

St Bernard's School

St. Bernards House, Wood Lane, LOUTH, Lincolnshire, LN11 8RS

Inspection dates	17/07/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- This school has been judged as good in all areas except outcomes for residential students which are outstanding. There have been no failures of national minimum standards. Four recommendations have been made to support the residential provision to improve further. These relate to the review of the statement of principles and practice and the medication policy, improvement to records of fire drills and to ensure the residential register is fully completed.
- The school's inclusive ethos and underpinning philosophy are strong throughout the provision, ensuring residential students are in a supportive and nurturing community within which they are valued and safe. An external professional said, 'This is one of the strongest schools in terms of understanding and their ability to apply sensory-based strategies.' Residential students develop strong relationships with staff. They enjoy the residential experience. In a recent survey of parents that the school conducted, 100% of parents agreed they would recommend this school to other parents.
- The voice of each child is highly valued. Residential students are encouraged to make decisions and choices. There is a strong focus on promoting independence using innovative practice. Residential students practice new and established independence skills throughout their stays in the residential provision which enables them to successfully make the transition to adulthood.
- Safeguarding is a high priority at this school. Residential students feel safe and are safe. They show consideration and respect towards each other and staff. Bullying is not an issue at this school.
- The residential provision is well organised. The senior leadership team is committed and focussed to continually improve the service to ensure a high quality provision for residential students in which they can thrive. An external professional said, 'This is a proactive and positive school.'

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced on the morning of the start of the inspection. The inspector visited the residential accommodation, spoke to residential students and staff, including key staff with responsibility for the residential provision. The inspector also observed practice in the residential provision and scrutinised school policies and records. The inspector was unable to gather information from Parent View as not enough had been completed to be viewed.

Inspection team

Joanne Vyas

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

St Bernard's School is a maintained residential special school for 52 students aged 2-19 years. Four students currently reside at the school during the week and a further 14 at weekends. The residential accommodation is located on the school site within one of three buildings and on a single level. The school is located in Louth, a small country town in the rural county of Lincolnshire. The school serves a population of primarily White British young people. The school caters for students with complex and severe learning disabilities. The last residential inspection was carried out in January 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- improve the dispensing procedures of medicine in syrup form so that medication does not become contaminated
- ensure records of fire drills clearly state which students and staff have been involved in the drill and at what time the drill occurred
- Ensure the register for the residential provision is fully completed
- ensure the statement of principles and practice clearly states that the residential provision can only accommodate children who are on the school roll.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential students are outstanding in this school. Students who stay in the residential provision during the week focus on their educational targets and practise their life skills such as personal hygiene, cooking and social skills. Students who stay at weekends and during holidays enjoy spending time with their friends.

Residential students enjoy staying in the residential provision. They particularly enjoy time with their friends and the activities they participate in. They are relaxed and feel safe. They have strong relationships with staff and their peers. They make significant progress towards their educational achievement and life skills. A parent commenting in a recent school survey said of the residential provision, 'My son has made really good progress and staff are great at keeping us informed.'

Residential students show consideration and respect for each other as well as patience and thoughtfulness towards those who cannot move as quickly as they can. For example, students who like to run around will patiently wait for another student in a wheelchair to pass by. Other residential students will set up less mobile students with the equipment they need to complete their work. Residential students are therefore enabled to grow in confidence, self-esteem and develop their resilience.

Residential students significantly contribute to the running of the provision. The student voice is highly valued throughout the school. Residential students access a wide range of communication aids which enable them to fully contribute to their care, education and the running of the school. A student represents the residential students on the school council. Residential students also have their own meeting which is focused and inclusive to ensure all members of the meeting have their say. Residential students have recently achieved, through these meetings, an extra computer and helped to organise various parties at the provision. Residential students also complete the weekly on-line shopping order and choose their meals and activities.

Residential students have significant opportunities to practice new and established independence skills which include learning to use the toilet, dressing themselves, cooking and budgeting. As a result residential students can successfully make the transition into adulthood.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of the residential provision and care is good. Students receive an individually tailored induction into the residential provision. This may include the use of social stories, visits to the provision with parents, siblings, residential staff working with the student in school to get to know them and for them to get to know the staff, and consulting with parents throughout. Parents are appreciative of the attention to detail and the reassurance they receive from staff. Consequently, students enjoy their residential experience and settle in very quickly with no issues of anxiety or upset.

Parents say that staff are 'really caring and very understanding'. They feel that the school and residential staff work closely together which helps to relieve any anxiety students might be feeling when they go into residence for the first time. Furthermore, there is a well-planned and executed approach between school, residential staff and parents when they are supporting students to achieve life skills such as using the toilet or making a drink. A parent described the good progress their child has made believing this to be achieved through a consistent approach across all three environments: school, home and the residential provision.

Staff provide a high quality, inclusive service to each student. All students, no matter how profoundly disabled, are seen as having potential and aspirations. Residential students are at the centre of practice. Innovative work such as 'systematic instruction' means residential students are learning to become more independent. For example, students who previously would allow staff and parents to 'wait on them' now will make their own drink when they come into residence from school. The school also uses the latest technology such as 'eye gaze' to enable students to have a voice and become more independent.

Residential students say they enjoy their meals. They are provided with a wide variety of food and are encouraged to try new foods, thereby promoting a healthier diet. Staff and residential students eat together to enjoy a sociable and relaxed meal. They benefit greatly from this experience as they learn to conform to mealtime social etiquette. Residential students are sensitively supported to ensure they can eat their meal as independently as possible. They are asked about their likes and dislikes with regards to food which helps to formulate the menu. Specialist diets are catered for and alternatives are offered if required. Residential students are encouraged to get involved with the preparation and cooking of meals and complete a weekly online shop, which they sign for when it arrives and take responsibility for putting it away. Residential students are extremely proud of this achievement.

The good health of residential students is promoted. Staff receive specialist healthcare training when it is required, such as training in epilepsy, epipen and splint training. Medication is generally managed safely. It is stored securely and staff follow safe procedures for the administration of medication. However, the procedures for the dispensing of medication in syrup form can be improved. Currently, staff pour this medication out into a container, syringe what they require and then pour the remainder back into the bottle. This practice could potentially contaminate the remaining medication.

Staff provide a cohesive package of education and care for residential students. Residential students benefit from a high quality of provision which ensures the personal, social and academic development of the child is central to all practice. There are effective links between parents, residential and academic staff as well as external professionals, ensuring students are provided with a seamless holistic package.

Residential students are positively involved in a wide range of activities within the residential provision and within the local and wider community. They seem to particularly enjoy the activities on offer such as football, trips out to local seaside resorts, board games, and listening to music to mention just a few. Activities are clearly linked to educational targets so offer a valuable learning experience which supports students to achieve academically. They also provide excellent opportunities for students to develop their social and emotional skills. A parent commenting in a recent school survey said of the residential provision, 'Great activities and better feedback.'

Staff work closely with external professionals to improve outcomes for residential students. External professionals feel welcome when they visit the provision and comment that staff are helpful and provide them with good information.

The residential environment consists of a lounge and large dining room which can also be used for crafts and playing board games. There is a functional kitchen that residential students have access to. There are plans to extend this kitchen and refurbish it so that it is more accessible to students in wheelchairs. Bedrooms are individual and students like them. There are plans to make bedrooms more personalised and residential students have been involved with choosing posters and quilt covers for their rooms. Some students bring in personal items from home such as toys, quilt covers and DVDs. These help residential students to settle into the provision.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

The arrangements for ensuring residential pupils' safety and protection from harm are good. The safety of students is a high priority for this school. Staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding and child protection procedures. The designated safeguarding person has an in-depth knowledge of all safeguarding concerns affecting students and manages these effectively, ensuring the appropriate services are involved where necessary.

Residential students feel safe and are safe in this school. The high staffing ratio contributes to students feeling safe and secure. Bullying is not an issue in residence. Positive behaviour management strategies ensure residential students are usually well behaved. Staff utilise de-escalation and distraction techniques, which work well to prevent students becoming anxious or distressed. Furthermore, they have a good understanding of how each student communicates which also alleviates stress and tension. Consequently, there have been no incidents resulting in a physical intervention since the last inspection. Residential students do not go missing from this school but staff have a good understanding of the procedures to follow should this happen.

Residential students practise evacuating the building in fire drills to fully prepare them should there be a fire. However, records do not make it clear which students or staff have been involved in the drills and what time the drills occurred. This is an improvement the school can make so that it can be clearly seen which students have not practised evacuating the building. Tests on fire detection systems and the emergency lighting within the residential provision have not been carried out as regularly as they should be until recently. This shortfall was identified within both the latest fire risk assessment and governor visit report and has now been rectified. The school carries out other health and safety procedures to a satisfactory standard.

There are effective procedures in place for the safe recruitment of staff which ensures students are not cared for by unsuitable adults. All visitors are asked to show identification and sign in and out of the school. The school is appropriately secure from intruders.

Leadership and management of the residential provision **Good**

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. The statement of principles and practice is a comprehensive document providing good information for parents. However, it can be improved further as it currently does not make it clear that the residential provision can only accommodate children who are on the school roll.

The residential provision is an integral part of the school, which has clear aims that are translated into practice. Staff are passionate and committed to providing a high quality service for the benefit of residential students ensuring their health, wellbeing and educational achievement.

Staff are experienced, caring and professional. Most staff are qualified to an appropriate National Vocational Qualification at level 3 or equivalent. Staff also have access to a good level of mandatory and specialised training in order for them to be able to meet the needs of the students accommodated at the school. This includes training in gastrostomy care, autism and epilepsy. Staff feel well supported by each other and the senior leadership team. This affords them the opportunity to reflect and improve practice ensuring a good standard of care is provided to residential students.

Staff complete the school register and a daily fire record for the residential provision. Both these documents provide a register for the residential provision which meets the national minimum standards. However, the daily fire record is not always fully completed. This makes it difficult to track when students have accessed the residential provision or which staff have been working with them.

The complaints procedure is accessible to parents and residential students. Students have strong relationships with staff and feel comfortable in voicing any concerns. Residential students have access to an independent visitor. The independent visitor is currently unable to visit so an advocacy service has been contacted to provide an interim advocate. Parents say that staff make time for them and take their concerns seriously. The school has an open door policy. No complaints have been made since the last inspection.

The senior leadership team has a strong commitment to improving practice and ensuring a high quality service is provided. It has a clear vision for the future of the residential provision. There is challenging self-evaluation leading to improvements to practice. Governors complete regular visits to the residential provision and report back to the main governing body. The school continually strives to drive up standards to provide a good quality service for residential students.

What inspection judgements mean

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
DfE registration number	925/7025

This inspection 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	
Number of boarders on roll	52
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	2 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Leanda Mason
Date of previous boarding inspection	13/01/2014
Telephone number	01507 603 776
Email address	stbernards@lwf.lincs.sch.uk

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