

Barndale House School

Howling Lane, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 1DQ

Inspection dates 14–15 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Barndale House School is a good and improving school. The strong leadership provided by the headteacher and senior leadership team has led to good teaching and achievement across the whole school.
- Middle leaders share the headteacher’s vision for the school and are determined, through their monitoring activities, to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Governors have a sound understanding of the school’s performance. Its members challenge and support the leadership team and gather first-hand information on how well the school is doing, from their frequent visits.
- Achievement is good overall because, from their low starting points, pupils make good progress in the development of their literacy, communication and numeracy skills.
- Teaching over time, and in most subjects, is consistently good and sometimes outstanding.
- Pupils feel safe, behave well and say they are happy in school. Attendance is good.
- Early years provision is good and enables children to make good progress over time so that they are ready for learning in Year 1.
- The sixth form is well led by the deputy headteacher. Students make good progress both academically and in learning life skills which support them well for the next steps in their education or training.
- The curriculum is skilfully adapted to match the needs and interests of all pupils. Furthermore, the school works hard to raise the pupils’ self-esteem and understanding of British values thus preparing them very well for life in modern Britain.
- The school is highly thought of by parents and the local authority and has been selected by the authority to provide support and training to other local, mainstream schools.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Classroom activities do not always provide sufficient challenge in order for the most able pupils to do as well as they can.
- The balance between help and support during lessons is not always used effectively to encourage the most able pupils to learn independently.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited classes and carried out two joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, governors and two representatives from the local authority.
- Discussions were held both formally and informally with pupils about their experiences in school.
- The inspector attended a school assembly.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including information about pupils' performance and progress, their written work, procedures for safeguarding and for monitoring attendance, the school's improvement planning and minutes of governors' meetings.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents spoken to during the inspection, of responses to a recent internal school parent questionnaire, the 21 completed staff questionnaires and the 10 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Maureen Coleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Barndale House School is a small specialist school with residential provision catering for pupils between the ages of two and 19 years.
- The school serves pupils with a diversity of learning difficulties including severe and profound learning difficulties, sensory and physical disabilities, and autism.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision and children in the Reception class attend full time.
- A small number of pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- Most students are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much larger than the national average. These are pupils who are eligible for support through pupil premium funding. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school is a part of the Dales (Blyth) Teaching School Alliance, a partner school with Schools North East and a member of the Federation of Leaders in Special Education.
- Barndale House School residential provision is subject to a separate inspection. The report can be viewed at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the existing strengths in teaching and enable pupils to make even better progress by ensuring that:
 - activities are consistently challenging for the most able pupils in literacy and numeracy
 - most able pupils take more responsibility for their own learning to enable them to work at a faster pace.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is passionate about meeting the needs of every pupil. He has a strong commitment to excellence and has assembled a workforce that shares his vision and drive to create an outstanding school over time.
- A culture of high expectations permeates throughout the school, where all staff are dedicated to supporting pupils' academic and personal development. Good relations are fostered with everyone and discrimination in all its forms is robustly tackled.
- Senior leaders have built on the many strengths found in the previous inspection and they work continuously to improve the school and find new solutions to pupils' difficulties.
- Middle leaders have established their role and contribute effectively, through their work in checking the progress of every child, to the honest and accurate self-evaluation the school has of its performance.
- The quality of teaching is regularly checked by the senior leadership team and its members provide good guidance to teachers on what is working well and how pupils' progress could be promoted even better. However, there is limited challenge in some literacy and numeracy lessons for the most able pupils to achieve as well as they can, and limited opportunities for such pupils to develop independence and reflect on their learning.
- Rigorous procedures for monitoring teachers' performance are firmly in place and ensure that only the most effective teachers are rewarded.
- Robust assessment procedures are well established and leaders carefully record and track the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils within the school. Assessment focuses very much on the progress that pupils make in relation to their starting points and against their individual targets, which are broken down into very small steps.
- Leadership in the early years and sixth form is good. Staff have an accurate view of pupils' performance and are fully aware of their accountability for pupils' achievements.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to provide good support for disadvantaged pupils to help them catch up with their classmates. The provision of individual programmes of study for these pupils is having a good impact on their attitudes to learning and on the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The sport premium funding is used well to enhance the curriculum and increase the number of pupils engaging in physical activity. It also enables the school to offer an increasing range of sporting activities and opportunities for pupils to take part in local competitive sporting events.
- Staff morale is high and many staff say how privileged they feel being part of 'such a wonderful school'.
- The exciting, well adapted and relevant curriculum does much to engage and motivate pupils to learn. They learn about different faiths and cultures and how to keep themselves safe, including on the internet. This, together with the experience they gain when they take part in the democratic process of electing school councillors and school ambassadors, prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The advice and careers guidance provided for older pupil enables them to contribute to and make informed choices about their next steps after leaving Barndale House School.
- Pupils are encouraged to use their understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to develop their reading skills and support their learning across the curriculum.
- The school promotes spiritual, social, moral and cultural development well and equality of opportunity is paramount, successfully creating a culture and ethos for pupils to strive to do well in all that they do.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and meet current requirements. Policies and procedures are well understood and implemented by staff, and all staff are appropriately trained in child protection procedures.
- The local authority provides good support and recognises the significant skills and expertise that staff have in Barndale House School. As a consequence, the school has been selected to be part of a pilot scheme within the authority, providing outreach support to staff in other, mainstream schools.
- The school works well with parents and a range of therapists and agencies. Parents appreciate the regular and pertinent information they receive from the school about all aspects of their child's development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There is good governance of the school. Governors visit the school regularly to get first-hand information on pupils' progress and achievements. They share the headteacher's vision and commitment to do everything possible to meet the needs of all pupils.
 - They work closely with the senior leadership team and keep a close eye on how well the pupils are doing, making sure that any extra support is deployed effectively.

- Governors have a clear understanding of how the school promotes tolerance and prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.
- They make decisions based on a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Their monitoring of the school's work, together with training that they have undertaken, means that governors have a good knowledge of the school's performance. This enables them to hold the school robustly to account and ensure that performance is closely matched to pay progression.
- Members of the governing body make sure that the school is financially stable. Through looking at data about pupils' progress they check the school's effectiveness in the spending of pupil premium funding and satisfy themselves it is having a positive effect on the progress of pupils for whom it was intended.
- Governors meet their statutory duties, ensuring that the school has appropriate systems for safeguarding pupils and that these are fully understood by all staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils love school and demonstrate very positive attitudes towards their learning.
- The school is a calm and harmonious place in which to learn. Relationships are a strength of the school and the positive, exemplary care that staff show towards the pupils underpins much of the school's work. Pupils are treated with the utmost dignity and respect. Pupils who were able to express their views were unanimous in their enthusiasm about school and appreciated the many additional activities, for example the summer school, available to them.
- Attendance is good. Any authorised absence is as a result of serious medical conditions and pupils' need for ongoing medical attention.
- The school has highly effective systems in place for managing pupils' behaviour and those pupils who need them, have comprehensive behaviour management plans.
- School records and pupils say that there is no bullying. Pupils try very hard to get along with everyone. The school diligently teaches them about the different forms of bullying, including homophobic, racist and other forms of bullying based on prejudice.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils are confident, relaxed, happy and feel safe and secure.
- The school provides outstanding care for all its pupils some of whom need sensitive personal support. Furthermore, pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, especially on the internet, and show a willingness to support each other in understanding school rules and being good role models to other pupils.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are scrupulously followed and the protection of all pupils is the major priority for all staff. Pupils are very well supervised at all times and risk assessments for all aspects of pupils' care are detailed and very well monitored.

The quality of teaching is good

- The standard of work in pupils' books and their improving rates of progress in reading, writing, communication and mathematics demonstrate that teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding. However, some work in pupils' books and some activities in lessons show that the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged or given opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. This slows their progress.
- Marking is detailed and consistent, and pupils received instant feedback on their work. Next steps are clearly identified and written comments linked to pupils' targets.
- Lessons are interesting, purposeful and productive. Activities are well planned and teachers have a good understanding of each pupil's learning difficulties.
- The teaching of phonics promotes the development of early reading skills well. Pupils make good progress in their reading and enjoy a range of reading material appropriate to their individual interests and abilities.

- Teachers and teaching assistants use imaginative ways to engage and maintain pupils' interest in their learning. For example, in an art lesson, pupils were learning about Rangoli spice paintings. The teacher capitalised on their enthusiasm by developing their sensory and cultural awareness, providing opportunities for the pupils to touch, smell and describe a range of spices before deciding on the ones they liked.
- In literacy, pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills. In a lesson focussed on the book 'Stig of the Dump' pupils effectively used their knowledge of phonics to support their writing.
- Communication, at a variety of levels, is taught well, particularly in the early years, preparing children well for learning in Year 1.
- In mathematics pupils are given practical problem-solving tasks, providing them with good opportunities to develop life skills preparing them well for life in today's society.
- Good use of pupil progress information ensures that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are mostly accurate although, for the most able pupils, these are not always high enough.

The achievement of pupils is good

- As a result of pupils' complex learning difficulties, their attainment when they first join the school is well below that expected for their age.
- Achievement is good because pupils make sustained progress in reading, writing, communication and mathematics throughout the school, including in the early years and in the sixth form.
- The rate of progress and level of attainment for all pupils is increasing each year. However, the most able pupils do not always reach the levels of which they are capable due to the lack of challenge in some activities.
- The teaching of reading is high profile across the school. As pupils move through the school they make good progress, recognising shapes and then letters and the sounds that letters make. Some pupils progress even further, enjoying reading and discussing increasingly complex texts and books.
- There is no discernible difference in achievement between different groups of pupils, including boys and girls, those known to be eligible for additional funding and those from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- All students leaving the sixth form gain a range of accredited qualifications and the school does not use early entry for examinations.
- Children in the early years make good and sustained progress in relation to their starting points as a result of well planned activities, carefully matched to their abilities and needs.
- In the sixth form students gain confidence and are provided with opportunities to utilise their skills through daily activities promoting good progress and attainment. For example, they use their mathematical knowledge and understanding of money to shop for items in the local shops.

The early years provision is good

- All children enter the early years with low levels of attainment. Teachers and teaching assistants carefully analyse their needs and abilities and provide personalised learning, so that they get off to a flying start when they join the school.
- Different groups of children make good progress in all areas of learning, and especially in the development of their communication skills, preparing them well for learning in Year 1.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. The leader provides clear direction and support, ensuring that high expectations pervade all activities.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and, sometimes, outstanding. This results in children being eager to learn, well behaved and responding positively to instructions given by staff.
- Children grow in confidence and begin to make choices by seeking out preferred activities and resources. Staff are skilled and swiftly adapt activities to ensure that children maintain interest and that good learning takes place.
- Adults effectively check on children's' progress and record detailed observations, through photographic evidence and written reports. These are shared with parents, which successfully keeps them informed of their child's development and progress.

- Home visits and close working with parents and other agencies, mean that children's needs are identified as precisely as possible and that positive, trusting relationships exist between home and school.
- The children are kept safe and secure as a result of robust policies and procedures which are well understood and followed by all staff.

The sixth form provision**is good**

- The sixth form is well led and managed. It provides a highly adapted curriculum to support the development of life skills and growing confidence for all students.
- Due consideration is given to the programmes of study offered to students, to ensure that they are closely matched to their individual needs and interests.
- Good teaching and high expectations enable all students working at Entry Level 1 to 3 to gain a range of accredited qualifications prior to leaving school.
- Progress and achievement in English, mathematics and communication skills are good, as a result of the high focus placed on these areas of study. However, the most able students do not always achieve the highest standards of which they are capable in English and mathematics. This is due to the limited challenge in the level of some of their work and restricted opportunities available for them to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Relationships between students and staff are exceptional. Staff are passionate about students making the most of their time in the sixth form and being well prepared for the next stage in their lives.
- Students undertake work experience placements in a range of venues and receive good career advice which helps them develop the necessary skills for future employment and study. It also prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is exemplary. Students are excellent role models for other pupils and highly effective ambassadors for the school within the local community.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122384
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	449492

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Nicholls
Headteacher	Colin Bradshaw
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2012
Telephone number	01665 602541
Fax number	01665 606370
Email address	admin@barndalehouse.northumberland.sch.uk

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