

Education and residential inspection summary for Bowden House School

Firle Road, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2JB

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 November 2023

Outcome

The education overall effectiveness judgement is: good

The judgement for the experiences and progress of children in the boarding provision is: outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

- Staff establish strong and caring relationships with their pupils, who are happy, secure and feel respected as a result. Sometimes, pupils find school hard. Staff understand this. They get to know pupils very well and make sure that they feel well supported and comfortable.
- The school's family atmosphere makes a significant contribution to pupils' growing self-esteem and to their sense of belonging. For instance, the dining hall is prepared with care to provide a warm and welcoming space for pupils to enjoy breakfast and lunch. Parents appreciate the care and support provided for their children. One commented: 'Moving to this area and getting our son into this school was one of the best things we did.'
- Pupils have individual plans to support their learning and development. Staff follow these plans carefully to ensure a consistent response throughout the school day. Well-established routines and clear expectations mean that pupils can feel confident about what each day will bring.
- Lessons are undisturbed by poor behaviour, and staff respond calmly and consistently when this is not the case. This view is shared by pupils. Adults are skilled in spotting the early signs that a pupil is struggling and act swiftly to avoid pupils' frustrations from escalating.

The inspectors made **two recommendations** to help the school improve, covering the reading curriculum and governors' roles in holding leaders to account.

What is it like to board at this school?

- Comprehensive planning supports children and their parents or carers when children first join the residential provision. Children's initial plans capture essential information to help make moves a success and lead to effective placement planning for the children throughout their stay. Plans are reviewed termly to track and inform children's targets. This work is carried out in collaboration with the team around the child and is child focused.
- Children make exceptional progress from their starting points. For example, they achieve positive exam results, which give them future opportunities in further education.
- Relationships between staff and children are strong. Children feel able to speak to staff about any concerns that they have. There is a mentoring and anti-bullying committee. Senior leaders are acutely aware of the fact that bullying does and can happen, and they take a proactive approach to tackling this. Children feel safe and that they can talk to staff about any worries or concerns.
- The children are supported by staff who genuinely care about them. Staff are committed to ensuring that children have positive experiences and make great progress. Staff are proud of children's achievements and enjoy watching them 'grow'. Many children go on to further education, learn to travel independently and gain life skills. One child commented, 'I wouldn't have made the progress that I have without the support from the staff at the school.'
- Sensitive consideration is given to children who may not arrive fully prepared for school. For example, staff ensure that children have a freshly pressed and washed school uniform waiting for them when they arrive. Staff also provide sports equipment, such as football boots, when required. Consequently, children feel cared for, are more confident and feel part of their peer group.
- The staff proactively ensure that children's health needs are met. There are strong links between health professionals and the school, supported by the student and family co-ordinator. For many children, the staff take an active lead in arranging routine health appointments that may have been missed in the family home. The children and staff are also supported by the school's on site specialist child and adolescent mental health practitioner, who provides extensive support when needed.
- Outreach activities are provided for the children during the school holidays to ensure that they have continued opportunities while away from the school. For many children, this gives them the chance to be active and maintain the positive relationships that they have with the staff. Staff arrange the activities in their holiday break, going above and beyond to offer outstanding care to children.
- The home environment is personalised, and bedrooms are reflective of children's personalities. The housekeeping team ensures that the accommodation is warm,

clean and well maintained. There are pictures of the children and staff on the walls, and children's bedrooms are well equipped and comfortable. A reading room with sensory equipment has been provided for the younger children. This is a calm and nurturing space that they love spending time in.

The inspector made **one recommendation** to help the school improve, covering arrangements for the independent visitor.

- View the full inspection report for the education provision:
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/25/100986>
- View the full inspection report for the residential special school provision:
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/10/SC050152>



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