

St Bernard's School

St. Bernard's House, Wood Lane, Louth, Lincolnshire LN11 8RS

Inspection dates

05/07/2016 to 07/07/2016

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding **1**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding 1

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding 1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- The residential provision has been judged as outstanding in all areas. There are no failures to meet national minimum standards or recommendations for improvement. In a survey conducted with parents, for the third year in a row, 100% of parents agreed they would recommend this provision to other parents.
- Young people make excellent progress because of the residential experience. The development of social and independence skills is a real strength of the school. The transference of these skills across varied settings, including school, residential provision, home, and community, supports their transition to adulthood.
- The work with parents is exceptionally effective. School staff embrace technology ensuring widespread accessibility of information. This includes websites and a phone app for parents to access information. This encourages wider parental participation.
- Safeguarding is a high priority at this school. Residential young people feel safe and are safe. All staff have an excellent awareness of national and regional perspectives relating to safeguarding, and leaders have established very positive links with other agencies and organisations to promote safeguarding throughout the school and community.
- Leaders and managers are not complacent. They continue to make substantial improvements across the whole school site.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

There were no areas identified at this inspection.

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 the young people 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 gathered information from Parent View to inform the inspection. In addition, the inspector spoke to parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Judith Longden

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

St Bernard's School is a residential special school that has academy status. It provides for 62 students aged from two to 19 years. Three young people currently reside at the school during the week and a further 10 have the opportunity to use the provision 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 September 2015.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Young people make exceptional progress in this school. The quality of the residential experience is a key factor in this progress. This is because the young people who stay in the residential provision during the week continue to work on their educational targets and learn valuable life skills. Others, who stay at weekends and holidays, enjoy spending time with friends and engaging in a wide range of activities. The use of a variety of rigorous and creative monitoring tools, including mapping, highlights the progress that all young people make. Evidence such as photographs and video recordings supports parents to see the progress their child makes from their starting point. The use of these tools enables staff to step back and reflect on the young people's abilities and raises their expectations of what young people can do by themselves.

Young people, staff and parents speak very highly of the school and recognise the positive difference that the residential provision makes. One parent commented, 'They do a very good job looking after him. He has come on in leaps and bounds. He is happy and likes everyone. He is a lot more independent now and has really engaged so much; he will talk to people now and helps at home. His understanding of life has moved forward completely. He has changed beyond recognition and he can see his progress.'

Achievement in education is excellent. The school and residential staff work very closely to ensure that the opportunities to learn and develop skills in school are consolidated in the residential provision. Twice-daily meetings enable staff to share progress that young people are making and identify where further work can enhance this. For example, when young people have made some progress in maths lessons, the residential staff embed this by helping young people to plan the evening meal, budget, shop, and pay for the food.

Young people enjoy a range of activities including trips to the nature reserve, seaside visits, shopping, attending local festivals, meals out, swimming and going to the gym. Physical activities, alongside varied and very healthy meals, help to promote excellent health. Young people's experiences have recently been enhanced through a music project where they learn to play various instruments and enjoy the sensory experience of music. One young person's musical talent is being promoted by having a drum kit in the residential provision, something he was very keen to demonstrate during the inspection. One parent commented in a survey, 'The experiences provided are varied and appropriate and are helping him to build his confidence and independence skills.'

The development of social and independence skills is a real strength of the school. Of vital importance is the transference of these skills across various settings, including school, residential provision, home, and community. Young people are enthusiastic about what they learn and can readily identify the progress they have made and continue to make. One said, 'I am able to cook lots of meals myself now.' Another was very proud of his achievements saying 'I am learning independence. I can cook, and do the garden, make my bed, and use the washing machine.'

Young people enjoy being in each other's company and have excellent relationships with staff. Their communication skills continue to develop and improve, with young people exceeding expectations in their ability to hold conversations with adults and use humour.

The use of technology enables all young people to share their views and feelings, and express their choices and preferences. One professional commented, 'All children have progressed with communication. It is what stands out. They really embrace communication. It is encompassed throughout what they do.'

The school leadership team is tenacious in its desire to continue to improve outcomes for young people. Current developments include a project focused on understanding autism. This project encourages residential staff, school staff, parents, and young people to focus on the strengths of the child, what they can do and what they can achieve, inspiring high aspirations for all. This is being led by an experienced professional working closely with staff, parents groups and directly with young people. Other developments such as the 'friends' and 'peers' programmes, enhance relationship skills and social skills. They also help young people understand their feelings and manage their anxieties. A member of staff said, 'They need to talk about teenage life.' These programmes also help young people to understand difference and prepare them for life in 21st century Britain. A member of staff said, 'We help send these young people into the world happy, able, respectful and confident.'

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The residential provision's ethos of supporting outcomes and overcoming barriers is clearly demonstrated by all staff. Staff help young people to develop skills and to be able to use those skills in other environments. They fully understand the needs of each young person and their developmental targets, ensuring that activities and daily routines enable young people to reach and exceed these targets. This understanding is underpinned by clear, detailed care plans, compiled with young people and their parents. These are intrinsically linked with education and individual learning plans, ensuring a whole-school approach to the care and progress of each young person. Staff have high expectations of young people and of each other, creating a 'can do' attitude throughout the school.

Staff clearly understand individual health needs, and medication practice is robust. They understand the impact that medication can have on behaviour and ensure that they are equipped to manage this effectively. Staff access specialist health training as required, and are supported by the nursing team and local pharmacists. Young people benefit from information on relationships and sexual health through community health services. The food provided by the school catering team is excellent, and young people enjoy sitting with their peers and staff at lunchtimes. A family feel to mealtimes exists in the residential setting with the young people and staff all eating together round a large dining table. Young people actively participate in the preparation of evening meals. This provides further opportunities for learning and social development.

Work with parents is exceptionally effective. Excellent communication with parents through weekly updates and termly newsletters provides them with updates on what is happening at the school and in the wider community. These newsletters inform parents of training available to them and the activities planned by the school. It also seeks their views about the service. For example, one parent has requested a focus on support for siblings in the next training event, and this has now been planned. School staff embrace technology ensuring widespread accessibility of information. This includes websites and a phone app for parents to access information. This encourages wider parental

participation.

Parents benefit greatly from the coaching model implemented by the school. It ensures that they have appropriate information, empowers them in decision-making, and enables them to participate fully in the ongoing care of their child.

Plans for respite care are now shared with parents in advance. This helps them to prepare themselves and their child for their next visit, ensuring that they get the most from their stay. One parent said: 'It is so good to receive the planning in advance of stays. I can prepare [the child] and can talk about his weekend positively so he knows what he is doing.'

The voice of each young person is highly valued. They are encouraged to make decisions and choices. They share their views through resident meetings and are represented at student council. A recent review of the council has improved feedback processes and ensures that students are better represented. Access for young people with various communication styles has improved, with the addition of appropriate vocabulary on communication tablets. Young people know who to talk to if they have a problem or are worried. This includes the academy advocates (previously called governors), an independent visitor, and various support agencies.

The residential provision is welcoming and provides a homely feel. It is also an environment that encourages continued learning. For example, the well-equipped kitchen is an excellent learning resource. Young people's rooms are personalised and they are proud of their environment. Maintenance issues are dealt with as swiftly as possible, ensuring that the environment remains homely and safe.

Managing transitions is a real strength of this school. Work with young people, parents, and providers ensures smooth transitions to new placements. Annual transition events provide parents and young people with an opportunity to see the various services, resources, and opportunities available for them when they leave. Staff are fully aware of the impact on the remaining young people when someone moves on, and this is handled effectively, ensuring that the transition is a positive experience for everyone.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Leaders, managers and staff have an excellent awareness of national and regional perspectives relating to safeguarding. They have established very positive links with other agencies and organisations to promote safeguarding throughout the school and community. Staff, leaders and advocates share serious case review findings, implementing learning points to ensure that students are protected. For example, learning has already improved the student voice, enabling them to move from making simple choices through to being fully involved in their care. It has also enabled staff to recognise the importance of early identification of concerns and acting on these concerns, resulting in early help assessments being undertaken when required. Protecting young people is of paramount importance to the whole school. All staff, leaders, academy advocates and trust directors are aware of the risks posed by possible misuse of the internet, grooming, radicalisation, and bullying. Training in these areas is robust and ensures that all staff understand how to keep young people safe. For example, young people who are non-verbal have the relevant words and pictures, such

as body parts, on their communication tablets, enabling them to tell staff of any concerns.

There have been no allegations or suspicions of harm since the last inspection and no complaints have been made. Although the staff team know each other very well, they understand the need to report any concerns they may have, always putting the safety of young people first. Staff take an active part in 'child in need' meetings, providing and sharing information appropriately to ensure that young people are supported.

The management of behaviour is excellent and a real strength of this provision. Staff use a new technology system to capture information about behaviour. This allows a thorough analysis of incidents, with real-time monitoring and review. Consequently, staff are able to identify what works well for each young person and to develop the most positive response to any incident. For example, the analysis of one young person's behaviours in school highlighted their recent change of peer group and class environment, and it became clear that he needed to access more planned and supported social opportunities in an outdoor environment. Having provided these, staff can now identify a substantial reduction in negative behaviour and incidents. Staff ensure that all young people have the opportunity to mix with a variety of peers, form friendships and explore their own feelings, helping them to self-regulate their behaviour. There is no bullying in the school. However, staff work hard to ensure that young people understand what bullying is and how to report any concerns. The use of restraint in school has decreased and no restraints have been used in the residential provision since the last inspection.

There are no concerns regarding the misuse of alcohol or drugs, and young people do not go missing from this environment. Staff know what to do in the event of any such incident, and detailed protocols and procedures provide the relevant information for them. Detailed risk assessments allow young people to safely take part in age-appropriate activities, enabling them to grow and develop.

Fire safety procedures have been recently updated, providing clarity for all staff and ensuring that the individual evacuation plans are understood. Fire and safety checks, completed daily, ensure that young people remain safe. Recruitment checks are very robust. This ensures that young people are protected.

The trust director responsible for safeguarding undertakes regular monitoring visits. He ensures that young people have access to a variety of people whom they feel comfortable with to share any concerns. This ensures the ongoing safety and protection of young people.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

The leaders and managers of this provision are not content for it to stand still, having previously obtained an outstanding judgement. They have used peer-to-peer reviews with other head-teachers assessing the school and residential provision, identifying strengths and areas to develop. They have utilised feedback from within the organisation at every level to celebrate what they do well and to set targets for improving the areas that are not as strong. They continue to implement a range of creative and innovative methods of working, especially in monitoring and assessment. This enables the detailed

review of all young people's progress.

All leaders, managers, directors and staff have embraced the change to academy status. The executive headteacher commented that it brings opportunities in terms of vision, creative thinking and more autonomy. She has forged strong links with various forums and organisations, utilising the various networking opportunities and partnership work to the benefit of the young people.

The whole leadership team shares a clear vision for the school. A number of detailed and robust development plans from the trust, federation and residential provision intrinsically link to create a clear path for improvement. For example, next month brings the opening of a new post-19 non-educational provision with a focus on life outcomes, such as supporting independent living, employment, full engagement in the community and the ongoing development of communication and social interaction skills.

Strong governance is a key strength. The governors have become academy advocates and work closely alongside the directors. Directors and advocates have a clear understanding of their roles, and the new scheme of delegation is under constant review. They recognise that safeguarding is a key responsibility for all, and undergo regular training in this area. Robust monitoring of the school and boarding provision ensures that young people are safe, looked after and making outstanding progress. Challenge to the executive head and head of school is provided, if appropriate, ensuring that any concerns are swiftly dealt with.

Staff are excellent. They enjoy fantastic relationships with young people and work well together as a team. One member of staff said, 'We are committed to each other's success.' Communication across the whole site is excellent, ensuring consistency in approach and a shared ethos and understanding of the aims of the school. The coaching programme established last year is now fully embedded into the whole-school culture. Staff are engaging in the programme and this is developing individuals and teams, and helping them to realise their potential. Coaching is also being used effectively with young people, supporting their communication, empowering them and helping them to recognise their strengths. Parents also benefit from this, feeling more involved in the care of their child and decision-making.

Robust and effective supervision of staff ensures their well-being, explores what is working and what is not, and challenges them when appropriate. Regular meetings with all staff ensure that they remain up to date with what is happening across the school and how developments are progressing. Specific areas for discussion, such as learning styles, provide an opportunity for staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of how they work with young people. A variety of training opportunities ensure that staff develop their understanding in areas such as safeguarding, medication, and autism. A recent review of training for the residential staff has resulted in an improvement in delivery, ensuring that all staff have the opportunity to receive training at the same time and to share their learning across the whole school. All residential staff either have the required qualification or are on the relevant course. This means that young people benefit from well qualified, skilled and experienced staff. Staff work closely with other professionals, such as the speech and language therapist, to support and help young people to make continued progress.

This inspection has found no failures to meet national minimum standards and there are no recommendations for improvement made. Leaders constantly seek the views of

parents to inform their development. A recent survey with parents found that, for the third consecutive year, 100% would recommend the school to another parent. One summed up the school, stating, 'It is a fantastic school. I never thought I would find an environment that is so well suited to my child's needs.'

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceed the standard of good and result in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding, and the impact that the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services that exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean that children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	120761
Social care unique reference number	SC065118

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	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	Three
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	Two to 19
Headteacher	Lea Mason
Date of previous boarding inspection	15/09/2015
Telephone number	01507 603 776
Email address	lea.mason@lwf.lincs.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/ofsted." If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.co.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016

