

St Bernard's School, Louth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120761
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number	291849
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Naylor

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	44
6th form	13
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Kevin McMamara
Headteacher	Mr Mike Warren
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2001
School address	Wood Lane Louth Lincolnshire LN11 8RS
Telephone number	01507 603776
Fax number	01507 603914

Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Bernard's school admits pupils with severe learning difficulties, autism, and profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school provides daily and weekly boarding on a county-wide basis, but currently has only four boarders. Over half the pupils are in Key Stage 4 and 5. At the time of the inspection there were no pupils in the Foundation Stage. The school serves a mixture of urban and rural communities. Currently there are no pupils from ethnic minority groups in the school. The school is developing an early intervention base as part of the County Children's Services.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Bernard's is a good school. Pupils' progress is good and their personal development is outstanding. Parents are very happy with their children's achievements and believe the school to be 'fantastic' in many respects. The school provides good value for money.

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the school has sustained the quality and standard of provision noted at the last inspection and has improved in particular the quality of teaching, resources and opportunities for pupils with autism. It has significantly improved the accommodation, facilities and resources for all pupils. A recent staffing restructuring has allowed the leadership to capitalise on the expertise and experience of the two assistant headteachers. This change has revitalised the school's approach to several areas of development such as the use of assessment and recording data to support teaching and to help to boost pupils' achievements and progress. Despite some sound qualities, school development planning lacks a clear focus on teaching and learning. There are some key gaps in the staff training programme.

Teaching is consistently good. Good use is made of a range of teaching strategies to promote communication skills. Pupils therefore achieve well, especially in their speaking and listening skills. They make significant progress from the time they arrive at the school. They ultimately achieve success in a range of national accredited basic life-skills courses. They have excellent success in their personal development. This is characterised by the tremendous enjoyment they get from attending school and by their very good attendance behaviour and relationships. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also very good. It is well promoted by the good personal, social, health education (PSHE) programme. The outstanding curriculum provides access for pupils to an enriching range of relevant and specially tailored activities to suit individual learning requirements. The provision for pupils with autism is good.

Pupils have a good awareness of the need to keep themselves safe and healthy. They make a huge commitment to their own school community and are thoughtful and helpful towards one another. There is an active school council and pupils feel they are listened to by staff. They have many contacts with the local and wider community and raise funds for charity. They are highly successful in work-experience and college-link placements. These, together with very good vocational and careers work, prepare them extremely well for transition to adult life.

There is good care, guidance and support. The school has good policies and procedures for safeguarding its pupils. The youngest children are well prepared for school by staff. Support for parents and carers is being extended further by the establishment of the school as a base for a local authority early years intervention programme. School governors are closely involved in supporting staff and pupils. They challenge the leadership team and ensure that they implement effective monitoring and school self-evaluation procedures. The issues of the last inspection have been thoroughly addressed. The school demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students make good progress. There is no separation of students from Years 10 to 14, but provision for them is good. There is good teaching within an excellent range of creative and responsive activities. Students have access to work experience and adult environments. This

helps to promote outstanding personal development. Students receive good guidance and support and are well prepared for adult life. Leadership by the assistant headteacher is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The Commission for Social Care inspection report of November 2006 judged provision for boarders to be good. The school has already addressed the few areas for improvement raised in that report. The four boarders are looked after well by a dedicated team of staff led by an experienced assistant headteacher. Care staff also work effectively as support staff in the classrooms. This helps to make them very aware of the learning and social needs of the pupils. A number of parents make use of the boarding accommodation for their child as respite care. They view the school as very receptive to their needs and as offering a good quality service.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide better opportunities for staff training and regular updating and renewal of skills and expertise.
- Focus the school development planning more directly on teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils make good progress from the time they enter the school. They make especially good progress in their speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy skills. School assessments and records show that pupils make steady gains against the 'P- scales' in their overall achievements in all subjects, including PSHE. Pupils with autism make significant progress in their communication skills and social relationships as a result of the good specialist teaching. Students in Years 10 to 14 achieve well in nationally accredited courses such as the EQUALS 'Moving-On', and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network assessments. Spectacular success has been achieved in students' work experience placements where employers and careers coordinators speak very highly of their hard work, dedication and enthusiasm. Students' records of achievement also reveal their continuous success in learning across a wide range of school activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupil surveys and evidence in lessons show that pupils are very enthusiastic and get a huge amount of enjoyment from school. They work hard and behaviour is excellent. They have outstanding relationships with one another and with staff. Attendance is very good with only a very small amount of unauthorised absence. Parents feel that provision for their child's personal development is excellent and that there is significant growth in self-confidence and independence. Students in Years 10 to 14 show a high level of personal development as a result of their successful work-experience placements.

Pupils have a good awareness of the need to keep themselves safe and to be healthy. Through the school council they make their views known and choose healthy school dinner menus. They

take advantage of the many opportunities for physical activities such as swimming, dance and physical education. Pupils are involved well in their school and wider community. There are numerous examples of pupils helping one another. They raise funds for charity. They make good progress in their basic life skills and are well prepared for the transition to adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Activities are well planned to match the individual needs of pupils and to cater for the diverse range of abilities, learning difficulties and personalities. Staff have a good understanding of the learning and social needs of pupils and respond to these well in their teaching. Teachers and support staff work together well and are good role models to pupils. When support staff teach this is also good. Lessons are lively and interesting and hold pupils' attention. Good use is made of signing and the use of symbols. Specific teaching methods for pupils with autism or those with sensory needs are employed well. There is very good management of behaviour. Assessment is used effectively, although more opportunities could be made for pupils to evaluate their own progress. Home-school books let parents know what their child has learned each day.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

There is an extensive range of activities which effectively meet the very diverse needs of the pupils. There is a well-balanced timetable, covering all nationally required subjects. A flexible and imaginative approach to curriculum provision helps to meet the learning needs of pupils with autism, sensory and physical disabilities. The school has been highly successful in achieving the Careers Mark Award. It provides excellent work-related learning and work-experience opportunities for older pupils. There is very good PSHE provision and the school has achieved Healthy Schools status. A huge range of school trips and residential visits together with visitors to school provide variety and interest to the curriculum as well as very necessary practical and sensory experiences. Special events such as Industry Day, religious festivals and school performances give additional support and a focus for learning. Links with other similar schools, including European schools through the Comenius Project, provide further excellent curriculum enrichment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Staff provide good welfare and pastoral care for pupils, both in the classrooms and in the boarding accommodation. They have very good relationships with pupils and there are good behaviour management strategies. There are clear procedures and systems for staffing checks with a single central record in place. There are good risk assessments for all school journeys and visits. There are clear procedures for child protection. Staff are trained in first aid and the safe administration of medication. Good assessments and records are made of pupils' academic performance and social skills. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly and annual

reviews involve parents and pupils. There are very good links and liaison with other agencies and professionals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership and he utilises his extensive experience very well to the benefit of pupils and staff. He is well supported by the assistant headteachers who are good teaching role models. They bring a coordinated approach to the curriculum and to care. The school development plan is satisfactory in its strategic overview but lacks a clear focus on teaching and learning. This is a barrier to achieving outstanding quality in these areas. School self-evaluation is accurate and the result of careful monitoring by the leadership, governors and local authority advisers. Although the leadership encourages support staff to undertake national vocational qualifications to enhance their skills, it recognises there are some gaps in the renewal training programme for all staff. Governors play an active role in monitoring of provision and have good procedures in place to support the staff. The school has excellent partnerships with other schools and organisations.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

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	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
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?	2	2

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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

21 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bernard's School, Wood Lane, Louth, LN11 8RS

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently.

I was very pleased and impressed with all that I saw. You are lucky to attend such a good school. I know that you like coming to school. I think you all work hard to make your school good. You all make good progress. This is shown in your records of achievement and by the excellent success you have in things such as your work-experience placements.

You know how to keep yourselves safe and healthy and you often work to help other people. Older students amongst you make good progress in getting ready for when you leave school.

Your headteacher and staff give you good support in all that you do. They teach you very well and provide lots of interesting activities for you to take part in.

I have told the headteacher that there are a few ways to make things even better for you all.

Staff need to extend their training so they get even better at what they do. The headteacher's plans for the way things happen in school need to be even stronger.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Naylor

Lead Inspector