

# Bowden House School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC050152
<b>Inspection date</b>	25/01/2011
<b>Inspector</b>	Paul Taylor
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Key

---

<b>Setting address</b>	Bowden House School, Firle Road, SEAFORD, East Sussex, BN25 2JB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01323 893138
<b>Email</b>	admin@bowdenhouse.towerhamlets.sch.uk
<b>Registered person</b>	Bowden House School
<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Gerry Crook
<b>Nominated person</b>	Gerry Crook
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	29/09/2009

---

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

## 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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

## 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**

This is a residential special school maintained by a local authority. It is currently providing education, care and accommodation for up to 38 boys, with an educational statement for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, between the ages of 10 and 16.

The headteacher from September 2007 who has overall management with the support of the head of education and two heads of care.

The school and residential accommodation is on one site situated in large grounds. The boarding facilities are located on the upper three floors. The school provides weekly boarding with several residential weekends to offer special activities and events.

## **Summary**

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

At this inspection all the key standards were assessed. The school delivers an excellent standard of care which enables and encourages the boarders to develop both their confidence and social skills in a safe and nurturing environment.

There is an established and well led team of staff who provide consistent care and a positive experience to pupils who have had disrupted and often difficult educational histories.

Activities provide excellent opportunities for personal development and enrichment. The standard of care and support enables the pupils to feel safe and gives them to opportunity to experience degrees of success which they have not achieved before.

One recommendation was made as a result of this inspection. This relates to ensuring that the recording of sanctions include the reasons why the sanction has been imposed.

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

At the last inspection four recommendations were made. These have all been addressed. All members of staff have now received training in the method of physical intervention used in the school. Additionally, all the details required to be included in reports about physical interventions are now recorded.

The fire risk assessment has now been updated and reviewed since the last

inspection and all members of staff now receive planned formal supervision and appraisal.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The food offered to the pupils is varied, healthy and of excellent quality. Dietary needs, whether based on medical or cultural issues are known and met. The pupils have a wide choice of menus to choose from and have their preferences known and met. They have the opportunity to taste food from different cultures. Pupils are able to influence the choice of menu offered via the school council. Meal times are very well structured. Great care and support is placed on developing the table manners and emphasising that eating as a group can be an enjoyable and sociable experience.

Health care needs of the pupils are met to an excellent standard. The staff are aware that many pupils will have come from backgrounds where basic health needs may have been neglected. Therefore the school arranges, where needed, appointments with doctors, opticians and dentists. Specific attention is paid to promoting pupils psychological and emotional well-being. Guidance and oversight is available from specialists such as educational psychologists, the children and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) and a psychotherapist. This advice guides the staff in delivering sensitive and structured care to the pupils.

Healthy living is actively promoted with advice and guidance, commensurate with pupils' understanding, on issues such as smoking, substance misuse and sex education. Exercise and activities are embedded in the school routines and encourage the boys to become healthy and fit.

All members of staff who administer medication have been trained to do so. The system to monitor medication and to ensure that records are accurate, is robust.

The approach of the school ensures that the dietary and health needs of the pupils are met to an excellent standard.

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

The provision is outstanding.

There is clear policy and guidance in place for the staff to follow in ensuring that the confidentiality and privacy of the pupils is protected. Staff are aware of this and know with whom they can share sensitive information. Additionally, all confidential information is kept securely stored. Members of staff provide sensitive support to pupils who may need help with hygiene or self-care such as washing and dressing. The level of discrete support is commensurate with each boarder's specific needs and abilities.

Pupils are confident to express their opinions. They have a number of avenues they can follow to express their complaints. These include members of staff, key workers, members of the senior management team, school social worker, counsellor and governors. Posters around the school also give the pupils information about different help lines they can telephone. Formal complaints tend to be made by parents and records indicate that these are thoroughly explored and responded to promptly. A school governor regularly checks and endorses the records to ensure that this process is thorough and timely.

The school has clear guidance in place for the staff to follow in the event that they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. All members of staff are offered regular training to ensure that they are aware of their obligations. The school social worker keeps thorough, detailed and well organised records of any child protection concerns. She ensures that all agencies are kept informed and up to date with any issues and ensures that pupils welfare is promoted and seen as paramount. The system and approach to monitoring child protection and welfare issues is robust and conscientious.

The school has a bullying policy in place which has been developed by the pupils. It is embedded into the culture of the school that bullying is not tolerated. The school has developed an approach whereby bullying is seen as a community responsibility rather than an issue to be dealt with by members of staff. If incidents of bullying occur they are dealt with promptly and records maintained on how the issue has been resolved or if further action is needed. High levels of supervision in boarding areas ensures that dynamics between pupils are known, and areas of conflict and tension, can be addressed.

There is clear guidance for the members of staff to follow in the event that a pupil goes missing or leaves the site without permission. Incidents of pupils making a determined effort to run away are rare. Most incidents involve pupils being in the grounds or the local area without permission for a short period of time, before returning to school.

All members of staff are trained in the method of physical intervention used by the school. Records completed after an incident of physical intervention include all the details required. The reports are regularly checked and endorsed by senior members of staff and the chair of governors to ensure that the incident was appropriately dealt with.

Pupils are clearly aware of the rules and routines in the school. Positive behaviour is rewarded and celebrated by earning extra privileges such as small gifts and extra outings. Pupils also achieve extra privileges by meeting targets outlined in their individual learning plans. Targets may include pupils controlling their use of swearing or not lashing out when frustrated. Pupils are aware of what sanctions can be imposed and feel that on the whole they are fair. Records of sanctions are, for the most part, accurately recorded. There are occasions where the reason for a sanction being imposed are clear in the incident report related to the sanction, but have not been made clear in the sanctions book.

There are numerous risk assessments in place with regards to ensuring the safety of the pupils. The assessments cover activities, behaviour and individual vulnerabilities and the school environment. These are reviewed and renewed on a regular basis. Fire safety is ensured via regular checks on equipment and alarms and a review of the fire risk assessment by a representative from the organisation which runs the school. Fire drills are regularly carried out at different times of the day and night to ensure that the pupils' awareness of the evacuation system remains high.

All members of staff have the necessary checks carried out on them before they commence employment. Visitors to the school are closely supervised and have to report to reception before commencing their visit. Closed circuit television provides security observation of some communal areas.

The school's approach and systems, combined with a high level of awareness shown by members of staff, ensures that the welfare and safety of the pupils is valued and promoted to an excellent standard.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The small size of the school ensures that each pupil's progress and circumstances are known to all members of staff. Both care and education staff liaise on a daily basis and share any issues of note. Targets for progress are shared between care and education and ensure that each pupil is receiving consistent and supportive care across the board. Examples of shared targets include pupils receiving help with reading from care staff in the evenings and developing their life and self care skills in both the classroom and boarding area. Pupils are proud of the fact that their social and educational skills develop while they are at the school. One pupil reported that, 'This school has helped me with my work and my temper, it's much better than the other schools I went to.'

Care staff are clearly conversant with the physical, social and emotional needs of the pupils. If it is felt a pupil requires additional support to meet their needs, referrals will be made via the school social worker to the appropriate services, such as educational psychologists and CAMHS. The pupils have access to the school counsellor who is based on site at least twice a week. They can 'self refer' to this service as well as be referred by members of staff. This means that additional emotional support is readily available to underpin the support already given by other members of staff.

The school operates a curriculum that aims to provide a wide range of educational and social experience throughout the day. It is clear that the pupils live full and active school lives and each day includes dedicated periods of education, recreation and social time. The variety of activities and their links to developing pupils skills and interests ensures that they have ample opportunities to engage in an enriching and stimulating programme. Pupils experiences in these activities are celebrated by the

school and include events such as camping trips, rock climbing and kayaking. An important element provided by the care and structure is that pupils are given the opportunity to play; often for the first time in their lives. Pupils are seen to make toys and to take part in 'make believe' games in an environment where this is safe and acceptable. Each pupil has a diary of their achievements and experiences, complete with photographs and certificates, put together during their time at the school. This means that they have a meaningful record of all the positive things they have enjoyed and achieved when the time comes for them to leave.

The level of individual support offered to the pupils is outstanding. Each pupil's needs and idiosyncrasies are known and the staff work very closely across the curriculum to ensure that they receive the support and nurturing that they need.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Staff regularly consult pupils about all aspects of their lives within the school. Consultation can take place individually and collectively. The school council provides an effective vehicle for discussing issues of common concern. Pupils believe strongly that they can influence change in the school, particularly with regards to menus and activities. Informal meetings and discussions often take place within the boarding areas and during mealtimes. Senior members of staff have an open door policy and any pupil within the school can access them directly. Additional to teachers and care staff, pupils actively seek out advice, guidance and reassurance from the school social worker and counsellor.

The admission of new pupils and the process of transition and moving on, are areas which are carefully thought through. The detail planning of these processes involves multi-disciplinary input. The pupil's strengths, weaknesses and aspirations are known by all involved in the process. The school appreciates and values parents input in this process, which is underpinned by their knowledge of their own children. It is also recognised by the school that this process can be difficult for the parents as well as the pupils. Support for them is also readily available from members of staff, particularly the school social worker, who will advocate for them if necessary. Once pupils are admitted they spend time being closely supported and assessed in the area on site dedicated for this purpose. Support and nurturing provided by the staff in this area is of a particularly high standard. Admissions are set at a pace with which a pupil can cope. Everyone is aware that this can be a very anxious time for a pupil, especially if their prior experience of education has been unsettled and negative. This approach to assessment, ensuring that needs are met and responded to, enabling pupils to be sensitively supported and nurtured, is outstanding.



## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Support provided to pupils who are preparing to leave is outstanding. Careful assessment is made of their abilities and life-skills. Individual programmes for their development are planned as a result of these 'skills audits.' Pupils report that they enjoy the programme and that they feel very well prepared to move on to college, work experience and vocational training. The member of staff responsible for this programme liaises closely with the pupils' teachers to ensure that they are receiving the support that they need. On occasion the school will identify particularly vulnerable pupils who would benefit for a further period of time with them to further develop their life-skills. The school then ensures that the local authorities are made aware of these concerns and have enabled pupils to stay on at the school for an extra year.

The school premises are well maintained and emergency repairs are carried out promptly. A rolling programme of refurbishment ensures that the living areas are comfortable and homely. The pupils are encouraged to personalise their rooms with pictures and posters.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has a prospectus which describes what it intends to deliver and the underlying ethos behind the running of the school.

The staffing arrangements, both day and night, ensure the welfare of pupils is protected and promoted. Staffing levels provide appropriate supervision both on and off site and support pupils in relation to their assessed individual needs and vulnerabilities. Pupils benefit from the continuity of care provided by close working achieved between both teaching and boarding staff.

Training for the staff team is regular and varied. The staff team receives training every 'inset day' and this includes subjects such as behaviour management, child protection, first aid and drug awareness. There is a rolling programme for staff to receive training in the National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Over 80% of care staff have the qualification or an equivalent.

Staff receive regular supervision and appraisals on a formal basis. They are also able to receive on-going support from senior members of staff on an informal basis. Members of staff report that senior members of staff are approachable and operate an 'open door' policy.

The care staff meet regularly to discuss issues and progress of the pupils. They also meet teaching staff briefly on a daily basis so that they can catch up on any specific

issues or events. There is a thorough induction programme which prepares new members of staff to work at the school and all members of staff have access to policies and procedures which are reviewed on a regular basis.

Senior members of staff regularly monitor, comment upon and endorse key records such as risk assessments, records of sanctions and restraints, minutes of meetings and any significant incidents and accidents. The small size of the school means that key members of staff are able to quickly respond to any issues, such as individual pupils coming to note for poor behaviour or struggling within the school. The senior leadership team meets frequently to ensure that significant information is passed on to those who need to know.

Monitoring visits, carried out by the chair of governors occur at least every half-term. Additionally, she monitors key records more regularly as part of a thorough quality assurance system. Reports written as a result of monitoring visits are excellent and identify any issues which need to be addressed. In turn, senior members of staff provide written information to the chair of governors on how they have responded to any identified issues.

There is an active board of governors who meet regularly to examine and discuss the functioning of the school.

Promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The individual needs of each young person are known and promoted and difference in behaviours and routines are responded to sensitively. The personal learning programme operated in the school also ensures that young people are able to learn about differences in culture, beliefs and background and that differences are to be enjoyed and celebrated.

The stability of the staff team, underpinned by strong leadership and thorough monitoring, ensures that the care and well-being of pupils is promoted and scrutinised to an excellent standard.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Compliance with national minimum standards**

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that the record of sanctions includes the reason why they have been imposed. (NMS 10.9)