

Barndale House Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Dennis Bradley
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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 age of students who board at the school may range from 9 years to 19 years, and they 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 situated within easy walking distance of Alnwick town centre and all its amenities and facilities.

Summary

At this full inspection all the key standards were inspected. The inspection also looked at the progress the service has made with the recommendations made at the last inspection. These related to: the arrangements for safeguarding and monitoring the welfare of young people; care planning; and staff supervision and appraisal.

The quality of the boarding provision is satisfactory but has some good features. There was evidence of very positive relationships between the staff and young people who use the service. There are good arrangements for protecting and promoting the health of the young people. The arrangements for ensuring the residential unit provides a safe setting for the young people are satisfactory. Staff are good at consulting the young people and involving them in decisions about their stay at the residential unit. They support the education and achievement of the young people and encourage and support them to participate in a range of community based activities and outings. The opportunities for staff to take part in relevant training are generally satisfactory and staffing levels are good. However, the arrangements for monitoring the service and the care and welfare of the young people are not sufficiently robust.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection of the residential service it was recommended the school ensures that: the school's complaints procedure includes all the recommended information; all staff receive training in the school's child protection procedures; appropriate risk assessments are carried out in relation to children's disabilities; records of fire drills include details of who took part; all of the young people have an appropriate placement plan; staff receive regular supervision and appraisal; governors monitoring visits are carried out each half term and appropriate reports are completed. Action has been taken to address these recommendations and this should help to make sure young people's welfare is safeguarded and staff receive appropriate support and guidance.

It was also recommended that the school ensures its system for recruiting staff includes all the recommended elements and this is verifiable in the recruitment records held at the school. There is evidence that the system for recruiting staff does include the recommended elements. However, these were not all verifiable in the recruitment records checked. This part of the recommendation will be repeated in this report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from being cared for by staff who actively promote their health and well-being. Staff are good at monitoring and meeting the diverse health care needs of the young people. The young people's care plans clearly set out their health and personal care needs and how they will be met. Staff are good at communicating with parents and carers to support the health and well-being of the young people. The school promotes healthy eating and the young people have appropriate opportunities to gain experience in food preparation and cooking of meals. There are good arrangements for making sure young people's dietary needs and preferences are met and young people said they enjoy the meals that are served. Staff encourage and support the young people to take part in healthy activities, such as swimming.

There are good arrangements for storing, administering, recording and monitoring the young people's medication. These help protect their health and meet their health care needs. There are procedures covering the administration of medicines, but they do not cover the administration of non-prescription medicines. Staff who administer medication to young people have had relevant training. Staffing arrangements ensure appropriate support, such as staff who are trained in first aid, is available for the young people at all times. However, the school does not obtain written consent from parents for the administration of emergency first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff are good at respecting the privacy of the young people and they make sure information about the young people and their families is handled confidentially.

There are suitable procedures for managing complaints appropriately and ensuring young people and their families are listened to. Staff make sure the young people and their families are aware of who they can go to if they have any complaints or concerns. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

The school has suitable procedures for safeguarding young people and all of the staff have now had child protection training. This training helps staff protect young people from abuse and ensure they respond appropriately to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.

Staff create an atmosphere where bullying is known to be unacceptable. There is a clear anti-bullying policy and good staffing levels help make sure that any bullying behaviour would be dealt with promptly. Most staff have also taken part in training in how to counter bullying.

There have been no incidents involving a young person leaving the residential unit without permission. There is a procedure for staff about what they must do if a young person is missing. However, it is not comprehensive. For example, it does not cover what staff should do on a child's return. The headteacher said they would ensure the procedure does include all the recommended guidance for staff.

Staff are good at encouraging and supporting the young people to develop and maintain socially acceptable behaviour. They give very positive messages to young people to reinforce acceptable behaviour and they encourage and support the self management of young people's behaviour.

Staff do not use sanctions. Some young people have behaviour management plans. These are clearly recorded and staff agree them with the young people's families. There has been one incident involving the use of physical intervention by staff since the last inspection. Although the record of the incident demonstrates that staff took appropriate action, they did not record the incident in a bound and numbered book as recommended. Also they did not record the actual duration of the physical intervention. All of the care staff have had training in behaviour management and the use of physical intervention. However, although this training covers the circumstances in which physical intervention may be used the residential unit's policy does not.

There are satisfactory systems in place to keep the young people and adults safe from the risk of fire and other potential hazards. For example, regular checks of equipment such as fire alarms and electrical appliances are carried out, and the headteacher completes regular health and safety checks of the school and residential unit. Staff carry out a range of risk assessments including individual risk assessments for some of the young people. Although there have been a number of fire drills carried out over the last 12 months, some staff have not taken part in a drill at the frequency recommended by the local fire authority. One of the heads of care advised that, in light of the needs and capabilities of the young people who currently stay overnight on the residential unit, it has been decided that they do not need personal emergency evacuation plans.

There are satisfactory arrangements for making sure the school only employs suitable people. The school carries out a range of checks on new staff, including a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure check. However, it was not possible to verify in the recruitment records for one person that one of the recommended checks had been carried out. The school does not use agency staff to cover shifts on the residential unit. The arrangements for monitoring and managing visitors to the school are satisfactory and help ensure they do not have inappropriate access to young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The residential care staff are good at supporting and promoting the education and achievement of the young people. For example, they ensure young people attend school punctually and young people's plans of care include some targets that are linked to their educational targets. The young people and their parents are involved in setting appropriate targets. Communication is good between the care staff and school based staff and this helps make sure young people's needs are understood and addressed appropriately. Care staff also contribute to young people's annual education reviews.

The young people benefit from having care plans and risk assessments based on their individually assessed needs. Staffing levels provide good opportunities for staff to give the young people support and assistance to meet their individual needs and wishes. For example, staff may provide one-to-one support to enable some young people to take part in an activity such as cooking or to go to the local shops.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Admissions to the school and the residential unit are well planned and handled sensitively. The school is good at consulting young people and their families and preparing young people for

moving into adulthood. Young people are actively encouraged and supported to develop skills in daily living and to have their say about their day-to-day lives on the residential unit and how the school is run. Staff take the views and opinions of the young people seriously and where possible and appropriate act upon them.

Young people benefit from having plans of care that set out how the school will meet their assessed needs. There are good arrangements for reviewing their care and progress. There is good communication between staff and the young people's families. This helps staff keep up to date about any changes needed regarding the care and support of the young people. Staff support young people to maintain appropriate contact with their families.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements for ensuring young people are prepared for the transition into adulthood. For example, planning for this commences when a young person reaches 14 years of age. The daily life of the school and residential service provides good opportunities for young people to develop the knowledge and skills they will need for daily living.

The accommodation in the residential unit is comfortable, clean and decorated, furnished and maintained to a satisfactory standard. There is an attractive and easily accessible eco-garden in the school's grounds and the young people were actively involved in designing this. They are also involved in the decoration and refurbishment of the residential unit living areas and bedrooms. Some of the young people have created very attractive paintings that are on display in the residential accommodation. The ground floor accommodation provides suitable areas for dining, relaxing and leisure activities such as board games and arts and crafts. Bedroom accommodation is on the first floor and young people who require the use of a wheelchair cannot access this area. There are two single bedrooms and four bedrooms that can each accommodate up to four young people. Young people can have a say in who they share with. There are sufficient bathing and toilet areas for the number of young people who stay on the residential unit.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Young people and their families have access to clear information about the school and the residential unit. Staff are preparing information about the residential unit in formats that can be more easily understood by some of the young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs and preferences. Staff have a good knowledge of the young people and try to make sure their needs are being met at all times. There is a commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice.

Staffing levels are flexible to ensure sufficient staff are on duty to meet the individual needs of the young people. The residential unit uses a small number of school staff to cover staff absences. This helps maintain continuity of staffing and reduce potential disruption to the young people.

Staff feel well supported and the arrangements for providing staff with supervision and guidance in safeguarding and promoting the young people’s welfare have improved since the last inspection. For example, staff receive more frequent formal supervision sessions from a senior member of staff.

The residential care staff are experienced and knowledgeable and have appropriate opportunities for taking part in relevant training. There is a rolling programme of core training, such as child protection and first aid as well as training covering the specific needs and conditions of the young people. The majority of staff have a relevant qualification confirming they have the competencies needed to care for young people. Arrangements are being made for staff that do not to undertake training to obtain a relevant qualification.

The school’s arrangements for monitoring the residential service and the care and welfare of the young people are not fully satisfactory. For example, although senior staff carry out regular checks of the home’s fire precautions records, these checks did not identify that some staff were not taking part in fire drills as often as they should.

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):

- obtain and retain on file, appropriate written permission for the administration of first aid. Prepare an appropriate written protocol on the provision of non-prescription household medicines to children (breach of national minimum standard 14.10)
- ensure that a record of any use of physical intervention on a child is kept in a separate bound and numbered book and includes all the details set out in national minimum standard 10.14. Prepare an appropriate policy on the use of physical intervention and the circumstances in which it may be used (breach of national minimum standard 10)
- ensure staff take part in fire drills at the frequency recommended by the Fire Authority (breach of national minimum standard 26.6)
- ensure that all elements of the school’s system for recruiting staff can be verified in the recruitment records held at the school (breach of national minimum standard 27.2)
- ensure the arrangements for monitoring the school’s records and welfare of young people are effective. (breach of national minimum standards 32 and 33).