

Baskerville School

The Baskerville School, Fellows Lane, Birmingham B17 9TS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Baskerville School is a foundation special school for day and residential children and young people aged 11 to 19 who have autism spectrum disorder. Up to 16 children and young people use the residential provision. Children and young people stay from Monday to Friday and return home each weekend.

Baskerville's residential provision comprises three residential units. Each unit has a particular focus and aim, based on children and young people's needs, supporting young people through adolescence into adulthood. The residential provision was last inspected in January 2020. Fourteen children and young people access placements at present.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

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: 15 to 17 February 2022

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 28 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive individualised care from staff who know them well. Leaders and staff work hard to ensure that children receive consistent care. They put in place clear expectations and routines which create a reliable sense of safety for children. This means that children feel settled and make good progress at school.

Staff actively seek children's views. Staff are adept at recognising children's body language and other non-verbal communication. This means that all children, including those who have communication difficulties, have their wishes and feelings acted on. As a result, children are central to staff's work and enjoy an inclusive environment.

Children enjoy numerous activities at school. These include sporting activities, games, cooking and many off-site activities. For example, inspectors saw children enjoying a pottery activity. Staff and the potter were skilful in including all children and celebrated their significant achievements. Staff are highly committed to children having these positive experiences. Children and parents appreciate these efforts.

Staff help children to develop individual independence while residing at the school. Staff spend time with children supporting them to develop self-care skills. They also develop their cooking skills to the point where students cook meals for each other on a regular basis. Staff also work to enable children to be able to manage their own medication, if possible. This increases their confidence for their future. As a result, children are as prepared as they can be when they move on from the school.

Leaders have identified that children need more help with their emotional health and well-being after the period of restrictions due to COVID-19. As a result, they have increased the number of people in the pastoral team. Staff in this team are working to better understand children's incidents and behaviour. This means that they can ensure that there are clear support plans in place. The newly implemented termly student well-being survey aids this review and highlights students who may need extra help. This well-rounded approach means that children and residential staff can access increased support.

Leaders have not ensured that the residential accommodation is well maintained. There are bathrooms that need refurbishment, and some simple small tasks are outstanding. COVID-19 has had some impact on this, but even taking this into account the deterioration has been unacceptable. Inspectors raised these areas during the inspection and leaders addressed some of these. In contrast, staff work hard to make sure that the accommodation is as welcoming as possible and meets the sensory needs of children. However, it remains that some aspects of the accommodation are not to the standard that children deserve.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The designated safeguarding lead and the safeguarding team are clear in their responsibilities. Staff are aware of what information they need to share if they have concerns, and the system works seamlessly. Safeguarding leads act quickly to involve other agencies as needed. Staff offer internal support for children's well-being when other agencies do not or cannot provide help to children. As a result, the school has systems that are effective and safeguard children.

Staff work with each other across the school. They use communication books and physical handovers, and the head of care has a presence during the school day. As a result, children receive joined-up and cohesive care. The continuity in approach across the day and night is a further element that ensures that children have a calm and settled time in residence.

Staff carry out direct work with children to support their development and well-being. This helps children to feel safe and listened to. However, staff do not record this well in children's records, so this good area of practice is poorly represented.

Staff are clear about the procedure for the administration of medication. Staff assess children over time to consider if they can safely self-administer their own medication. The measured approach means that when children can take this step towards independence it is safe to do so. For some children, records of the names and dosages of medication differ across records. In addition, staff cannot evidence that the administration of medication is observed as the observing member of staff does not sign the record to indicate correct administration. This removes a layer of security to prevent errors and ensure that medication is accurately signed for. This also reduces the ability of leaders to quality assure this important area of practice. Inspectors raised this with leaders during the inspection. They had not considered this weakness in practice before but committed to making changes. Overall, the confusion in information and weakness in practice has the potential to leave children at risk of harm.

Staff help children to respond to fire drills. Leaders have not ensured that these drills are frequent enough. This means that children do not have the practice they may need to increase their independence when the fire alarm sounds.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The head of care is knowledgeable and experienced in his role. He knows the students and staff exceptionally well. Staff feel supported by him, and he enjoys their confidence. His consistent presence, and the largely stable group of staff, helps children to feel calm while they are staying at the school.

The head of care has worked tirelessly to ensure that children are safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff absences relating to COVID-19 have not affected

children's residential stays at school. The head of care has ensured that there are always adults who know children well available to them. This has involved residential staff doing extra shifts, and adults from around the school helping as needed. This herculean effort has meant that children have been able to continue with experiences that help them grow and develop.

Leaders do not have effective monitoring systems for the residential part of the school. For example, bathrooms have deteriorated, and this has not been addressed in a timely way. In addition, leaders have not ensured that children's files are well maintained. They have out-of-date or conflicting information which could lead to confusion. Leaders have not ensured that medication information for all children is clear in files and fire drills are not frequent enough. The head of care has provided some review of these areas, but it is over-optimistic. As a result, the picture of care that school leaders have is not accurate.

Governors commit time, energy and experience to their roles. Due to an over-optimistic view of boarding, leaders have not always given governors a full and accurate picture. The governors' independent visits are not frequent enough and they do not fully consider the provision. However, the lead governor for residential has provided ideas to help planning and oversight. Leaders have readily accepted these. In addition, the headteacher has not completed an annual report to governors about the school's compliance with national minimum standards because she was not aware of this requirement. Overall, this means that governors do not have accurate information to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the boarding provision. As a result, governors' scrutiny is not effective.

Staff have access to a range of training. Leaders do not review this programme to consider its effectiveness. This weakens the workforce planning for the residential staff. Staff have supervision with leaders three times per year. They do not fully consider all aspects of children's needs in these sessions. They are also not frequent enough to provide continuity for staff or to hold them to account. In addition, staff appraisals do not give an accurate picture of the appraisee's year. This means that the rationale for staff targets is not clear. Despite the weaknesses in these formal structures, staff feel well supported by school and residential leaders.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- Accommodation is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any children with restricted mobility. The accommodation contains suitable specialist facilities to support children whose disabilities require them. (NMS 5.4)
- In addition, fire drills are regularly (at least once per term) carried out in 'residential time'. (NMS 7.2)
- The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school and takes appropriate action where necessary. (NMS 13.1)
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (NMS 13.4)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.8)
- The learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and is updated if necessary. (NMS 19.4)
- The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who is independent of the management of the school, to visit the school six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the headteacher (or school equivalent). (NMS 20.1)
- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS 20.2)
- The headteacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to: its Statement of Purpose; its staffing policy; the placement plans for individual children; and an internal

assessment of its compliance with these standards. Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school. (NMS 20.4)

Recommendation

- Leaders should be clear about how they can be assured that the administration of medication is safe and correct

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: SC017168

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Jackie Smith

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

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