

# 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 110 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 five children can be accommodated in the residential provision. At the time of this inspection, two children were resident on each day of the inspection. They were interacted with as part 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.

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

### Inspection dates: 18 and 19 March 2025

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b> | <b>good</b> |
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| How well children and young people are helped and protected | good |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|

|                                           |      |
|-------------------------------------------|------|
| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | good |
|-------------------------------------------|------|

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

**Date of last inspection:** 12 March 2024

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## **Inspection judgements**

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

Children who have complex learning needs enjoy good experiences in the residential provision of this school. The children benefit from having their short breaks in a large and spacious environment.

Children have the freedom to select from a variety of engaging activities that align with their interests and preferences. Additionally, all school resources, including the play equipment and swimming pool, are readily available and easily accessible to support their exploration and development while they are on their break.

Positive relationships between the staff and the children are fostered through mutual trust, open communication and a supportive environment. Additionally, the use of humour and playfulness helps create a warm and engaging atmosphere. These make interactions more enjoyable and encourage children to feel comfortable, valued and motivated to participate in activities or life-skills work.

Children are making good progress in various key areas. They are being supported and empowered to enhance their existing skills or develop new ones. For some, this progress has led to increased independence, enabling them to manage tasks such as washing, cooking and cleaning. Goals are regularly reviewed and updated in collaboration with parents and school staff.

Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the children through the support they provide. However, this knowledge is not consistently reflected in key documents, leading to varying standards in documentation. As a result, staff may not always have the most up-to-date information about each child.

Children can make their needs known to staff through their individual communication methods. Staff are patient with the children and encourage them to use their full communication tools to provide more detailed information about what they are trying to say. This helps children to develop their communication skills, which supports greater interaction with other children and staff.

Children participate in a monthly students' meeting. In addition, a child from the home is a member of the school parliament and can raise issues at the meeting at the request of all the children. This enhances the children's voice and allows them to be part of decision-making in the school and home.

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

Safeguarding starts when visitors enter school. Visitors are provided with a leaflet outlining the procedures and key contacts, reinforcing the importance of safeguarding on school premises.

The school adopts a positive behaviour support approach. This promotes teamwork and open communication, which creates a calm structured environment in which the children feel safe. This has contributed to there being no incidents of children going missing or any use of physical intervention being required.

Detailed behaviour support plans are in place. They outline all areas of risk specific to each child. These plans equip staff with effective strategies to respond appropriately, ensuring they can confidently manage challenging situations. Through their expertise in promoting positive behaviour, staff consistently apply a proactive and nurturing approach. This then creates a safe and supportive environment for all the children.

Staff are proactive at keeping children safe. The nature of the children's complex needs means that they have little or no sense of danger and always require close support from staff. Staff can determine and pre-empt risks to the children and what they need to do for children to remain safe.

There is a robust recruitment process in place to ensure that individuals are safe to work with children. However, in one instance, full pre-employment checks were not consistently evidenced before a staff member began work.

Staff do not have the required training to meet one child's specific diagnosis. Managers have shared information about pica, however, staff have not had any form of training. The lack of training for staff fails to provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to care for children and manage associated risks.

The school has an established medication procedure in place to ensure the safe and accurate administration of medication. Staff are trained to follow this procedure carefully, adhering to set guidelines and protocols. This structured approach has meant that there have not been any medication errors.

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

The head of the residential provision is dedicated and passionate about her role. She has a vision for the home, and the focus is to support the local community by extending the provision and caring for a greater number of children.

The leadership team is continually seeking ways to improve the service. They recently asked parents to complete a survey on the support their children receive. Parents and carers stated they are happy with all aspects of the care provided by the home. Parents' feedback as part of the inspection was equally positive, with one parent saying their child 'absolutely loves it'.

Staff benefit from regular supervision. This provides them with an opportunity to discuss children's progress, challenges and learning experiences. Team meetings are used to share essential information with staff that will support them in their roles. Staff participate in regular training that seeks to enhance their skills and knowledge.

The leadership team demonstrates a proactive approach to providing a supportive and caring environment for staff. They prioritise staff well-being through various incentives. This helps staff to feel supported and valued in their roles and maintain a healthy work-life balance. This commitment to staff welfare not only enhances job satisfaction but also contributes to a positive and productive team.

Staff feel supported by the managers and enjoy working in the home. There is a strong ethos of teamwork and supporting each other to meet the needs of the children.

Staff work closely with parents; this has fostered strong relationships. These relationships have created positive and trusting commitments to the children. Engaging with parents supports children's development and strengthens a supportive network around the child that benefits everyone.

The home has not been visited by an independent visitor since the last inspection. Despite efforts by the leadership team to identify a suitable individual, they have been unsuccessful. As a result, there has been a lack of external oversight and scrutiny to assure the leadership team that the home's operations align with national minimum standards.

## **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 standard for residential special schools:

- School leaders must ensure that an independent visitor is appointed and undertakes the required visits six times in each school year. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 3.1)

### **Points for improvement**

- School leaders should ensure staff are trained in pica disorder.
- School leaders should ensure that they operate safer recruitment procedures.
- School leaders should ensure that children's records capture all relevant details and are updated regularly.

## **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

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspectors**

Lizette Watts, Social Care Inspector

Linda Mason, Social Care Inspector

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