

# St Bernard's School

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

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

St Bernard's School is a residential special school that has academy status. It provides education and care for 81 children aged from two to 19 years. One child routinely stays at the school for part of the week. Other children access the provision for short breaks. Post-16 students access the provision for time limited, targeted support as part of their education, health and care plans. The school caters for children with a range of needs, including complex and severe learning difficulties.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 23 to 25 November 2021

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of previous inspection:** 12 November 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Strong, trusting relationships mean that children thrive in the residential provision. Children are exceptionally positive about the care they receive. Children say that staff give them the confidence to do well and that staff are excellent at motivating them to achieve their goals. A young person said: 'What we are about here is learning and inspiring.'

Leaders and managers recognise the importance of good emotional health for both staff and children. Many staff are trained as mental health first-aiders, enabling open discussions about children's well-being. Children are confident to discuss any concerns or anxieties that they may have and know that they will be given good-quality, sensitive support.

Children enjoy rich and varied experiences during their stays. Activity planning is very individualised. This ensures that all the children are relaxed, happy and enjoy their stay. Children enjoy the social experience of being away from home. They also benefit from the very good-quality independence skills training that the school offers. Staff are skilled in ensuring that children's targets, as set out in their education, health and care plans, are incorporated into activity planning. As a result, children achieve their objectives while having fun.

Children have been supported exceptionally well as they prepare to leave the school. Because staff are so ambitious for children, the children develop higher expectations for themselves. Children are encouraged and well supported to challenge themselves and make ambitious choices about their future. Staff maintain a clear connection with children and continue to provide very effective support after they have left the school.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

Staff are highly skilled in helping children to regulate and improve their behaviours. Behaviour management strategies are well considered and fully adhered to. Staff are consistent in their approaches but always empathetic. A social worker said: 'Staff know children really well and are skilled and experienced in supporting children and families. The service is a life saver for families.'

Staff have a particularly strong understanding of the underlying factors that influence children's behaviour. As a result, they respond with great care and empathy when children become anxious and upset. If children's behaviour does not meet the required standard, staff use restorative approaches to help children to understand the consequences of their actions and to take responsibility. These restorative

approaches are effective because they are carried out in a non-stigmatising way that focuses on learning.

A comprehensive programme of training equips staff with detailed and up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. Staff have access to a range of high-quality resources that give them a good understanding of a broad range of safeguarding issues.

Staff know what to do if they have any concerns about the safety or welfare of a child. Managers have promoted a very open, transparent safeguarding culture. Reporting procedures are well understood, and whistle-blowing systems are easily accessible to staff. As a result, the risk of abuse is significantly reduced.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

Managers and senior staff lead a service that inspires children to reach their full potential. Children become significantly more confident and ambitious as a result.

Managers also set very high expectations for staff conduct and performance. Managers act as excellent role models for staff. Experienced staff provide formal and informal mentoring and coaching to newer staff, ensuring that high standards are maintained. Staff receive regular supervision from senior leaders that enables them to reflect on and develop their practice.

Staff are provided with extensive, good-quality training that covers all aspects of their role, as well as wider care and education topics. Learning and development is incorporated into performance management systems and team meetings. As a result, the level of expertise within the staff group at the school is exceptional. The school's approach to staff development is recognised as a model of excellence and is being implemented in other schools across the trust and local authority.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an opportunity for staff to demonstrate their strong commitment and dedication to children. Disruption to children's learning and support within the residential care has been minimal. At times, when isolation has been necessary, staff have worked creatively to ensure that children still had good education and social opportunities. For example, children accessed a virtual youth club and took part in online assemblies. Although there has been some disruption to the school as a result of extensive building work that is taking place, children have been exceptionally well supported so that there has been minimal impact on them.

Governance and external monitoring are strong. The school governors' oversight ensures a high degree of scrutiny and has been a key factor in the high quality of care provided to children. The chair of governors works closely with the executive headteacher and head of care, empowering and supporting them to set and maintain high standards.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## **Residential special school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC065118

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Leanda Mason

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01507 603 776

**Email address:** lea.mason@lwf.lincs.sch.uk

## **Inspectors**

Bev Allison, Social Care Inspector

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 and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2021