

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 95 children aged from two to 19 years. The school caters for children with a range of needs, including complex and severe learning difficulties.

During the week, post-16 students access the residential provision for time-limited, intervention, in support of the outcomes identified as part of their education, health and care plans.

One child routinely stays at the school for part of the week. At the weekend and during school holidays, children access the provision for short breaks. All children who access residential care are on roll at the school.

Up to six children can be accommodated. At the time of this inspection, four children and young people were resident on each day of the inspection.

The residential provision is overseen by the principal education and care officer, who has been in the role for a number of years and holds an appropriate level 5 qualification.

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

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

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 last inspection: 23 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in residence. They make friendships, take part in a variety of activities and enjoy time to relax, in a safe and comfortable space. The dedicated staff team provides exceptional care. They have an in-depth understanding of how important nurturing relationships are for children. Children are relaxed in the company of staff. Individualised support means that children are at the centre of all decisions and practice. All children have positive experiences and make excellent progress. A social worker said, 'Progress and outcomes are fantastic.'

The residential provision remains an integral part of the school. There is excellent partnership working between the school, the children's families or carers and residential care staff. This means that there is consistency for children, enabling them to make great progress in line with their education, health and care plans. For example, post-16 children make significant progress in their practical independence skills, such as being able to make a bed or tidy away after a meal.

Children say they have a voice and are listened to. There is a representative from residence on the school parliament. Positive relationships between staff and children enable open communication. Parents were overwhelmingly positive about the communication residential staff provide in relation to their child's well-being. Parents' feedback during the inspection was positive. One parent said, 'My child loves it there. The staff are fantastic. 100% they are brilliant.'

Transitions are managed very well. During the week, children are eager to start the school day and move with ease between residence and the school building. Children feel comfortable in their surroundings and, for children who find moving between places difficult, support is available. Exceptionally strong links between residence and adult and children's social care aid children's positive transitions towards adult care.

The school and residential building have undergone a long period of rebuilding and refurbishment. The result is a light and bright residential building where children feel comfortable and at home. Children can freely access the kitchen, regularly help prepare meals and enjoy eating them in the lounge/dining room. The extension has created two distinct spaces for socialising which give children ample room to enjoy the activities provided by staff. Children have access to a wide range of toys, computers and play equipment. Children enjoy and benefit from this space.

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

Professionals consistently fed back that communication and safeguarding practice are excellent. Arrangements to safeguard children are highly effective. Staff undertake a broad range of good-quality training in safeguarding matters. Updated training on

any new government safeguarding guidance ensures that staff are always aware of good practice. Staff clearly understand the risks and vulnerabilities of individual children and their role in keeping them safe. Highly effective risk assessments and risk management plans promote children's safety.

Staff use their positive relationships with children to maintain a sense of calm and ensure that all children can get the most out of their stay. Staff skilfully help soothe children who are in distress. Children's communication needs are well understood by staff. There is a whole-school approach to positive behaviour management. Staff are committed to finding positive solutions that improve children's outcomes. This is very effective and there has been no use of physical intervention in residence.

Staff understand the importance of meeting children's health needs. There is a well-managed system for administering and recording medication safely. Children's mental health needs are also fully addressed. This is a strength of the service. There is a determination throughout school and residence that children's mental health needs should be recognised. Staff guide and support children to begin to understand and manage their feelings. Children know who to go to for help if they are struggling with their mental health.

Recruitment and vetting procedures are effective and therefore help protect children from contact with unsuitable people. The physical environment is safe and meets children's needs. Health and safety is effective. Any matters relating to safety and maintenance are promptly addressed. There is a clear fire safety plan and staff understand what they need to do in an emergency or if the fire alarm should sound. Children would benefit from being reminded more frequently about what they should do if they hear the fire alarm.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The strong and effective leadership team ensures that the school and residential provision are making a real difference to children's lives. Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and very competent. They are progressive and forward thinking. New initiatives are introduced and reviewed to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the school. Leaders and managers create a culture of high aspiration for children and have an ambitious vision for what children and staff can achieve.

Staff say that they are well managed and they feel valued. The school and residential staff teams have a shared vision that puts children at the centre of their practice. The staff team is stable, and many members of staff have worked in residence for several years. No agency workers are used. This promotes consistency for children. A parent said, 'The staff are amazing. I know my child will be safe, happy and well looked after there.'

All staff are experienced, suitably qualified and have access to regular good-quality supervision and training. There is a comprehensive training and development

programme so that education and residential staff deliver a consistent approach in line with the school's ethos, aims and objectives. This supports the staff team's ongoing professional development.

The school's governing body very closely monitors the effectiveness of the leadership and management and delivery of care in the residential provision. All quality assurance information is routinely considered at the governors' meetings. A clear and ambitious development plan is in place to continue measured growth in the provision based on strengths and clear objectives. This ensures that high standards of practice are maintained across the school and in residence.

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

Point for improvement

- School leaders should review children's knowledge of what they should do if a fire alarm is activated. (Linked to NMS 15.1)

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: Lea Mason

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Inspector

Catherine Honey, Social Care Inspector

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