

# St Bernard's School

St. Bernards 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 102 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.

At the weekend and during school holidays, children access the provision for short breaks. All children who access residential care attend the school.

Up to six children can be accommodated in the residential provision. 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: 12 and 14 March 2024

**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:** 17 January 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

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

Children make excellent progress when they stay in the residential provision. Children receive highly individualised care and support from experienced and qualified staff. A holistic approach is adopted by staff to meeting children's needs. Children who stay in the residential provision benefit from the staff being stable and consistent in their care practice. A child who loves the media of video said: 'It is amazing. I like to do videos of staff because they are all amazing and I want to record us having fun and making memories.'

Staff have gone above and beyond in their roles in their support to children and families. This timely and intensive support has at times helped children to remain living with their families. The service has offered care to children who have been at risk of family breakdown. The service is highly responsive to the individual and specific needs of children and families. Professionals recognise the crucial role the home plays in supporting children and families. A professional said, 'The staff and the manager, bend over backwards for social workers, and no request has ever been met with anything but enthusiasm.'

Children have strong, secure, and trusting relationships with staff. These relationships are of exceptionally good quality and are fundamental to the progress that children make. One child has contacted staff when he is not staying in residential. This has been at times when he had felt stressed and anxious, and staff have responded appropriately. The positive relationships help children to trust staff and feel safe.

Staff complete carefully coordinated care plans that are in line with children's education, health and care plans. For example, one child received targeted support around transitions. This support was well rehearsed between the family, school, and residential. This has helped the child with transitions into the community by staff, including the local youth club. In addition, this progress has impacted on the child's ability to transition to other places.

The school carefully considers targets from children's education health and care plans and tracks and evidence's how targets are met. This ensures that EHCP's are live tools for promoting children's educational, health and care progress. These plans are very detailed and ensure that target areas are broken down. Progress for children no matter how big or small is tracked and celebrated.

There is a highly coordinated approach from a multi-disciplinary team at the school. This approach and strong communication between all, help to secure excellent outcomes for children. This working together and holistic approach to meeting children's needs ensures that children's needs are well understood and met. A one team approach is a strength across the school.

Staff promote and advocate for independence for children as far as is reasonably possible and safe. Equipping children for independence are a priority for staff. There are examples of children being supported to understand what medication they are on and why, preparing children for safety in the community and extensive evidence of life skills practice and development. This is carefully embedded into the home to help children enjoy their stays whilst still creating learning opportunities for children. One child said, 'I feel relaxed here.'

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

Children's safety and welfare are a priority at the school and safeguarding is a real strength. Safeguarding is embedded into all the work staff do. It is a priority within the school and there are good systems in place, so necessary safeguarding information gets disseminated to the staff team. There is a 'one team approach' and this means that all staff know what to do should a safeguarding issue arise. The ethos of 'one approach' is key to this process and allows for the ready exchange of safeguarding information, so that actions can be taken quickly. As a result, children are safe.

Children are equipped with the support, training and knowledge around keeping themselves safe online. There is also a filtering system in place in school that protects the children while they are online. Staff have benefited from introducing a new safeguarding recording system that enables good links between school and residential care setting. This ensures that there is good information sharing across the school and promotes good working arrangements to keep children safe.

There are the necessary risk assessments in place. All staff work together to ensure that risk assessments are shared and regularly reviewed to ensure that the children are protected.

There has been no use of physical intervention. Staff are very proactive and use their skills and experience, relationships with children and holistic positive behavioural support plans to creatively deescalate situations quickly.

Staff receive the training and development they need to ensure they have the required knowledge and skills to keep children safe. This includes a regular newsletter on safeguarding and what's new. Key information, both internal guidance and local and national resources are available for staff. Staff are kept up to date on relevant safeguarding matters. Comprehensive safer recruitment policies are in place, this creates a safe and positive environment to keep children safe from harm.

Children are encouraged to participate in meetings/discussions to ensure their voices and views are heard by the staff, leaders and managers. Children spoke openly and have a good understanding of the importance of internet safety and how this is best managed to reduce their worries. Staff have supported children to develop their

knowledge and understanding of internet safety and because of this the children state they feel safe at school and in the residential provision.

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

The head of the residential provision is highly experienced and committed to providing children with outstanding care. She has high aspirations for the children. She works extremely hard to ensure that all children have opportunities to have fun with their friends, develop their skills and remain safe. Children become significantly more confident and ambitious as a result.

Staff work hard and diligently to develop and sustain commendable relationships with children's families and external agencies. Families value the support from the residential provision. They are overwhelmingly positive about the benefits for the children and families when children go for overnight stays. Parents report that they truly appreciate the support for their child and can see the progress in the children. One parent said, 'It's a relaxed nurturing environment where my child feels safe to build their identity and self-esteem.'

Staff receive child specific training to ensure that the children are responded to on an individual level. Staff receive regular supervision, and they feel well supported. Team meetings are held bi-monthly, these provide an opportunity for the team to share their experiences of working with the children and reflect on their practice to determine how it can be improved even further.

Leaders have creatively managed unavoidable disruption to the independent visitor reports. This has ensured that independent scrutiny has been maintained. As a response to this the school have recently commissioned an independent advocacy service to complete these visits. Leaders have been careful to ensure that the person is suitably skilled to communicate with the children and gather their views. Reports evidence that visitors have seen children in situ and gathered their views alongside evidencing that key policies and procedures are being followed.

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 head of care, empowering her to improve the service.

Leaders ensure that staff are upskilled and trained. They are creative in utilising in house training and relevant external training bodies, tapping into local safeguarding partners. There has been a focus on mental health training for staff and children. The school is committed to ensuring peoples mental health needs are well understood. The impact of this training is being embedded into practice.

Leaders are proactive in the development of the service. The impact of the service is recognised at a local level. Plans are in place to widen the accessibility of the residential provision to a more localised offer. Leaders are fully committed to share

the excellent practice and outcomes of this service to other children in the community.

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

### **Recommendations**

- ensure staff are trained in PICA disorder. (Linked to NMS 26.1)

### **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:**

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

**Telephone number:** 01507 603 776

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## **Inspector(s)**

Lizette Watts, social care inspector  
Beverley Allison, social care inspector  
Linda Mason, social care inspector

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