

# Barndale House Special School

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

## Inspection dates

29/09/2015 to 01/10/2015

## The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Requires improvement 3**

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement 3

How well children and young people are protected

Good 2

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement 3

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision requires improvement because

- The school has not addressed all the points for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Leaders and managers have not acted with sufficient urgency to make improvements in documentation. This has led to inconsistency in the quality of care plans and risk assessments for individual children and young people.
- Information about the complaints procedure is not in a suitable format for children and young people to understand.
- Children and young people greatly enjoy their time here and make good progress. Parents report that their children improve their social skills and are better prepared for adult life.
- Residential staff are caring and enthusiastic. They are very well supported by experienced and dedicated managers. However, managers would benefit from making links with similar settings in order to improve the service to children and young people.
- The school keeps children and young people safe. Behaviour is excellent and children and young people relate well to each other and to staff.

## **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

21.1 The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day to day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans.

6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

22.1 Every child has an accurate, permanent record of their history and progress which can be read by the child at any time (except where the data controller is not obliged to supply the information to the child), and add personal statements or statements correcting errors.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consider making links with managers in similar settings to develop practice and keep in touch with developments within the sector.
- Ensure that information about the complaints policy is in a format which children and young people can understand.

## Information about this inspection

The school was given notice of the inspection two hours before it commenced. The inspectors met with the headteacher, heads of care, several residential and support staff, and a number of children and young people individually and in small groups. The inspectors scrutinised school policies and procedures, general records and individual case files, and analysed responses from Parent View. In addition, the lead inspector contacted two parents by telephone. Inspectors observed routines at various times of the day, including breakfast, tea time, and early evening activities.

## Inspection team

Nick Murphy	Lead social care inspector
Debbie White	Social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Barndale House School is a local authority residential special school for children and young people who have a statement of special educational needs. The school provides a residential service for up to 18 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.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

### Requires improvement

Pupils enjoy staying in the residential provision. They make friendships with other children and form close and trusting relationships with staff. They demonstrate this with appropriate expressions of affection such as giving hugs, and wanting to share activities with staff. Children often act cooperatively to help each other out and are sensitive to each other's moods.

The residential experience enables children to take part in activities that otherwise might be denied to them. One parent said, 'My child loves it, the best thing for him is the stimulation, it gives him a chance to meet people of his own age, and do things which we could never get him to do. It gives him confidence. He's always full of it when he comes home.'

In the daily routine there is a seamless transition between the residential provision and the school, which promotes academic progress. One of the independent people who makes monitoring visits to the school said, 'There is a lot more communication between the education staff and the residential side, it has always been good but has improved.' Arrangements for health care are satisfactory.

The headteacher and the heads of care are experienced and know the needs of the children and young people well. They are committed to improving the accommodation in order to offer a service to a wider range of children. For example, work is well advanced to provide a lift to enable wheelchair users to use the provision. There are always sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of each individual child. This means that the particular challenges that each child has are effectively addressed through the close personal support that staff provide. For example, some children need extra support to brush their teeth properly, or to eat their meals, and staff give one-to-one attention to provide this. Care staff record the progress that children and young people make in several formats within case files. These are not consistent and some are not as up to date as others. This limits the school's ability to understand or evidence the impact that the residential provision has on pupils and thus to address any shortfalls.

The school is good at safeguarding children and young people and as a result children feel safe. Staff understand and put into practice the policies and procedures which protect children, although risk assessments on individual children require greater management oversight. Children are able to express their views in daily interaction with staff. They make choices about their meals and what activities they prefer. In addition, children have regular formal meetings with staff to make their opinions known. Staff enable even those children with the most challenging communication needs to have a voice in the life of the residential community.

Children become more confident and develop their abilities as a result of staying in residence. They increase their awareness of the need for give-and-take in relationships through living in a group where everyone's needs have to be considered. They gain skills which will be of use to them in later life, for example, going to the shop with a member

of staff and learning about money. The progress that children and young people make in acquiring self-care skills is recorded through formal accreditation. A parent said, 'My child's social skills and ability to be independent would be nowhere near they are if he hadn't had the chance to come here. He is as independent as he can possibly be at this stage in his life.'

## **The quality of care and support**

### **Requires improvement**

Staff have a good knowledge of each child's individual needs and what level of support they require in daily living. They take pride in helping children to make progress and celebrate any positive developments. For example, one child had recently washed her own hair for the first time without the assistance of staff. She was very pleased with herself and received copious praise from staff for this achievement.

Communication between staff is effective, information about children being passed over both verbally and in writing. However, written care plans are inconsistent in quality. Some do not include all areas of importance, for example, where advice has been given by physiotherapists about how to improve a child's mobility. Risk assessments on children are not always linked to the written plan of day-to-day management. For example, one describes how to respond if the child has a seizure, but there is nothing in the plan referring to this. There has been an attempt to make the plans more child-friendly and include children's views but this remains an area of development. In addition, some children are looked after by the local authority but there is no reference within the case file to the outcomes of looked after reviews. These shortcomings mean that there is the potential for children's quality of care to be inconsistent.

The residential accommodation is spotlessly clean. Staff and managers do well in making the rather institutional building as homely and welcoming as possible. They have successfully sought funding to modify the accommodation to make it accessible by children with mobility issues, though further work remains to be done to make it fully suitable. Additional improvements include the provision of a separate arts and crafts room, widening the range of activities which children can enjoy.

The school promotes healthy living. There is an emphasis on outdoor activities, staff taking advantage of the school's proximity to the coast to take children on beach outings. In addition, the grounds themselves provide excellent resources for children and young people, with stimulating play areas and facilities for outdoor education. The school is well supported by registered nursing staff, who provide training for staff in the administration of emergency medication. Routine medication is managed effectively and safely. The school provides children and young people with plentiful food of good quality. Kitchen staff accommodate children's likes and dislikes while working with care staff to encourage children to try new things and have a more balanced diet.

## How well children and young people are protected

**Good**

The school keeps children safe within the residential provision. Staff understand the different vulnerabilities of each child and what they need to do in everyday living to keep them safe. This understanding is underpinned by individual risk assessments, but these are sometimes lacking in depth and the areas that they address. Although in practice children's safety is not compromised, such shortfalls affect the consistency of approach in reducing to the minimum potential sources of harm.

For those children who have limited communication, staff are able to interpret their physical presentation and so be aware if they are distressed or uncomfortable. There are clear procedures in place about how staff should respond to any concerns or complaints. Allegations against staff, though extremely rare, are dealt with promptly and in complete accordance with statutory guidance and local procedure.

The high staffing ratios ensure that children are supervised very effectively both within the residential setting and when out in the community. As a result, there has never been an incident where a child has gone missing. Nevertheless, there are clear policies in place (which are consistent with the local authority and police protocols) to manage such an incident safely.

The bullying policy has been reviewed and updated since the last inspection and addresses all forms of potential bullying. In practice, staff monitor the interaction between children and young people very closely. They give praise when children act kindly to one another and act swiftly to manage any friction or disagreement. This effectively reduces the incidence of bullying to zero.

Staff are good at managing children's challenging behaviour. They fully understand why children sometimes act in this way and respond sensitively and consistently. As part of the care planning process, each child has a behaviour support plan which describes triggers for possible outbursts and ways of dealing with them. These are updated every six months, although the latest one is not always held within the residential file. Staff are trained in how to manage behaviour, and in particular how to keep everyone safe by the use of techniques such as diversion and distraction. It is commendable that there has never been the need to use physical restraint within the residential provision.

The residential accommodation itself is safe. Managers work with other agencies, for example the fire service, to ensure that any changes to the premises do not result in unforeseen risks. The recruitment process for new staff is very robust and ensures that only people who are suitable to work with children are appointed.

Senior staff within the residential provision are qualified and very experienced. They work closely with the headteacher who regards the residential element as integral to the school as a whole. Staff find the quality of leadership supportive and enabling. One said, 'Both heads of care are fantastic role models, both for ourselves and the children.'

Managers have been slow in implementing points for improvement made at the last inspection. As a result, three national minimum standards are not met. Senior staff have little contact with other professionals who provide similar services. This denies them the opportunity to learn of good practice elsewhere and so drive improvement.

The staff team is well established, with very little turnover. This provides stability and consistency for children. Following resolution of some uncertainty about the school's budget, two additional residential staff have been appointed. This enhances the quality of care not only by increasing staff numbers but also by widening the diversity of age and gender in the team. All but one of the staff are qualified, and new staff complete a thorough induction process to ensure that they are ready to take on the role. The training programme is well planned and ensures that all staff keep their skills refreshed and updated. Senior staff provide formal supervision at regular intervals, and each member of staff has their performance appraised regularly.

Monitoring of the residential provision is satisfactory. The reporting format for independent visitors has been improved and provides more assurance that children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted.

Policies and procedures are generally satisfactory. However, although the complaints procedure is robust, it is not produced in a format which all children are capable of understanding.



## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122384
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC041487
<b>DfE registration number</b>	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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	18
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	2 to19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Colin Bradshaw
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	10/02/2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01665 602541
<b>Email address</b>	admin@barndalehouse.northumberland.sch.uk

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