

Inspection of Barndale House School

Howling Lane, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 1DQ

Inspection dates: 3–4 December 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This school has been through a difficult period. However, since the arrival of the new headteacher in September 2019, the school is improving at a pace. The headteacher knows the pupils well and has made sure that they are safe in school. Pupils like and trust him. Pupils talk about changes made that help them, for example in being kind to others and being polite to everyone.

Nevertheless, pupils' learning and experiences of school are varied. Behaviour in some classes is not calm or well managed, which does not support pupils' learning.

Some pupils enjoy experiences such as hosting radio shows and taking part in forest schools. During the inspection, older pupils were enjoying preparing for the upcoming pantomime performance.

Pupils feel safe. Most are happy at school. They attend regularly. Pupils are confident that bullying does not take place, but understand that some pupils find it hard to understand how to 'be a good friend'. Pupils are confident that adults will help them if they are concerned. Pupils receive the social support they need.

There are some positive changes taking place in school. For example, there has been a stronger focus on training for staff around safeguarding and promoting more positive behaviour.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The quality of education is variable. Sometimes, pupils experience disconnected activities rather than a well-designed and coherent curriculum. Teachers generally take account of pupils' individual needs and targets. However, sometimes they do not make sure that pupils' next steps are as precise as they could be.

The new headteacher has set about making improvements in school. He has improved the policies, training and records relating to safeguarding. He has developed a new curriculum. The way that this is delivered in classrooms is varied. School leaders know this and are working to improve this further.

Until very recently, adults have not been given sufficient training to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils. They did not provide carefully considered learning activities to help pupils make small but important steps of progress. This has improved. However, expectations of what pupils can achieve across subjects are not consistently high. Sometimes, pupils complete the same activity, even if the task is too easy. Teachers' subject knowledge is too variable.

Not all school staff are yet aware of how to support children to develop reading skills. Some children need to develop their phonic knowledge further to help them to learn to read. The books they are reading are not well matched to their reading

ability. For pupils who are developing basic communication skills, teachers use a variety of strategies to help them to express their needs.

Leaders have not trained staff well enough to manage the behaviour expectations in classrooms. There is a lack of consistency between staff. This had led to areas in school not being calm places of learning. Some pupils are unsettled. Older pupils spoke about days when behaviour was weaker in class as the teacher for that day did not manage the behaviour in the way that other adults do. The headteacher is aware of this and has plans to support staff to develop the skills they need.

Leaders and teachers cater for many aspects of pupils' personal development successfully. For example, in the sixth form, students develop independence skills through lessons and community visits. Some host a show on a local radio station. For some in the sixth form, assessment has been used to design a meaningful curriculum. However, for others, the curriculum does not offer enough challenge or reflect their ability.

Leaders work closely with local colleges and external careers guidance professionals to support students' successful transition to the next stage of education or suitable meaningful provision.

Provision in early years has been poor. In the past, children were often given a jumbled, unconnected series of activities. Now, activities that are planned for individual children are more closely linked to targets in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Children are safe, respected and well cared for.

The headteacher has accurately identified the strengths of the school and where it needs to improve. Teachers welcome the improvements that the new headteacher has made. The school has faced challenges in the past that have affected staff morale. Most staff expressed their understanding that some things needed to improve.

Governors and school leaders are keen to accept the help on offer from the local authority. One member of staff explained that there was 'a lot to do'. The school is on the right track.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know the pupils and families well. Leaders take pupils' welfare seriously. They have updated policies and practices in school. The training for staff has become more robust. Staff act quickly to report concerns. The headteacher works effectively with external agencies. He is persistent in making sure that pupils get the support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum plans are not firmly established. Plans, which are in their early stages, have yet to be refined or implemented consistently. Pupils have not been taught in a way that builds on their previous knowledge until recently. They have gaps in their skills as a result. Leaders need to make sure that comprehensive plans are in place and adhered to by all teachers.
- The assessment of pupils' skills and knowledge is variable. Assessment has sometimes been based on work that has been over-supported by staff or for which targets have been too easy. Leaders need to make sure that assessment is accurate and that it is used effectively to help individual pupils to reach their potential.
- Reading books are not well matched to pupils' reading ability because the required books are not available to the teaching staff. This means that pupils are not developing their reading skills as well as they could. Leaders need to establish which resources are needed and ensure that these resources are available.
- Behaviour in classrooms is not always conducive to learning. Leaders need to make sure that there is a better understanding among teachers and support staff around creating a calm classroom that supports pupils' positive behaviour for learning.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	122384
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10119940
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of students in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Christopher Benjamin
Headteacher	Daley Barber-Allen
Website	www.barndalehouse.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 July 2015

Information about this school

- The current headteacher commenced employment in September 2019.
- The school provides education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils have an EHC plan.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- Inspectors visited classes in a range of subjects. We did deep dives in reading, mathematics, science and preparation for adulthood.

- We observed pupils interacting with staff in lessons and considered the work pupils produced. We spoke with teachers and support staff about different aspects of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and leaders in school. We spoke with two representatives from the local authority. A meeting was held with the chair of governors and other representatives of the governing body.
- We reviewed a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding records and the single central register. We considered behaviour records, attendance information and information regarding the use of physical intervention.
- We also considered the 13 responses to the Ofsted parent and carer questionnaire.
- On 15 January 2020, an additional visit was made to the school by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Ofsted Inspector to gather additional evidence in order to complete the inspection. The visit focused on the quality of education, leadership and management, and early years education.
- During the additional visit, we spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders, including members of the governing body. We visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and considered curriculum plans.

Inspection team

Catherine Garton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Dent	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Wardle	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Barton	Ofsted Inspector

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