

Barndale House Special School

Barndale House, Howling Lane, ALNWICK, Northumberland, NE66 1DQ

Inspection dates	25/02/2014 to 27/02/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Adequate	3
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is adequate because

- The quality of support which staff provide has a visible, positive impact upon outcomes for residential pupils. Staff are experienced, dedicated and committed to their task. They allow and encourage residential pupils to do things for themselves and so help them to acquire confidence and independence.
- Programmes of care are well planned and take full account of the individual needs of residential pupils. Staff enable residential pupils to have as much choice as possible within the daily routine. Pupils enjoy the time they spend in residence and develop sound relationships with staff and other children.
- The residential provision is a safe and secure environment for pupils. Keeping the residential pupils safe is a priority for staff. This principle is supported by robust procedures which all staff understand and put into practice.
- The management of the residential provision is generally sound. However, some aspects of leadership activity are weak and do not meet national minimum standards. These shortfalls detract from the otherwise good quality of the provision, but have not had a significant impact upon the welfare or safety of residential pupils.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

The school was given notice of the inspection three hours before it commenced. The inspector met with the headteacher, heads of care, and a number of residential and support staff, and later spoke with: a number of residential pupils individually or in small groups (although not all were able or willing to communicate); two parents; and one social worker. Information was also gathered from: school policies and procedures; general records; individual case files; and RSA. Routines were observed at various times of the day, including breakfast, tea time, and early evening activities.

Inspection team

Nicholas Murphy

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Barndale House is a local authority special school for children and young people who have a statement of special needs. The school provides a residential service for some pupils, ranging in age from 7 to 19, of either gender. The residential accommodation is sited in a building adjacent to the classroom block. The school is situated within easy walking distance of Alnwick town centre and all its amenities and facilities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that information in relation to residential pupils' looked after status and their responsible social worker is prominent within the case file
- Promote better communication between the education and residential staff groups, for example, by including heads of care in the education staff meeting
- **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**
 - New staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction, beginning within 7 working days of starting their employment and completing training within 6 months. (NMS 19.3)
 - All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (NMS 19.6)
 - The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who does not work at, or directly manage, the school, to visit the school once every half term and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the Headteacher (or school equivalent). (NMS 20.1)
 - Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS 20.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good.

There is an evident warmth and affection in the relationships between staff and residential pupils. Residential pupils display consideration and respect for each other, and have clearly developed some significant friendships within the group. Most of them enjoy solitary play as well as well as joining in group activities. For example, there are regular outings to the local youth club, where residential pupils love to dance to music.

Most residential pupils are able to undertake self-care tasks without close supervision. As a result their confidence in their own abilities improves. One parent said of their child, 'They have come on 110% as a result of the residential experience.' Residential pupils, no matter what their level of ability, are able to make some contribution to the school community. For example, there is a rota for residential pupils to help out with the laundry every morning. They do this willingly, and so are able to gain some understanding of the necessity of routine household tasks.

Residential pupils behave very well. They generally respond to guidance from staff without fuss. As a result, the atmosphere within the residential provision is calm and orderly. Residential pupils appear happy and at ease within the group. Occasionally a residential pupil may become upset or distressed, but with the help of staff they quickly settle. A parent said, 'My child is very much part of the Barndale family, they love staying here.'

Within the limits of their medical conditions, residential pupils are in good health. They are able to have access to a range of specialist health services which ensures that their physical, emotional and developmental needs are met. As a result of the constant emphasis on self-reliance, residential pupils are as prepared as they can be for adulthood. They acquire skills and abilities which assist them when they make the transition to the next stage of their lives.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of care provided to residential pupils is good.

Staff provide a level of care which is sensitive to each residential pupil's individual needs and abilities. Staff are thoughtful in planning the introductions of new pupils in a way which minimises any distress. Care staff work closely with teachers and teaching assistants, passing over and receiving information at the start and end of each school day. This ensures a continuity of care throughout the time that residential pupils spend here, contributing to their good outcomes. The daily transition from the residential provision to the school is well managed. Staff make sure that the post-breakfast period is calm, and focus the residential pupils on what they will be doing in the classroom. This helps to ensure a fulfilling day of learning.

Each residential pupil has a care plan which is based on their assessed needs and how to meet them. There are targets associated with these plans which are monitored by staff and enable them to see the progress that residential pupils make over time. Of particular note is the development of formal certification of residential pupils' development of self-care skills. This provides good evidence of the progress they make and gives the pupils and their parents concrete proof of their ability. All the care staff have a detailed knowledge of each residential pupils' circumstances and background. Some residential pupils are looked after by the local authority. However, this is not readily evident within the case files, with details like legal status and the name of the pupil's social worker difficult to find.

Staff provide a wide range of stimulating activities for residential pupils, both physical and more sedate. There is an emphasis on getting out and about in the community, which promotes social inclusion. Some activities provide much shared laughter. For example, residential pupils enjoy giving members of staff a facial makeover, sometimes with startling results!

There are good systems in place to ensure the health of residential pupils, which includes the provision of a school nurse. She coordinates not only the in-house health arrangements, such as giving medication, but also specialist services. These include community dentist, paediatrician, and speech and language therapy. Staff are thorough in addressing all health needs. For example, one residential pupil chooses to eat a very restricted diet. Staff monitor their height and weight regularly, arrange regular blood tests, consult with the dietician, and provide them with calcium and vitamin supplements. As a result, the residential pupil is developing as expected and is in good health.

Food within the residential setting is of excellent quality and attractively presented by qualified and well-trained staff. Fresh fruit is always available and much appreciated by residential pupils. There is always a choice of at least two options at mealtimes, and all specialist needs, such as allergies, are catered for. Mealtimes are structured yet happy parts of the day. Each meal starts with a very short and simple grace which residential pupils take part in. It is notable how staff positively encourage residential pupils to do things such as buttering their toast and clearing their table. Some residential pupils need more assistance than others in eating. Staff provide the help that is needed sensitively and discreetly. This ensures that all children are able to join in these social occasions with dignity.

The accommodation is clean and homely, and is set within attractive grounds and gardens. Although most residential pupils share their bedrooms, cabin-type beds and enclosures provide sufficient privacy. The quality of the surroundings helps residential pupils to feel good about themselves.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

The residential provision is good at keeping residential pupils safe.

The school has sound procedures for the recruitment and vetting of staff. A particular feature of staff recruitment is that residential pupils play a part in interviews for staff. This is a commendable practice which demonstrates the commitment of the school to listening to residential pupils. The thoroughness of the vetting process ensures that only people who are suitable to work with children are employed.

The policies for child protection and safeguarding are comprehensive. More importantly, all staff (including support and ancillary workers) can demonstrate that they understand them. This means that any concern which may be expressed to, or observed by, any member of staff will be appropriately reported. The school's management is zealous in notifying any incidents of concern to the appropriate agencies, ensuring that there is proper investigation of any issue. There is a bullying policy in place. However, the level and quality of staff supervision of residential pupils means that bullying is not an issue.

Residential staff manage behaviour very well. They are skilled in diverting and distracting residential pupils whose behaviour may be causing concern for others. This averts the need for more assertive intervention, and consequently the use of sanctions and physical restraint is virtually unknown. The site manager works closely with residential staff to ensure that the building and its furniture and fittings is always safe. All necessary maintenance checks are carried out according to schedule, and arrangements for fire safety are thorough.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Adequate

The leadership and management of the residential provision are adequate.

At the last inspection in July 2012, four recommendations to improve practice were made. The headteacher and heads of care have implemented these in full. This indicates that the residential provision has the capacity to address identified shortfalls and make the necessary changes.

The day-to-day organisation of the residential provision is generally sound. Residential staff operate as a team and it is commendable that they are flexible in changing their working arrangements to cover colleagues' sickness. This means that the needs of residential pupils are always prioritised. It also ensures that every residential pupil, no matter what their level of disability, has the same opportunities to play a full part in the daily life of the school. Although residential staff communicate well with teaching staff about individual pupils, there is less effective sharing of information at a management level. As a result, decision-making about changes within the school may not include residential managers.

The staff timetable is organised so that there are always sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of residential pupils. All staff are qualified or enrolled on appropriate training, and the two heads of care have recognised management qualifications. Although the turnover of residential staff is extremely low, the most recent member of staff appointed did not undergo the induction programme required by national minimum standards.

There is a well-planned training programme which ensures that staff skills are refreshed as necessary. Residential staff receive regular professional supervision, which supports them in delivering a high quality of care. However, there is no formal supervision for the heads of care. Furthermore, no residential staff have received formal annual appraisal. This is a weakness which has the potential to reduce staff resilience and effectiveness in promoting the welfare of residential pupils.

One of the school governors makes half-termly visits to the residential provision. However, there have been no visits in the last two half-terms prior to this inspection. Additionally, not all areas specified in the national minimum standards are addressed in these visits, for example, checks on residential care plans. It is also not clear whether independent visitors make themselves available for residential pupils to speak to. This means that the opportunity for children to express their views to people independent of the school is restricted.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	122384
Social care unique reference number	SC041487
DfE registration number	929/7010

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Maintained residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	23
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	7 to 19
Headteacher	Mr Colin Bradshaw
Date of previous boarding inspection	04/07/2012
Telephone number	01665 602541
Email address	admin@barndalehouse.northumberland.sch.uk

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