

Baskerville School

The Baskerville School, Fellows Lane, Birmingham B17 9TS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Baskerville School is a foundation special school in the Birmingham Special Schools Trust for day and residential children and young people aged 11 to 19 who have autism spectrum disorder. Up to 16 children and young people use the residential provision. Children and young people stay from Monday to Friday and return home each weekend.

Baskerville School's residential provision comprises three residential units. Each unit has a particular focus and aim, based on children and young people's needs, supporting them through adolescence into adulthood. Thirteen children and young people currently access the residential provision.

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

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 January 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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: 15 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff who care for children know them exceptionally well. They are creative in how they give children opportunities to enhance their experience in residence. Staff offer many different activities and are keen to take children out of school to broaden their experiences. Activities include rock climbing, going to youth clubs and trips to the local theatres. Staff make use of public transport so that children can work at increasing their independence skills. Staff are enthusiastic about these opportunities as they want children to have life experiences like those of any other child.

Staff provide children with consistent responses and routines. This helps children to understand what is happening around them and how staff will support them. Staff model calm measured responses for children to learn from. This calm approach contributes to the relaxed atmosphere that helps children feel settled.

Staff encourage children to treat each other kindly, and inspectors saw children being considerate to each other. For example, one child made a point of washing up his place mat after eating and passing it to another child who was preparing to eat. These small acts of kindness add to the positive atmosphere.

Leaders and managers have made improvements to the environment since the last inspection. This includes new white goods in kitchens so that children can cook and carry out independence tasks. In addition, new bathrooms have been installed and some redecoration has been carried out. Staff encourage children to personalise their bedrooms in ways that suit their needs. However, staff do not always check children's bedrooms when they go to school. As a result, there are times when children's rooms are not tidy places to return to after school. This is a missed opportunity for staff to support children to take pride in their own space.

Leaders have put in place individualised reward systems. Staff encourage children to choose rewards to work towards and there are clear steps for how children can make progress towards their rewards. Staff also use their professional judgement to provide ad hoc incentives to reinforce behaviour in the moment. Staff are proactive in using these systems to promote positive behaviour. This means that children are often able to celebrate when they are doing well.

Transitions in and out of the home are well planned. This includes for children arriving in residency for the first time, children moving between residential units and children who leave. However, leaders have not ensured there is a clear record of decisions about transitions. This includes considering the needs of the group already staying there. This means that understanding the detail of decision-making is not easy.

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

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is extremely knowledgeable about the children. The safeguarding team meets regularly to discuss any concerns about children. As a result, the DSL stays abreast of current and new concerns. In contrast, safeguarding records are not well collated. This makes understanding concerns from start to finish more difficult. The DSL is already thinking about ways of reconfiguring records so that they are easier to consider in their entirety.

Staff with specific safeguarding responsibilities take their roles seriously. The DSL and safeguarding manager call some families in the holidays to offer extra support if needed. This has helped families to feel that they are not alone at difficult times.

Senior leaders address allegations against staff swiftly and in line with procedure. The DSL refers concerns to the local authority designated officer and seeks advice as needed. Senior leaders act decisively when staff practice falls short of their expectations. This includes asking staff to leave the school site if necessary. The DSL also seeks to learn from allegations. As a result, there are regular safeguarding updates, including in relation to whistle-blowing and the role of external agencies. This proactive approach means that safeguarding remains a priority at the school.

Staff know about the dangers that children may face online and they are alert to these. There are comprehensive online protections and monitoring systems in place. These systems identify when students try to access inappropriate topics online. Staff talk to children about these so they can learn and develop. It also adds a layer of protection for children who may be vulnerable to online risks.

Staff understand children's individual risks well. The whole-school approach to risk assessment supports consistency for children. However, work is under-developed in considering times when there need to be distinctions made for children who attend both the school and residential provision. Leaders are developing children's risk assessments to include even minor incidents, so that staff have more help with their day-to-day work.

The DSL and safeguarding staff are proactive in making referrals to other organisations, such as Prevent. This liaison between the school and external agencies, as well as within the school, is strong. This means that the work staff undertake with children is appropriate and focused on concerns.

Senior staff have appointed an experienced independent visitor. However, their recruitment has not been in line with relevant guidance and the school's own recruitment policy. As a result, leaders cannot yet be fully assured about the suitability of the visitor.

Staff have a clear knowledge of children's needs. As a result, boundaries for children are clear. This helps children to feel settled in the residential accommodation and there are very few incidents. On the very few occasions when staff need to physically

intervene with children, this is proportionate. The school pastoral team reviews incidents to consider learning. This adds an additional safeguard to practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a strong commitment to children having good experiences and making progress at the school. Since the last inspection, the whole senior leadership team has developed their knowledge of the national minimum standards. This means they all better understand their responsibilities. Senior leaders and governors have worked together to address the shortfalls noted at the last inspection.

The governing body is knowledgeable about the school. They bring experience and expertise to support and challenge leaders. The new chair of governors has worked with the headteacher to restructure the board. This has included introducing a committee that has a focus on the quality of care in the school. While this is a new initiative, the benefits of this approach and the associated challenge to leaders it provides are clear.

The headteacher has increased her oversight of the residential provision. This includes regular reviews of standards and more frequent meetings with the head of care. These meetings support the head of care in his role and provide challenge about development and quality of care. For example, when the head of care missed some deadlines for actions suggested by the independent visitor, the headteacher was quickly aware of this shortfall. She then made her expectations about addressing issues clear. This has helped to ensure positive change happens as needed.

Senior leaders are proactive and persistent in challenging local authorities to help families get the help they need. They are also clear in how they can, and do, escalate concerns as needed. This is done with the best interests of children in mind.

Many of the residential staff work in school as well as in the residential units. This continuity is helpful for children to have consistency. In contrast, the work done in the education day is not clearly continued or followed through in residence. This is a missed opportunity to create a clear, joined-up waking-day learning offer for children.

Leaders and managers review children's records to make sure they include relevant information. However, children's files are hard to navigate, and these reviews do not ensure records are accurate, clear and complete. As a result, residential leaders are not always sure where documents are when needed.

Leaders and managers meet with staff individually to talk about practice. The quality of records of these meetings is variable. These meetings include regular appraisals. Managers and staff review appraisal targets and practice to identify future learning and development. Staff also have access to a variety of training, which is well attended and well received. This means that staff can develop their skills over time.

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 standards for residential special schools:

- The school's leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities consistently and effectively so that the standards are met. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.4)
- The governing body, trustees or proprietor of the school appoint a representative who is independent of the leadership and management of the school to visit the residential provision six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. The representative is vetted in line with the school's safe recruitment policy, in accordance with the safer recruitment requirements set out in 'Keeping children safe in education' and has the skills and authority to effectively carry out this role. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 3.1)

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure staff carry out daily checks of children's bedrooms to help children to keep them as clean, tidy spaces.
- School leaders should maintain a written record regarding the decisions about children moving into residence or between units. This should include a consideration of the needs and risks of individual children who already live in those units, as well as any dynamics of the group.
- School leaders should clarify who can access children's information and for what purpose. This relates to the independent visitor and the governing body but is not exclusive to these roles.

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: SC017168

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Jackie Smith

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 0121 427 3191

Email address: J.Smith@baskvill.bham.sch.uk

Inspectors

Karol Keenan, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

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