

# Barndale House Special School

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

## Inspection dates

20/03/2017–22/03/2017

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

### Requires improvement

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision requires improvement because

- Not all children's and young people's progress is recorded, monitored and evaluated.
- Children and young people do not receive support from allocated key workers within appropriate timescales.
- Risk assessments need further improvement to ensure that they fully reflect children's current behaviours and individual health needs.
- Care plans do not comprehensively detail children's complex care needs.
- Partnership working between the residential provision and the school is not wholly effective.
- The residential provision is not yet an integral part of the school.
- Some staff do not have communication skills, such as sign language, to enable them to support children and young people in line with their personal communication plans.
- There is a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities at all levels. Staff sickness is affecting the manager's capacity to monitor the quality of the provision effectively and further develop the service.
- Governors' reports do not assist the residential provision to improve because the findings following each visit are not evaluated to assist the manager in raising standards of care.

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

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

- 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.
- 21.2 Each child has at least one key worker (or similar person) within the school who provides individual guidance and support to the child. They regularly make time available to the child to enable the child to seek guidance, advice and support on any matter. They monitor the school's compliance on a day-to-day basis with the child's placement plan.
- 20.2 Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:
  - checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children;
  - evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded;
  - 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).
- 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.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consider a review and evaluation of staff roles and responsibilities at all levels within the residential provision.
- Continue to improve the quality of care plans. In particular, ensure that individual children's complex needs are comprehensively detailed in care plans for staff to follow.
- Continue to develop training which specifically meets individual's needs. In particular, in relation to sign language and children's varying communication needs.
- Strengthen links and practice between the residential provision and the school with a focus on incorporating the boarding element as an integral part of the school.
- Consider making links with other residential providers in order to further develop and improve practice.

## Information about this inspection

The headteacher received one hour and forty-five minutes notice of this inspection. The inspector worked closely with the headteacher and heads of care. The inspector spoke to a wide selection of staff throughout the inspection. Some staff were spoken to alone and others in a group. Time was spent talking to and observing children and young people. The inspector spent time observing children and young people over two evenings both in the residential provision and in the community. The inspector joined the breakfast routines, after school events and observed teatime activities. The inspector spoke to the head governor and safeguarding governor. The inspector had further conversations with parents and social workers. Parental views were collated from the Ofsted Parent View website during the inspection. The inspector consulted a representative from the local authority safeguarding team and examined a range of policies and records in relation to the safeguarding and care of residential children and young people.

## Inspection team

Jamie Richardson

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 seven 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

Children and young people experience a warm and caring approach from staff who know them very well. Children and young people enjoy a range of activities both on-site and in the community such as youth clubs, shopping and trips to the cafe. This enhances their life experiences and social skills. Consequently, children and young people enjoy their stays here and look forward to coming. One parent commented about her child, 'She is happy to go. She loves it there.'

Children and young people acquire a range of skills that will increase their independence in later life, such as managing money and learning to wash and dress themselves. The tracking of children's and young people's progress is inconsistent. Some children and young people have clear targets and make good progress. For other children and young people, there is no evidence of their goals and achievements. This leaves some children and young people without complete records of their successes and without clear objectives to work towards.

Children and young people make good progress academically. Individual children's and young people's personal and social development targets are not shared across both the residential provision and the school. This is not a consistent approach and means that staff members do not reinforce the learning of life skills across both settings.

The school has clear safeguarding procedures, which staff are confident to follow. One social worker commented, 'I am confident they understand safeguarding procedures and would follow them if they needed [to].' Some improvements have been made to risk assessments since the last inspection. Further improvements are required to ensure that the assessment of risk is reviewed following any changes in children's and young people's behaviours and needs.

Children's and young people's residential stays are well organised. Managers ensure that they match the individual's needs well. This enables children and young people to get the best out of each visit. The senior management monitoring of the residential provision, and children's and young people's progress and care, is not consistent. Since the last inspection, work has been successfully completed towards meeting standards and recommendations. However, national minimum standards are not yet being consistently met. Management monitoring systems require further review to ensure that positive developments for children, young people and the service overall are sustained.

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

Requires improvement

Children and young people benefit from a very nurturing approach by staff. Links between school and residential staff require improvement to ensure that all staff understand children's and young people's social, emotional and educational objectives. This will ensure that children and young people receive a consistent approach across the whole school.

New children and young people are warmly welcomed into the residential provision. Staged transitions help them to settle quickly and become familiar with the environment. Key workers for new children and young people are not always allocated within reasonable timescales. This leaves new children and young people with a lack of personal oversight around their individual care and progress while they are settling in.

A recent review of care plans ensures that they now contain all the factual information required. Some plans still lack details about the specific support that some children and young people need. This could affect the consistency and quality of care that children and young people receive. Some plans do not demonstrate that they have been reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain up to date. Other plans do not show evidence of consultation with families and placing authorities regarding children's and young people's progress and care.

Staff value children's and young people's views. They support children and young people to make personal choices. For example, around their food and activities with the use of symbols and pictures. However, staff's use of communication systems with children and young people is not always consistent. This has the potential to cause some children and young people confusion and limits their ability to make choices. Some staff have more experience than others in using sign language. This mixture of experience means that some children's and young people's communication is not consistently promoted in line with their personal plans.

Children and young people enjoy a varied diet. The cook knows each individual well. The cook works closely with the school nurse and medical professionals to ensure that children and young people receive the specific nutrients and specialised diets that they require. The cook consults with children and young people in designing menus. The cook's flexible approach to food ensures that individual likes and dislikes are catered for.

Staff manage children's and young people's complex health needs well. The school nurse works closely with residential staff to ensure that children and young people receive the high levels of daily healthcare that some children and young people need.

### **How well children and young people are protected**

Requires improvement

Improvements to individual risk assessments are not consistent for all children and young people. Some do not demonstrate regular review as behaviours change. Assessments do not always contain specific detail on how individual's risks should be managed and monitored. Although staff know individuals very well, this leaves room for inconsistency in approaches and lacks a clear assessment of safe methods in dealing with health issues or behaviours that may put children and young people at risk.

Staff demonstrate good knowledge of safeguarding procedures and they all feel confident to use them in practice. Strong links with the local authority safeguarding officer and social workers ensure effective sharing of information to safeguard children and young people.

Staff manage any instances of challenging behaviour positively. Their excellent knowledge of each child and young person means that they detect the subtlest of signs,

which may indicate that children and young people are becoming distressed. Consequently, this enables staff to quickly redirect behaviours without the use of any physical intervention.

Staff model relationships around trust and respect. As a result of this approach, there is no bullying and children and young people enjoy positive relationships with staff and each other. Children and young people benefit from a well-maintained environment, which provides them with safe areas to sleep and play.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers** Requires improvement

The dedicated residential managers work hard to ensure that children's and young people's visits are well organised so that they enjoy their stay. They spend a lot of time working directly with children and young people. This time has increased recently due to them covering staff who are currently away from work. Staff sickness and a lack of clarity around staff roles at all levels are hindering improvements needed to the monitoring and oversight of care practice and progress.

Regular visits by school governors provide a basic oversight of care practice. They undertake a range of checks with a particular focus on safeguarding. Reports lack evaluation of their findings, particularly in relation to the effectiveness of care and safeguarding practice. As a result, managers do not fully benefit from this monitoring as it does not enable them to consider changes where necessary.

Information sharing between the residential provision and school regarding children's and young people's current support systems is not integrated. Similarly, monitoring processes between the residential provision and school are not fully combined. As a result, the residential provision is not yet an integral part of the school.

The experienced and stable staff team members feel well supported by their managers. Due to this support, they enjoy working in the residential provision and are committed to providing children and young people with an enjoyable stay. Staff receive regular supervision, which helps them to feel confident to undertake their role.

Staff benefit from regular mandatory training. Staff training is developing positively to ensure that staff acquire further understanding of children's and young people's specific needs. For example, staff are due to undertake a course which will expand their knowledge of autistic spectrum disorder.

This service is not fully functioning in line with its statement of purpose. Shortfalls identified through this inspection demonstrate that there are a range of areas for improvement.

## 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>	39
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	2 to 19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Colin Bradshaw
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	29/09/2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01665 602541
<b>Email address</b>	admin@barndalehouse.northumberland.sch.uk

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