

Barndale House School

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

Inspection dates	10/02/2015 to 12/02/2015	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
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	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Residential pupils love their time here, enjoying the experience of being with their friends and taking part in activities. One said, 'I like coming here to sleep over. I love going shopping into the town. I also like the youth club, it's great.'
- Care staff are skilled and committed. The nurture and close support given by the residential provision helps residential pupils to make good progress. Staff do not allow residential pupils' disabilities, however profound, to prevent them from enjoying the facilities and opportunities available to all. Parents report that the developmental progress their children make within residence is carried over into their home life.
- The quality of care planning and recording of residential pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection. There is more consistent and measurable monitoring of the positive changes that residential pupils make. However, there is insufficient time built into the rota for staff to dedicate to their key worker tasks.
- Residential pupils, even those with limited communication, clearly feel safe here. There is no bullying, and any other threats to their safety arising from their disabilities are identified and well managed. Staff have good knowledge of safeguarding policies and are prompt in reporting any concerns to the appropriate agencies.
- The residential provision is well managed. Senior care staff are tireless in their efforts to improve the quality of service, and provide sound leadership to their team. All national minimum standards have been met, but there are several shortfalls which do not have significant impact upon the welfare or safety of residential pupils.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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, several residential and support staff, and a number of residential pupils individually and in small groups. The inspector scrutinised school policies and procedures, general records and individual case files. 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 School 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 up to 19 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, including information from looked after reviews, is available within the residential case file.
- Update the anti-bullying policy to address homophobic bullying and refresh staff training in this area.
- Ensure that all residential pupils have behaviour support plans in place and that individual risk assessments address all potential hazards.
- Provide care staff with dedicated, paid time, away from residential pupils, to keep case files up to date and carry out development activities.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good.

It is abundantly clear that pupils greatly enjoy the experience of residence. Groups of residential pupils are carefully matched to ensure that individuals are compatible in terms of age, ability and needs. As a result, firm friendships develop. A parent said, 'Residence provides a great way for my child to socialise with others.' Residential pupils have a wide range of disabilities and communication difficulties. Nevertheless, all are tolerant of these differences between themselves and accept each other without prejudice.

Residential pupils make good progress in developing greater self-reliance and confidence. Many take the initiative in performing tasks such as clearing away their dishes at mealtimes. Others need some direction from staff, for example in using cutlery appropriately, or in personal care routines such as brushing teeth. All residential pupils take turns to help out with household tasks, such as collecting the washing and taking it to the laundry. This improvement in independence and motivation is sustained when residential pupils return home. One parent commented, 'My child's independence has come on loads. For example, she no longer needs me to help her get dressed.'

The behaviour of pupils within residence is excellent. They enjoy the attention of staff and clearly regard staff with deep affection. They follow the simple rules in place to ensure a pleasant and harmonious community. Residential pupils are considerate and respectful, giving encouragement to those of lesser ability. For example, in an indoor games session, all residential pupils participated fully, no matter what their disability. They all enjoyed the friendly (and noisy) competition, striving to win yet being gracious in defeat.

Residential pupils are able to express their views in a number of ways. There are regular meetings where all can have a say. For example, prior to the bathrooms being repainted, residential pupils were able to choose their preferred colours. They are consulted about the activities they prefer and what food they like.

Residential pupils are in good health. Good communication between the school, parents and health professionals ensures that residential pupils' well-being is consistently promoted. Those with potentially serious conditions, such as risk of seizures, are well protected by robust emergency plans which all staff are aware of.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of care received by residential pupils is good.

The staff group is highly experienced and very stable. All staff have a detailed knowledge and understanding of each residential pupils' needs. They provide a very caring and nurturing experience for residential pupils, placing their welfare at the heart of their practice. Links with education staff ensure that there is a consistency of response across the school day and into residence. There are plans to further develop these communication pathways.

Care plans are succinct, setting out the objectives for each residential pupil and how they will be achieved. One plan for a pupil who is looked after did not make his legal status clear, nor did the file contain minutes of looked after reviews. It is important for staff to have this information to hand. Some residential pupils have separate behaviour support plans which set out how challenging behaviour is best managed. It would be helpful for all residential pupils to have such

a plan, for example, to include guidance on how to respond to behaviour which demonstrates that the child is distressed or anxious. Progress against targets is regularly monitored and updated, enabling staff to evaluate how well each residential pupil is developing. Senior staff have begun to implement a new system for involving residential pupils more effectively in their care plans. This uses symbols so that all residential pupils can contribute their views.

Staff value the importance of providing a wide range of leisure activities for pupils. Recent reorganisation of the accommodation has created a hall which can be used for games such as Boccia. Residential pupils love this kind of activity, staff ensuring that everyone can be fully involved irrespective of their physical limitations. There are more sedate activities available, such as a wide range of board games and arts and crafts materials. In addition, using community facilities is a key aspect of the school's leisure programme. There are trips out to go shopping, to the cinema, parks, beaches, youth club, bowling, and restaurants. Using these activities helps residential pupils to feel connected to the community. It also has benefits for parents and children when they are at home. One parent said, 'The school has given me the confidence to take my child out in the community, she is much better behaved when we go to the cinema.'

Staff are effective in promoting the health and welfare of residential pupils. In day-to-day living, staff implement advice given by health workers such as physiotherapists. For example, staff were observed discreetly reminding one residential pupil to keep her free hand flat while eating. This maintains her physical flexibility and good posture, improving her comfort and well-being. Food is plentiful and nutritious, menus reflecting current guidance about salt and sugar content. Staff accommodate the individual preferences of residential pupils. Despite the best efforts of staff, some residential pupils, whose choices result in particularly limited diets, are resistant to change. In these cases, in consultation with nurses and dieticians, staff provide vitamin and mineral supplements to maintain good health. Medication arrangements are robust, promote the dignity of residential pupils, and very safe.

The accommodation is spotlessly clean, warm and welcoming. Residential pupils share bedrooms, but the way in which furniture is set out provides an appropriate degree of privacy. Residential pupils enjoy this arrangement, one saying 'I like sharing my room with my friends.'

Residential pupils' safety

Good

The residential provision is good at keeping residential pupils safe.

Because of the low turnover of staff there have been no new staff recruited for some time. Nevertheless, selection and vetting checks are rigorous. Occasionally, volunteers are used in the residential provision. These, too, undergo appropriate checking, and subsequent supervision, in accordance with statutory guidance. These safeguards ensure that only people who are suitable have access to residential pupils.

Staff, including those in support roles, have the necessary understanding of safeguarding policy and procedure. There is clear signposting of the routes staff need to take to report any concerns, including those about more senior staff. The school's governing body has a keen awareness of the importance of safeguarding, the chair of governors having particular expertise in this area. Bullying is not an issue within the residential setting. Although there is an anti-bullying policy in place, together with policy and guidance on e-safety and cyber bullying, homophobia is not specifically addressed. Staff have a good awareness of what bullying entails and how to manage it should it arise, although they have not had recent training in this area.

Because of the emphasis given by staff to maintaining safety, it is evident from the general presentation and behaviour of residential pupils that they feel very safe. One said, 'I like all the other children and all of the staff. I am happy and safe.' A parent confirmed her confidence in the

way that the residential provision protects her child, saying, 'The safety rules here are second to none.' The management of site safety is good. Fire procedures are robust, and all necessary checks on installations and equipment are carried out according to schedule. Access to the residential accommodation is secure.

There are no incidents of residential pupils running away. When they go out in the community with staff, some need close support and supervision to keep them safe as described in individual risk assessments. However, these risk assessments do not address all potential sources of harm. For example, some residential pupils are inappropriately physically affectionate with strangers, creating risks to their safety.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good.

There are two heads of care who report to the headteacher. One of them always leads each shift, ensuring consistency of care and providing strong leadership to the staff team. There are clear contingency plans in place to manage unforeseen absences. The stability of staffing arrangements ensures that the residential provision runs smoothly. This is important to residential pupils, many of whom find it difficult to cope with routines which are not predictable or secure.

Staff receive regular formal supervision and an annual appraisal. This support helps them to reflect on their practice and consider what further professional development they may need. Staff also value the availability of managers for informal discussion or support. There is a programme of training for staff which keeps their skills and knowledge updated, primarily in mandatory areas such as safeguarding and first aid. Some training is available online, making it easier for staff to complete in instalments. The staff rota is organised to ensure that there are always sufficient staff on duty to support residential pupils and help them to make progress. Staff instinctively know which children require a greater degree of assistance, for example at mealtimes, and deploy themselves accordingly. However, staff have little rostered time, away from children, to carry out key worker tasks, such as keeping case records up to date and to a reasonable standard. This also restricts their capacity for developmental activities, such as non-mandatory training.

The school has taken positive action to address all the failures to meet national minimum standards identified at the last inspection. All but one of the recommended points for improvement have also been addressed. Monitoring by external visitors is more robust, and they make themselves available for both staff and residential pupils to have confidential discussion if necessary. Additionally, managers are developing a new self-evaluation tool which will help to drive further improvement.

The ethos of the school is clear in its promotion of equality of opportunity. Daily practice within the residential provision embodies this principle. For example, for one residential pupil of non-British heritage, staff were creative in translating pre-referral information for parents into their native language. The residential staff keep parents up to date with what their children are doing and how they are progressing. Parents are appreciative of the skilled care that the school provides. One parent said, 'Staff are really approachable – I will miss this place when my daughter leaves.'

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	19
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	7 to 19
Headteacher	Mr Colin Bradshaw
Date of previous boarding inspection	25/02/2014
Telephone number	01665 602541
Email address	admin@barndalehouse.northumberland.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

