

Baskerville School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103606
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308359
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	53
6th form	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Hogan
Headteacher	Rosemary Adams
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Fellows Lane Harborne Birmingham B17 9TS
Telephone number	01214 273191
Fax number	01214 282204

Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Baskerville is a special school for students with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). A significant minority of students enter the school after Year 7, often having spent up to two years out of school. All students have a statement of special educational need for ASD and most have a wide range of additional difficulties, including severely challenging behaviour and moderate to severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Just under a third of students are resident during the week and a small minority have extended day placements. A child care inspection of the residential facility took place in the same week as this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Baskerville is an outstanding school in every respect. Students of all ages, including those in the sixth form, make excellent progress in their subjects and courses, and show outstanding personal development. A significant reason for this success is the exceptionally effective approaches used by the school to accommodate and address the difficulties caused by the students' ASD. However, this is only part of the story. Very high quality leadership and management set out to ensure that every aspect of the school's work is focused on helping the students do as well as possible, and standards are exacting. The school buzzes with purposeful activity in a calm, supportive atmosphere. Students thoroughly enjoy their lessons. This is because outstanding teaching ensures that they know what they must do to succeed and then experience regular success in meeting their challenging targets.

For these reasons, academic outcomes are exceptional. In all age and ability groups, students far exceed typical expectations of the progress they will make in almost all subjects and courses. For many students, their progress is much more rapid than for their mainstream peers. All students leave with a wide range of qualifications very well prepared to move on to further education or employment.

The personal and social development of students, so crucial to their future success, is also exceptional. Students learn to communicate, manage social situations more easily and become far more independent than when they arrived. A testament to this is the atmosphere and conduct in the dining hall, which is as mature and sociable as in any public restaurant. As one student aptly commented, 'The teachers help us learn to manage situations and problems and be more independent so that we can interact with new groups.' This has enabled students make an outstanding contribution to their school and community, including sitting as student representatives on various regional committees for secondary schools.

Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school, especially students' improved communication, enthusiasm for school and feelings of being safe and well cared for. As one typically reported, 'In the short time my child has been at Baskerville, the staff have worked miracles.' Another stated, 'My child is not only excelling in all subjects but gets ready early in the morning and comes home asking to do homework.'

The outstanding curriculum is supported by extensive links with other providers to ensure that every possible opportunity is provided for students to develop a very wide range of appropriate skills. Although of good quality, the curriculum for students aged 11 to 14 lacks that element of individual choice, and the rich, practical skills-based focus so evidently enjoyed by older students. The school has recognised this and is planning to develop provision for this age group. A key part of the provision is the very high quality residential and extended day curriculum which consolidates and supports the rapid progress students make in their personal and academic development.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Outstanding sixth form provision means that students all leave with qualifications, many achieving far above expectations from their attainment on entry. Qualifications are diverse, including catering, land-based studies, information and communication technology (ICT), floristry, first aid, sports and leisure, performing arts and basic skills. This rich, enjoyable

curriculum is also geared to ensuring that as many students as possible are better able to look after themselves when they leave. Students' personal development and well-being are therefore outstanding with some excellent independence skills. Of those in residence, many cook for themselves each evening and they all prepare their own breakfast. Those on independent travel plans are coping very well using public transport. Students are mature, responsible and very helpful to each other. For those whose communication difficulties are severe, there is clear evidence of improved behaviour and coping skills. The excellent teaching is based upon detailed knowledge of students' needs, excellent subject knowledge and strong teamwork amongst all staff. There is a particularly strong focus on physical activity, enabling students to gain confidence and keep fit by enjoying activities such as golf, canoeing and horse riding. Leadership and management and the care and guidance given to sixth form students share the same high expectations and drive for improvement as the main school. Links with college are very effective because college and school staff work closely together, sharing skills and expertise to the overall benefit of the students. Those students attending college mix well with others and are very positive about their courses and their futures.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Boarding provision is outstanding in the contribution it makes to the personal and academic development of students. National standards for boarding are largely met, with plans already in place to address the minor points for improvement. Students are kept very safe and there is a family atmosphere based upon strong, rewarding relationships between students and staff. Comfortable, homely surroundings are constantly upgraded due to the relentless striving for excellence by leaders and managers. The 24-hour curriculum is exceptional. It strongly supports the personal development, independence and happiness of students. In addition, links between the residential provision and the school are outstanding and ensure that students receive support for their learning, consolidating new skills in different surroundings. The constant and successful promotion of communication skills is a key element of the work in the residences. Access, however, is not universal, especially for younger students and some who may benefit miss out. This is beyond the control of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the curriculum so that students aged 11 to 14 can choose from a richer range of practical studies based more upon their individual interests and aptitudes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Attainment on entry and standards are well below national averages due to the nature of students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Achievement and progress in all age groups, including sixth form, are outstanding. Progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT, as well as physical education and personal, social and health education, are consistently outstanding. Science is the strongest subject. Students exceed expectations and leave the school with a wide range of appropriate qualifications, including basic skills, vocational subjects, GCSEs and City and Guilds. Students of all abilities, including the most and least able,

progress at a rapid rate in the majority of subjects. Progress in Year 7 is initially slower due to students' problems with transition but they soon begin to catch up and, by Year 9, have progressed to a remarkable degree, often progressing much faster than is typical for their mainstream peers. The school is particularly successful at helping students who function in the lower ability range on entry to move into the middle ability band and achieve qualifications such as entry level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' evident enjoyment of school is reflected in their exceptionally good attitudes, learning, behaviour and attendance. Students spend a relatively high proportion of their time in class compared to most students with ASD. As one reported, 'I really love being in lessons', and others agreed. There is remarkably little bullying and students feel very secure in school and college settings. There is well documented evidence of just how much their personal skills improve during their time at the school. Students have a very good understanding of their own responsibilities and are keen to describe how much they help each other. Their outstanding contribution to the community includes helping to appoint new staff, playing an active part in the recycling project, running coffee mornings for senior citizens and working to reclaim a local pond. They are very well prepared for their futures through very well developed basic, ICT, social and independence skills. This preparation is further enhanced by an increased ability to work well in teams, cope well with change and understand the world of work, due to some high quality vocational education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding in most subjects, including English, mathematics and especially science, in all age and ability groups. Lessons are typified by exceptionally high levels of participation, concentration and excellent behaviour, where students are fully engaged in their work. This is due to the highly skilled and specialised approaches to students with ASD, with students being given very clear instructions. Teaching assistants contribute substantially to this work. Teachers set a wide variety of interesting activities to keep students involved. In one science lesson, for example, students were amazed as they watched paper rise due to the force of hot air. Very effective assessment of each student's different needs is used to ensure that every one of them makes progress at a rapid rate.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

An extensive range of varied activities provide excellent opportunities for students to enjoy learning and gain key skills in personal development and preparation for the future. The highly specialised work to support social and communication skills specifically for students with ASD provides a very strong basis from which their other skills can grow. In all age groups, provision

in most subjects is outstanding and contributes to the excellent progress being made. Very strong links with other providers ensure an exceptionally wide range of arts and sporting activities such as drum club, drama and swimming. Students embrace the school's very effective work in encouraging safe and healthy living, and they eat plenty of vegetables and fruit. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the innovative curriculum is tailored to each student's individual needs. It is typified by lively, practical courses based largely in real life experiences, such as horticulture, construction, catering and land-based studies. This is not so in Key Stage 3 where the curriculum is more conventional and, although good, does not provide quite such a high level of enjoyment and motivation. In recognising this, the school is planning to develop a richer, more practical curriculum for this age group, based far more on individual aptitudes and interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Procedures to safeguard students are robust and include high levels of supervision. Extensive and effective support for students' personal development resulted recently in one student, who found the classroom environment too difficult, increasing the time spent in class from 20% to 80%. In addition, students who did not attend their previous schools, or were excluded, improve quite rapidly. High expectations and very thorough assessment, monitoring and the process of setting targets keep students on track for exceptional academic achievement. Staff apply a sensitive and determined approach to nurturing learning, communication, social interaction and good behaviour successfully. Very effective links with other agencies and parents support many elements, including highly detailed procedures for when students enter or leave the school. The recently established multi-professional Autistic Support Team is having a strongly beneficial effect, especially with the most vulnerable students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding, and the high quality of provision has been maintained exceptionally well since the last inspection. The school is expertly led by the headteacher, whose vision and drive engenders very high expectations from all staff, regarding the academic and personal outcomes for students. As a result, the very challenging whole-school targets are met. There is a relentless focus on raising standards and achievement which has led to some excellent improvements over time in all aspects of the school's work, but particularly in students' achievements in their subjects and courses. The capacity to improve is therefore excellent.

Self-evaluation is exemplary in the way it identifies not only strengths but also continuously highlights detailed areas for development so that school improvement does not falter. The school copes very well with a number of staff moving on to promotion and the development of specialised skills in new staff is very successful. The school is involved in some groundbreaking work in seeking to develop better provision for students with ASD when they leave the sixth form.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

Your school is very successful and extremely well run. It is an excellent school, just as you and your parents told us it was. It helps all of you, including those in the sixth form, to make outstanding progress in your subjects, courses and personal skills. Your teachers, teaching assistants and care staff are highly skilled at helping you to do your very best, and lessons are interesting and great fun. You are responsible, hard working and you set a very fine example of how to behave. You clearly enjoy everything about your school, which is very good at keeping you safe and caring for you.

School leaders do an exceptionally good job in seeing that the school keeps improving. We have asked them to give you more practical things to do in Years 7, 8 and 9, linked more closely to your individual interests. You might like to share your ideas about this with them.

Your teachers see to it that you have a very interesting range of activities, clubs and visits, and we liked the way you help with these. It was also pleasing to see that you take so much exercise and eat such healthy food. We are impressed with the way you take responsibility around the school and look out for each other. The many ways you contribute to the community are impressive. Your increasing independence and confidence in social situations help prepare you very well for the future.

We wish you all the very best in the future.



14 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Baskerville School, Birmingham B17 9TS

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

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We wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Patricia Potteccary'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Lead inspector