good behaviour is encouraged through staff example or ideas like 'Friendship Week'. Inappropriate behaviour caused by pupils' learning difficulties is dealt with through agreed behaviour plans that tell staff what to do to help pupils learn to control their behaviour better.
- These plans are usually checked regularly and incidents carefully recorded so that improvements can be seen. Very occasionally this is not quite as thorough as it should be, although it has not

affected the support pupils receive.

- The high ratio of adults to pupils and mostly well-considered guidance make sure staff know what they need to do to keep pupils safe. Improvements to the way staff record precisely how they hold pupils if their behaviour is likely to cause harm to themselves or others, has made these records much clearer. There are some inconsistencies between education and residential settings on how to use the 'blue rooms' (safe spaces to help pupils with very complex behaviour calm down). Clearer guidance will avoid this confusion.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through lessons in personal and social development. They wash their hands and put on appropriate clothing in food technology lessons and learn about potential hazards in the kitchen.
- Attendance is good and the school checks this regularly and meticulously.
- Behaviour in the residential provision is good. Rigorous health and safety checks take place and any concerns are quickly reported and resolved. Staff are regularly trained in safeguarding and restraint and there are a range of appropriate policies. However, the school's child protection policy does not explicitly contain signs and indicators of abuse.

The leadership and management

are good

- The innovative executive headteacher has introduced several initiatives to keep the school moving forward. She knows the staff and pupils well and is able to put effective plans in place based on her careful observations of what works best. Staff are deployed according to their particular talents and this is beginning to make a real difference, for example in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- It is still early days for the newly formed federation, but is already giving staff and pupils from both schools wider training and educational opportunities.
- Improving the quality of teaching is given the highest priority. Senior leaders work together to make sure teachers know 'only good is good enough'. The development of the 'TALL' team (teaching and learning leaders) is a reflection of this.
- The executive headteacher works in close partnership with the local authority to make sure teachers have all the support they need to improve their skills and learn from one another.
- The way subjects are taught has been carefully thought out to reflect the wide range of abilities and ages within the school as well as the different ways pupils learn best. The emphasis on helping pupils overcome their difficulties means that everyone is given an equal chance to succeed, ruling out any possibility of discrimination.
- The questionnaires filled in by staff show they are right behind senior leaders' drive towards excellence. Parents are extremely positive about the school and are very impressed by the work it does.
- The leadership of the residential provision is good and there is effective communication with the school, meaning relevant matters and concerns are appropriately shared. The head of care is well supported by the school's senior management and the accommodation is valued by pupils, parents and outside professionals.

- Because the extra help eligible pupils have from the pupil premium is so well planned, it means its impact can be clearly seen in the individual achievements of each pupil.

■ The governance of the school:

- The recently formed governing body is a mixture of new governors and those from the two previous governing bodies.
- Governors have worked really hard to learn more about the school and find the best way to help the executive headteacher. They now challenge her appropriately about her work by asking the right questions and also spend time in school finding things out for themselves. They know about the quality of teaching and about pupils' achievement. They know how targets are set for staff to improve teaching. Training has made sure they understand the link between teachers' performance and pay, as well as the importance of the pupil premium to help eligible pupils catch up. They know about what the school is doing to reward good teaching and to tackle any underperformance. They are aware of the school's finances and ensure safeguarding requirements for children are met.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	is good
Residential pupils' safety	is good
Leadership and management of the residential provision	is good

- As a result of staying in the residential provision, residential pupils make outstanding progress in all areas of their lives, especially their personal and social development. This prepares them very well for adulthood. They have opportunities to develop their independence, social skills and to get on with others. They form long and lasting friendships with their peers. Regular trips and outings ensure they develop an awareness of the wider world. The exceptionally strong relationships with residential staff mean pupils feel safe, happy and relaxed. They feel listened to and that they are treated as individuals. A pupil commented 'staff are nice' and that they felt 'happy'. There are no incidents of bullying.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the provision and these very good relationships are a key strength. Parents' comments included, 'my child has made excellent progress,' that their 'speech has come on in leaps and bounds' and 'staff are very sensitive to their needs'.
- The views of residential pupils are actively explored and acted upon. A school pupil council, with representation from pupils who access the residential provision, ensures their views are taken into account. This is further underpinned within the residential setting where pupils are able to make choices about their care, activities and meals. A detailed intimate care policy provides clear direction to staff with regards to maintaining dignity, privacy and principles of safe care practice.
- The good provision makes sure well-trained, capable and experienced staff give good care to residential pupils in a warm, comfortable and homely environment. Their health is carefully monitored and their individual needs are mostly well met. However, pupils' religious and cultural needs are not given sufficient individual attention in their care plans.
- There are areas of good practice throughout the provision and improvements have been made since the last inspection, such as better communication systems between the school and residential staff. A teacher commented the school is now a 'much stronger, integrated site'. Shortfalls identified in the last welfare inspection in 2012 have been addressed and half-termly

visits by the governing body are taking place. The bathroom accommodation has been completely refurbished. However there are several areas that require improvement and one national minimum standard is not met. This relates to the recording of restraint which has not been robustly addressed. However, this has not affected the outcomes for residential pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>
Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	120761
Social care unique reference number	SC065118
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	401965

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	12
Number of boarders on roll	2
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Rhodes
Headteacher	Leanda Mason (Executive)
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2009
Telephone number	01507 603776
Fax number	01507 603776
Email address	enquiries@st-bernards.lincs.sch.uk

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