

# Barndale House Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Stewart Waddell
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	29 September 2006

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

Barndale House is a local authority special school. It is primarily for children and young people who have a statement of special needs. The school provides a residential service for some students. The students who board at the school ages may range from nine years to 19 years, and may be of either gender. The residential accommodation is sited in a building adjacent to the classroom block. This building also contains school offices and dining facilities. All sleeping accommodation is sited on the first floor. The ground floor holds a large sitting/play area and the dining room and kitchen areas. The school is sited within easy walking distance of Alnwick town centre and all its amenities and facilities.

### **Summary**

The purpose of the inspection was to assess all the key standards of the Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards and ascertain how the school meet these standards, and assess the quality of the provision the school provide in all six sections contained in the report.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The residential facilities and boarding accommodation have been enhanced, refurbished and redecorated since the last inspection.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

The school have the services of two qualified nurses from the Children's Community Nurses team, who provide medical cover at the school from Monday to Friday each week. The nurses have responsibility for ensuring young people's health needs are met whilst they are at the school. As young people only board for short periods at a time, the main responsibility for their general health care lies with their parents/carers. Therefore all young people remain registered with their own family doctors and dentists practices. The school provide good health care services that address the needs of young people very well. Several medical specialists, including paediatricians, psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and dieticians, visit the school regularly to provide services for young people. A dental nurse visits the school weekly and sees all young people. The school nurses monitor young people's health needs and each young person has a height and weight check once a term, and receive regular hearing and eyesight checks. Documentation is kept that covers all areas required by Standard 14 of the Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards (residential special schools NMS). The school keep detailed health records on each young person. Some of the young people who board at the school have specific health needs and the school have developed specific individual plans to address these needs. Staff have received training in moving and handling techniques and administering specific medication for epilepsy and diabetes. The school address issues of personal health care, healthy lifestyles, drugs awareness and other related issues through the education curriculum. These actions show the school are ensuring young peoples health needs are being appropriately addressed. The school has obtained signed medical consent forms for each young person. The forms cover consent to medical treatment and the administration of prescribed and non-prescribed medication. All medication is suitably stored

in lockable steel medicine cabinets sited in the school nurses room. A running total of the contents of the medicine cabinets are kept. First aid boxes are available in the residential accommodation and they are regularly checked and re-stocked. A written record is kept of all medication, treatment and first aid given to young people. A written record is also kept should a young person refuse to take prescribed medication. Medication administration records are suitably kept, recording time given, dosage given etc. All care staff have received basic first-aid training and all staff with responsibility for administering medication have received appropriate training. These actions show the school have appropriate medication procedures in place. Young people are offered a balanced, healthy diet that meets their dietary needs. The school cook has the responsibility for the meals provided and organising menus. The inspector met with the cook during the inspection. The school followed the governments food based standards contained in the documents published by the Schools Food Trust entitled 'Eat Better, Do Better'. The cook stated that young people's views and the advice of the school nurses and a dietician are taken in to account when preparing the menus. Options are available at all meal times and special diets can be catered for. Diets currently catered for include dairy free, preservative free and gluten free diets. Young people spoken to during the inspection thought the food provided at meal times was good. The inspector dined with young people at breakfast, lunch and evening meal times and the meals offered were appropriate and acceptable. Fresh fruit and fresh drinking water is readily available for young people at any time. The inspector observed one young person working with staff to prepare their own lunch time meal. The school dining room has recently been refurbished. All care staff have received appropriate basic food hygiene training. The school cook has successfully completed food nutrition and food hygiene courses.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is observed and respected. Young people spoken to said staff knock on their bedroom doors and ask before they enter. Most young people share a bedroom with three other young people, but each young person has an area in the bedroom that is sectioned in such a way to afford them a level of privacy. Young people's personal files are kept securely. Young people have access to a telephone they can use privately. Most young people spoken to said they have their own mobile phones which they can keep with them at all times. They told the inspector they could contact their parents/carers or friends whenever they wish. The school have not found it necessary to carry out any searches of young people's possessions or bedrooms. Staff are aware that if any such search were to take place a full written record must be kept. Some young people require assistance with personal hygiene care and staff have received appropriate training for this. Young people the inspector spoke with stated they had no complaints to make about the school or the care they receive. They said if they had a complaint they would make it to the head teacher or any of the care staff. There have been no formal complaints made since the last inspection. The school's documentation for recording any complaints made requires minor amendments to ensure it meets with the requirements of Standard 4 of the residential special schools NMS. All staff have received appropriate child protection awareness training. Staff spoken to showed they have a good working knowledge of how to protect and safeguard children from abuse. A copy of the school's and local authority's child protection procedures are kept in the office for staff to use if necessary. There have been no child protection referrals made relating to the school, young people who board there, or staff who work there, since the last inspection. Any incidents of bullying are taken seriously and staff have received training in how to counter bullying and address bullying issues. Young people spoken to said that they would tell staff if they were being bullied. In the completed

surveys the young people stated they were not bullied at the school. A representative from the Children's Rights Directors office visited the school on 4 October 2007 and talked to young people about bullying. Documentation and records viewed show there have been no instances of a young person absconding from the school since the last inspection. The school has guidance for staff to follow if a young person should go missing. There is documentation for staff to complete should such an incident occur, but this documentation needs amending to ensure it meets with the requirements of the residential special schools NMS. The inspector observed staff working with young people at various times throughout the inspection. Staff have a good understanding of young people's needs and appropriately manage any unacceptable behaviour young people display. The school do not use physical intervention techniques with young people and do not impose formal sanctions on young people. The school are aware that should they use such behaviour management techniques staff must receive appropriate training and that full written records that meet with the requirements of the residential special school NMS must be kept. The school place a greater emphasis on recognising and praising achievement and acceptable behaviour. Young people spoken to told the inspector staff at the school were 'very fair'. The head teacher has responsibility for overseeing health and safety issues. Regular safety checks are carried out on the residential facilities. The school has access to professional advice on all health & safety issues from the relevant department of the local authority. All required fire alarm checks, emergency lighting checks, fire safety equipment checks and fire drills are carried out. Checks on electrical equipment and installations are carried out annually. Required annual safety checks on gas installations and boilers are carried out. Relevant risk assessments are in place and are regularly reviewed. All taps for use by young people have regulators fitted. Water hygiene tests are carried out annually. These actions show the school take all reasonable measures to ensure they provide a safe environment for young people to live in. No new staff have been employed since the last inspection. The inspector viewed the files of four staff employed at the school. These, and discussions with staff responsible for overseeing recruitment procedures, show the school operate recruitment policies and procedures that meet the requirements of Standard 27 of the residential special schools NMS. These actions show the school are taking all reasonable measures to ensure staff employed are suitable to work with young people.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

The school have compiled individual education plans for each young person that detail the young person's educational needs. All young people have a 'statement of special educational needs'. Young people have the opportunity to study for accredited educational qualifications. The residential facilities have suitable areas for young people to study in private if they wish. All young people boarding attended school on both days of the inspection. Some young people have been on work experience placements. The school have developed links with other educational establishments and some young people attend local colleges. The school has a 'Young Enterprise' initiative in which the young people are fully involved. Through this they are currently trying to raise money to fund more leisure activities. The school work positively with young people, their parents/carers and other organisations to ensure suitable plans and placements are in place for young people when they leave the school. These actions show young people's educational needs are being well met. Young people spoken to were very positive in their comments about the activities provided for them at the school. Young people have been involved in local youth groups such as Air Cadets, Guides and Kick Boxing, all young people boarding attended a local youth club on the first night of the inspection. Young people

spoken to told the inspector they were attending a 'young fire fighters' training course run by the local fire brigade. Some young people have recently completed a canoeing course. Young people use local facilities during their leisure time, including the local sports centre and swimming pool. The residential accommodation has colour televisions, DVD and video players, personal computers, computer games, pool table, board games and books, all for young people's use. Staff ensure any video or dvd viewed are age appropriate. These actions show that young people's activity and leisure needs are being well met. Young people are offered individual support and advice when required or requested. They have access to a wide range of specialist support, including psychologists, physiotherapists, speech and occupational therapists, qualified nurses and child psychiatrists. The inspector observed staff giving individual support and advice to young people at various times throughout the inspection. Senior staff spoken to detailed specific individual, specialist support that is being delivered to young people who require it.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

All young people spoken to told the inspector they enjoyed boarding at the school. One said 'it is the best place I have been' and another stated 'I like being here because I get to go places and do things with my friends'. Young people spoken to said staff 'always' ask them for their views and opinions', and that staff 'always listen to them'. One young person stated 'staff are helpful and kind'. Young people's opinions are sought through regular 'Pupil Consultation Meetings'. The last meeting took place on 30 October 2007. A representative from the National Youth Advocacy Service visits the school regularly. Completed surveys returned by young people and their parents/carers confirm that their views are sought on important decisions. Young people said they would speak to care staff if they had any concerns or worries. The school have formed good communication links with parents/carers, who are informed of any significant events. One parent/carer stated in the completed survey they returned that the school 'always keep me informed' and went on to state 'my child has only been at the school a year, I wish they had got a place years ago'. Some young people who board at the school have severe communication difficulties. The school use the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and 'Makaton' sign language with some young people. Staff spoken to stated that it is by working consistently with individual young people over a period of time that they develop an awareness of the best ways to communicate with that young person, enabling them to ascertain the young person's wishes. The inspector observed staff working with young people at various times throughout the inspection. Staff have established good working relationships with young people. Young people spoke favourably about the care staff that worked with them. Many young people made positive comments about the care they receive at the school. This shows young people who board at the school are happy with the care they receive. The school have care/placement plans for each young person who boards at the school that show how the young person's needs will be met during their periods of boarding. The plans are reviewed regularly. All young people's placements are formally reviewed yearly at an annual review to which all relevant personnel are invited. The care/placement plans need amending to ensure they cover all areas required under Standard 17.5 of the residential special schools NMS. Young people's files contain essential information. Young people are assisted and encouraged to maintain regular contact with parents/carers and friends. They are permitted to have mobile phones, which they may keep with them at all times. Young people spoken to said they can contact their families or friends whenever they wish to. The school maintain good links with parents/carers. Five parents/carers returned completed surveys and they were generally very positive in their comments about the school and the care their child receives. The school only

offers boarding Monday evening to Friday morning during school term time, therefore, young people have regular home leave.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people wear their own clothing at all times. Young people usually bring their own personal toiletries and personal items with them when they come to board, however, the school will provide toiletries for any young person who needs them. Young people are encouraged to manage their own money, although staff will look after it for them if necessary. A record is kept of any valuables that young people bring with them when they come to board. All young people have access to a lockable storage facility for the safe storage of personal items. The school has good procedures in place to ensure young people about to leave have suitable plans in place and placements arranged for them. The inspector met with the staff member responsible for overseeing 'Transitions' issues. The school have formed good links with the Connexions organisation who visit the school regularly and meet with young people. The school work with local further education colleges and some young people attended such colleges for 'taster days'. The school successfully ensured there were suitable placements arranged for the three young people who left at the end of the last school year. The inspector toured all areas of the residential accommodation. The accommodation presented as comfortable, clean and well maintained. All young people showed the inspector their bedrooms. There is evidence to show young people have been involved in the designing and decorating of their own bedroom areas. Some young people had personalised their own areas with photographs and posters. Some said that they enjoy sharing a bedroom with their friends. The bedroom accommodation consists of four four-bedded rooms and two single bedrooms. All sleeping accommodation is on the upper floor, including the staff sleeping in rooms. All young people have a lockable storage facility to keep personal items. All bedrooms have at least one window providing natural light. All bedrooms were suitably furnished, decorated, clean and tidy. The school have made improvements to the residential accommodation since the last inspection, including redecorating several areas and installing new furnishings in others. The lounge, dining and other communal areas were suitably furnished and decorated. The residential accommodation provides suitable space for leisure activities. The head teacher detailed to the inspector plans the school have to further develop the residential facilities and the inspector viewed the school's 2007 - 2008 development plan. The school have a suitable alarm system in place and external doors have key pad entry locks fitted. The residential accommodation provides sufficient washing, showering and toilet areas for the number of young people who board. These areas are pleasantly decorated and present as warm, clean and tidy. All areas have appropriate locks on the doors to afford young people suitable privacy when using them.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school is currently updating its Statement of Purpose, handbooks and brochures to ensure they contain all relevant information for children, staff, parents/carers and placing authorities. Senior staff spoken to said they are endeavouring to produce all documents in a user friendly format. Young people's progress is recorded and reviewed regularly both in the school education classes and the residential boarding provision. The school ensure young people's files contain all relevant information and such files are kept securely. The residential care staff team consists of 12 care staff workers, two of whom are designated as joint 'heads of care', each with specific



responsibilities. Eight of the care staff hold relevant qualifications for their roles. Both heads of care hold suitable qualifications for their posts. The care staff team is made up of entirely female staff. The heads of care stated they would like to see a mix of genders on the care staff team. The school have managed to retain staff and this has led to an experienced, capable care staff team being in place, giving a consistency of care to young people. Viewing of staff rotas and observation of working practices during care hours show that the school ensure they have enough care staff on duty to meet the needs of the young people accommodated. One waking night staff member is on duty throughout each night, with two care staff on 'sleep in' duty each night to provide support, advice and assistance if required. Staff spoken to said they said that they have received mandatory training and other training specific to meeting the needs of young people who board. All care staff receive a copy of the school's handbook. Staff receive supervision and appraisal from senior staff. Senior staff spoken to said that training needs were discussed with staff at appraisal. Staff with the responsibility for delivering supervision have received appropriate training for this. Staff spoken to said they receive good support from the heads of care and head teacher. Some staff commented on the improvement in the boarding provision since the head teacher and heads of care took over their positions full time over a year ago. School governors carry out monitoring visits with the frequency required by the residential special schools NMS. The visits have are generally unannounced. Documents viewed show the last such visit was carried out on 18 October 2007. The head teacher and heads of care monitor the operation of the home monthly, checking relevant records and documentation.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- should ensure all residential staff have appropriate training in any preferred method of physical interventions and de-escalation techniques the school wish to employ (Std 10)
- should amend and update methods of evidencing that young people's views and opinions are sought, recorded and taken in to account (Std 2)
- should ensure young people's placement plans meet all the requirements of Standard 17 of the Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards (Std 17)
- should ensure that all relevant documentation, policies and procedures are amended and updated to meet the requirements of the Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards (Std 19).

## Annex

## Annex A

### National Minimum Standards for residential special school

#### Being healthy

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

**Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.**

#### Staying safe

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

**Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Enjoying and achieving

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

**Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Making a positive contribution

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

**Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.**

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

**Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.**

## **Organisation**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

**Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.**