



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Bowden House School

**Firle Road
Seaford
East Sussex
BN25 2JB**

Lead Inspector
Corrie McKeown

Announced Inspection
17th October 2005 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Residential Special Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained 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

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life.

Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of school	Bowden House School
Address	Firle Road Seaford East Sussex BN25 2JB
Telephone number	01323 893138
Fax number	01323 492057
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Bowden House School
Name of Head	Mr Asif Arif
Name of Head of Care	Mr S Pullinger and Ms L Haworth
Age range of residential pupils	10 – 16 years
Date of last welfare inspection	02/10/04

Brief Description of the School:

Bowden House is a maintained, residential special school catering for boys between the ages of 10 and 16, with an educational statement for emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. It is maintained by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and currently accommodates 26 pupils, 26 boarding and 3 day pupils on one site. Boarders are placed by Tower Hamlets together with boys from a wide range of local authorities, including East Sussex.

The school is under the overall management of the Headmaster supported by the Head of Education, who is responsible for the delivery of the school curriculum and two Senior Care Officers. The main 4-storey building stands in 11 acres of mature grounds on the outskirts of Seaford. The boarding facilities are located on the upper 3 floors and a programme of refurbishment and reorganisation of the sleeping arrangements, is resulting in a pleasing upgrading of the facilities overall. The staff sleeping-in facilities are located on each floor providing good supervision of the pupils.

In the past the school has closed every other weekend, but as many of the pupils are choosing to return home every weekend, it is now a weekly boarding establishment with 7 residential weekends offering special events.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection was announced and carried out by 2 inspectors over 2 days, spending time with the pupils throughout their day. A tour of the boarding facilities was carried out in the company of two pupils and records held by the school were viewed. The Headmaster and Chair of the Governors were interviewed together with a selection of staff and pupils. Questionnaires were sent to parents, pupils and the staff and a pleasing response was received.

What the school does well:

Since the last inspection the school has moved forward with a number of longer-term projects and overall the feedback from pupils and parents indicate that it is a more settled and beneficial establishment as a result. The whole school approach to meeting the pupils' needs, with education and care staff working closely together is going well. Consistent behaviour management, better support for the pupils' education and a more varied activity programme are some of the more obvious benefits. The care staff team continue to make meaningful and helpful relationships with the pupils and work closely with the parents, keeping them up-to-date with what's happening for their children at the school. They are well supported in their work and form a strong team. Health promotion at the school is good, delivered by a very helpful GP, school nurse and Education Social Worker (ESW), backed up by an award winning catering service.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The knowledge and experience of the care team has improved as a result of good training, staff retention and access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) input, training and consultancy. The school council is functioning well and the pupils have a number of ways in which to voice their opinions. Admission and moving on procedures continue to be improved and the independence programme has developed to include more self-catering by the 'leavers' group.

The refurbishment programme is close to completion with a pleasing new suite of single rooms on the first floor and improved lighting in other parts of the building; maintenance of the building happens more promptly and staff recruitment procedures now meet all the requirements.

What they could do better:

The recording of how the identified health needs are to be met and a healthy lifestyle promoted should be completed as soon as possible. Notifications made to CSCI by telephone need to be followed up by a written account of the incident. All staff involved in physical intervention must undertake updated

training in restraint techniques and risk assessments should be in place for all potentially dangerous activities. The corridors and one bedroom still need redecorating, in order that the boarding facilities meet the required standards.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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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)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Both of the above.

The pupils' health needs are identified and met and the meals provided for them are excellent.

EVIDENCE:

A separate health care plan has been drawn up for all pupils including a health history, current conditions, medication and any allergies. All staff consulted were aware of the pupils' individual needs and were working alongside a range of health professionals to ensure they are met. Details of how this was being achieved have yet to be included in the new plans. The local GP and Nurse visit the school every week during the school term and are very helpful in ensuring health needs are met locally, where this is appropriate. Access to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) services has improved, resulting in more individual support for pupils and helpful advice for staff regarding behaviour management. The administration of medication is good and includes a record of reasons why it is not taken and a system for tracking medication held at the school.

A healthy lifestyle is promoted in a number of ways, involving all staff at the school in an holistic approach. A balanced timetable is in place, offering pupils the opportunity to exercise and relax between the academic demands of their day. Nutritious and interesting meals are served providing the necessary energy and goodness and advice is offered on health issues, both in the formal education setting and the more relaxed care environment. This includes a drugs, alcohol and tobacco education programme that was awarded a SPEDI (Schools Preventative Education and Drug Intervention) award by the local authority.

The food prepared at the school is of a high standard and includes plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Pupils are offered a choice of 4 main meals at lunchtime and a substantial evening meal. Individual health and cultural needs are catered for and the pupils can suggest meals to be included in the menu

using authentic recipes; 'jerk' chicken is one of the favourites. Snacks are offered between the main meals and during the evening. As a result of their hard work the school has achieved the Healthy School and School Nutrition Awards.

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 by others.(NMS 6)
- All significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified by the Head of the school or designated person to the appropriate authorities.(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, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers.(NMS 27)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

All of the above.

The safety and security of the pupils is protected with a range of systems that inform and enable the pupils to take personal responsibility and clearly define the roles of staff and managers to ensure they are safe. Records are in place to demonstrate these systems are followed.

EVIDENCE:

The pupils report that their privacy is respected by the staff and protected in the way the bedrooms are configured, most pupils have single rooms. Some comments were made about privacy in the first floor bathroom and the school is investigating the possibility of replacing outer shower curtains with a door; in the meantime staff are encouraging pupils to behave appropriately in a busy area.

The school complaints system is well known to pupils and they were able to list a number of ways in which they can air their concerns. An on-going matter raised by a local resident who lives on the school boundary, has been resolved with the help of a mediation service.

Child protection procedures are well established in the school; all staff receive basic training and key personnel are well aware of their responsibilities and duties when an issue is raised. They have received extended training and have contacts set up with all local authorities involved with pupils at the school. No incidents have been raised in the school since the last inspection.

Bullying remains at a low level in the school and pupils say that they are encouraged to support the school ethos of respect for each other. When an incident is reported they feel the staff address it properly, that the pupil affected is well supported and the key-worker and class teacher offer the perpetrator help and advice. There was evidence of a co-ordinated, whole school approach on these issues and the appropriate notifications are made following any incident of a serious nature; these need to be followed up with written reports where necessary.

Good systems are in place to manage absconding and these are supported by a long-standing working partnership with the local Police Liaison Officer. The school Education Social Worker (ESW) has links with the placing local authority Social Inclusion and Education Welfare Officers in order to deal with children that go missing to and from school and in the current year attendance has risen. A recent improvement made in this area is the inclusion of absconding in the initial risk assessment made when a pupil joins the school.

The behaviour of pupils observed during the inspection was generally good and staff were observed making timely and appropriate interventions where necessary. There is a clear approach in the school of positive reinforcement of good behaviour and a number of systems to support this, offering the pupils a real incentive to behave well. These include a points system that results in individual rewards and a weekly prize of a special outing to the winning team. Targets are carefully set to ensure everyone can achieve a reward. Sanctions are not used a great deal and pupils are encouraged to take time out or talk their frustrations through with a member of staff if possible; helpful relationships between staff and pupils support this approach, together with a flexible approach that recognises individual circumstances. Records of physical restraint indicate that in all but one instance it is used appropriately, however in their questionnaires and interviews some pupils report that they have experienced some discomfort during a restraint and that on a small number of occasions they felt it was used inappropriately. All staff have undertaken training in this area but regular updating of this training is necessary, in order to ensure that correct techniques are used and that it continues to be used as a last resort to avoid injury or serious damage to property. Improvements to the recording of incidents are currently being considered.

The buildings and facilities are physically safe and secure, with regular checks and procedures carried out to guard against fire and accidents. Records are kept of these safeguards and a prompt maintenance service supports staff in this area. Risk assessments are drawn up for fire hazards, buildings and grounds and activities undertaken at the school, but on inspection one could not be found for the popular 'run-outs' activity. All the required staff recruitment checks are carried out and again a detailed checklist is in place to ensure procedures are followed.

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 both within the school and in the local community.(NMS 13)
- Children receive individual support when they need it.(NMS 22)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

All of the above.

The support provided by the residential staff for pupils' education has improved. A very good activity programme continues to be offered at the school and a high level of individual support is made available by a range of professionals according to pupils' individual needs.

EVIDENCE:

Residential staff are actively involved in classroom support, particularly the two team leaders. Here they gain a greater understanding of the difficulties some of the pupils experience and use the trusting relationships established in the care setting to support their learning. Pupils consulted generally appreciated the extra support, especially with their reading and some of this was evident during the evening spent at the school. The development of greater co-operation and joint working between the Education and care departments was commended in the recent Ofsted report.

Activity is a strong feature at the school, where pupils are encouraged to balance their academic timetable with breaks for fresh air and exercise. After school there are plenty of opportunities to take part in artistic, musical and sporting pursuits that the pupils say they really enjoy, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The staff have clearly responded to the interests and views expressed by the pupils, in terms of the activities provided and the very popular 'run-outs' were on offer during the evening of the inspection. A number of the pupils attend local clubs, but this is not easy to promote with weekly boarding, as Friday night and weekends are a popular time for events.

The care team and other staff working with them including the education staff, Education Social Worker, School Bursar and her domestic and maintenance team, know the pupils well and are keen to support them in any way they can.

There is a growing sense in the school of everybody working together to achieve the best for the pupils living there. Care plans that detail their needs are updated following reviews and individual goals are set up for each pupil. Cultural needs are ascertained on an individual basis in consultation with the pupil and their family; this includes the provision of special skin/healthcare products and support for the observation of religious practices. During the inspection one pupil was observing Ramadan and had helped to produce a small project presented at a school assembly. Access to the CAMHS team has improved, providing individual sessions for pupils and consultancy and training for staff. The key-worker system continues to operate as one pupil explained, 'to make sure we are happy and have everything we need' and according to the feedback received from all parties consulted, this is done very well.

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 living away from home at school.(NMS 20)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

All of the above.

Pupils are involved in the running of the school and enjoy positive and helpful relationships with the staff. The admission process has been improved and those leaving school receive good support from as well as the school staff. Care plans are in place for each pupil and contact with parents is encouraged and supported by the school.

EVIDENCE:

Pupil's views are sought on an individual basis regarding their choice of meals and activities; within their living group discussions are held about matters that contribute to a happy and pleasant environment, including issues such as bullying and the decoration of their rooms and the communal areas. On a more formal basis the school council enables pupils to bring matters to the headmaster, through an elected representative; this has resulted in a number of changes and additional resources such as a basketball ring, BMX track and input to the organisation of the new rooms.

Good relationships were observed between staff and pupils, characterised by relaxed interaction, good boundary setting and positive role modelling. The staff are very aware of the pupils' whereabouts and frame of mind and will often pass a friendly word or take time to make sure they are feeling alright.

This approach results in a friendly atmosphere and counters any possible feelings of isolation.

The admission process at the school is very helpful, according to feedback received from parents; the pupils said they spent time at the school, in many cases before they enrolled and were made to feel welcome by staff when they arrived. The school ESW is the main link between the school and parents; she plays an important role in co-ordinating the assessment process which appears to be managed very well by the school, resulting in an appropriately mix of pupils with very diverse needs. Moving on is also well managed with an interesting independence skills programme, run as part of the curriculum and activity options. Good links are in place with the local Connexions Service, which supports the pupils into further education and work when they move permanently back home.

Care plans continue to develop and improve, with additional information, assessments and targeted individual goals. Currently the school is looking to combine the three existing plans into one Individual Learning Plan, incorporating care, health and education targets into one document, with a limited number of goals for each pupil. Inspectors would support this move to further encourage a shared understanding of the holistic needs of each pupil, but would continue to ask that clear strategies about how the needs will be met are included as an essential part of any planning document; this was not observed to be a practice issue in the school, merely a matter of clear recording, all staff were very aware of how the pupil's needs were to be met.

Contact between parents and pupils is not a problem and is actively encouraged by the staff; parents reported that the school contact them on a weekly basis, and sometimes more often to report on their son's progress.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.(NMS 23)
- 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)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

All of the above.

After school the pupils change into their own clothes; these and other personal items are generally purchased at home during the weekend. The staff encourage the pupils to spend their pocket money wisely as part of a programme to develop their independence skills. Further improvements have been made to the living environment with improved facilities and some redecoration.

EVIDENCE:

The pupils and staff raised no problems during the inspection regarding casual clothing or obtaining any other personal items. The pupils can change after school for activities and leisure time and appear to purchase most of the items they need during trips to Seaford after school, or at the weekend when they go home.

Some of the after-school activities are particularly designed for the group of boys leaving school this year. They are encouraged to learn the skills of budgeting, shopping and catering for themselves, choosing healthy options and developing hygienic and safe methods of cooking. As part of this programme a group prepare their own breakfast once a week. Other community-based skills are part of this programme, such as opening bank accounts and there are good

links with education staff and the Connexions service which cover all areas of further education and work.

The facilities at the school have developed since the last inspection to include a new suite of single rooms and a lounge on the first floor. These rooms are furnished and decorated in a modern style and the pupils are very pleased with them. More individual lighting has been installed in other areas and as mentioned earlier in the report, the pupils have been involved in some of the design decisions. The bathrooms and bedrooms, with one exception are now bright, cheerful and well decorated; the corridors on the first floor are due to be painted over half term as the final part of the refurbishment work and when those in the rest of the building are completed, the accommodation will have a much brighter appearance. The level of damage to the building has reduced significantly over the past year, according to reports from the domestic staff and maintenance issues are dealt with promptly.

Management

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 is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.(NMS 18)
- There are adequate records of both 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)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

All of the above.

A good range of attractive and helpful written information is provided to parents and placing authorities and a student handbook is available for pupils to give them information about the school. Recording in general is of a good standard in all areas. The staff team are competent, experienced and increasingly well trained to meet the needs of the pupils in their care. They receive regular support and guidance from senior staff that run the school efficiently and constantly strive to improve outcomes for the pupils.

EVIDENCE:

The school prospectus and staff handbook are comprehensive documents outlining the education and care principles and practice at the school, together with guidance for staff. Small, well-presented booklets are also distributed to parents from time-to-time, explaining coming events and regular meetings regarding their child's welfare; these are a new and pleasing innovation.

Recording of the pupils' targets and progress is completed initially on a daily basis and individual reports are drawn from these when progress is formally reviewed, providing a detailed history of their development at the school. These reports, together with weekly verbal feedback to parents, keep them well informed, according to the very positive feedback given in the returned questionnaires. The organisation of records at the school has improved.

The care needs of the pupils are understood well by a consistent staff team, who themselves continue to grow in knowledge and experience. Basic training is now being complemented by more in-depth courses around the individual difficulties experienced by some pupils and the staff are talking about the pupils in a more informed and insightful way. There are strong indications, such as the improved attitude expressed by the pupils towards the school and the reduction in damage, that the staff are providing a more relaxed and positive learning experience for the pupils. The staff are also working hard to equip themselves with relevant professional qualifications; 6 members of the team have achieved NVQ Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People and 3 more are currently enrolled on the course. In addition to the training provided, staff are supported with regular supervision and appraisals of their performance by their line managers and all those consulted said the level of support was good.

The school is running smoothly, with a number of new strategies now showing clear results, such as the closer working relationships between the care and education staff and the improved feedback overall from both pupils and their parents about how much they enjoy school. The system for monitoring recording as detailed in Standard 32.2 is not a formal procedure, but it is clear that the Headmaster and the Team Leaders review them regularly and take action where necessary.

The Chair of Governors reported that school targets are being achieved, that admissions are rising steadily and the general atmosphere when he visits the school is very positive. The school is still experiencing problems recruiting parent governors and distance from the school is the reason; now that pupils are being drawn from a wider range of local authorities it is hoped that this situation will improve.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

“X” in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

“N/A” in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
Standard No	Score
14	2
15	4

STAYING SAFE	
Standard No	Score
3	3
4	3
5	3
6	4
7	2
8	3
10	2
26	3
27	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
Standard No	Score
12	4
13	4
22	4

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
Standard No	Score
2	4
9	4
11	4
17	3
20	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
Standard No	Score
16	3
21	4
23	3
24	2
25	3

MANAGEMENT	
Standard No	Score
1	4
18	3
19	3
28	4
29	3
30	3
31	3
32	3
33	3

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

YES

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)
1	RS14	That health plans detail how the identified needs will be met.	01/03/06
2	RS7	That a verbal notification is followed up with a written account.	01/10/05
3	RS10	That all staff regularly up-date their training in physical intervention techniques in order to continue to practice them.	01/03/06
4	RS13	That a risk assessment is put in place for the 'run-out' activity	01/10/05
5	RS24	That all outstanding decorating and refurbishment tasks are promptly completed.	01/03/06

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