



# Barndale House School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 122384  
**LEA** Northumberland  
**Inspection number** 281249  
**Inspection dates** 1 November 2005 to 2 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Andrew Margerison

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Howling Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Alnwick
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 19		Northumberland, NE66 1DQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01665 602541
<b>Number on roll</b>	42	<b>Fax number</b>	01665 606370
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr John Rutherford
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 November 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Les Gair (Acting)

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 1 November 2005 - 2 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 281249
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

## Description of the school

Barndale House School is situated near the centre of Alnwick and provides day and residential education for 42 pupils aged 4 to 19. At the time of the inspection the youngest pupils in the school were 6 years old. Pupils come from across Northumberland and approximately half the pupils stay in the residential provision from one to four nights during the week. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, mainly for severe learning difficulties, although a significant proportion has additional needs including communication difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. A small number of pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils join the school at different ages and many have some experience of mainstream school. However, when they join the school, most pupils' academic skills are very low for their age and many have limited personal and physical skills. Virtually all pupils are of White-British origin and no pupils have English as an additional language.

At the time of the inspection, due to the retirement of the previous headteacher in August of this year, the deputy headteacher was the acting headteacher pending the appointment of a new permanent headteacher. A senior teacher from within the school is in the process of being appointed as acting deputy headteacher, but had not yet taken up the post. As a result, in order to keep staffing levels up to the level required to deliver the curriculum, the acting headteacher has significant teaching commitment across the school.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This school has many strengths and provides pupils with an acceptable standard of education. In the last few weeks, management has begun to tackle some of the school's shortcomings and others are currently planned. The school takes a more favourable view than inspectors of its present effectiveness except in pupils' personal development and the care and support provided for pupils. Although, it provides satisfactory value for money, the school is not as effective as it should be.

Throughout the school all adults put the care and well-being of the pupils at the very heart of their work and parents are fully justified in their confidence they have in this aspect of the school's work. The residential care facility is very good and makes a very important contribution to student's personal development. As a result, pupils love being at school, behave very well and have every confidence that the school will help them learn and support them if they are worried about anything. Pupils achieve well from Years 1 to 8 where teachers concentrate on developing their basic communication, literacy and numeracy skill. However, deficiencies in the curriculum for pupils aged 14 – 19 means that pupils are not provided with their full entitlement in science and work-related learning. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) are limited throughout the school and the narrow range of external accreditation in Year 11 and the sixth form does not provide enough challenge for more able pupils. As a result, progress slows and some pupils in the sixth form do not achieve as well as they could. The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis, but school development planning does not identify clear priorities for improvement aimed at raising standards. Governors and staff are not involved enough in the school's review process or in monitoring the effect of interventions on pupils' achievement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the curriculum for pupils aged 14 – 19 fully meets statutory requirements in science and the work-related curriculum.
- Improve school self-evaluation procedures by setting clear priorities for improvement linked to their intended effect on pupils' achievement, teaching and learning.
- Ensure that all staff and governors are fully involved in setting school priorities and school self-review processes.
- Extend the range of external accreditation available for pupils in Years 10 to 14.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

#### Grade for sixth form: 4

Pupils' achievement overall, is satisfactory. From when they join the school, pupils with severe learning and communication difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders make good progress in Years 1 to 8 due to effective teaching that focuses, very strongly,

on developing pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy skills. This ensures they have the basic skills they need in order to make steady progress overall as they move through Years 9 to 11. They continue to make good progress in literacy and numeracy, but in science, pupils do not have enough opportunities to plan or take part in investigations. As a result, although their knowledge develops steadily, overall their achievement in this subject is unsatisfactory. The limited resources for ICT mean that pupils do not have enough opportunities to use the full range of their skills and their progress is uneven from year to year. Throughout the school pupils achieve well in art and design and produce thoughtful and expressive work. The few pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress relative to the major challenges they have to deal with in their learning.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Inspectors agree with the school that pupils' personal development is good. They develop very positive attitudes to school and behave well. Parents agree that their children enjoy school. Attendance is average. They are keen to take part in all that the school has to offer and join in activities enthusiastically. They develop a secure understanding of other faiths and traditions. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to eat sensibly and are taught about the risks associated with alcohol and drugs. They know the importance of having plenty of exercise to staying healthy and a good number are eager to take part in extra sporting activities that take place after school and in the evenings, such as swimming and bowling. They learn the importance of road safety and how to stay safe from other day to day hazards. Pupils make a good contribution to the local community and raise considerable funds for local and national charities. Although they develop good social skills and relate very well to other people, the lack of opportunities to have work placements through the work-related curriculum in Years 9 to 11 and the sixth form means that older pupils are not as well prepared for life after school as they could be.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning overall is satisfactory although there are consistent strengths throughout the school. Teaching for the youngest pupils and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties is good. Activities in lessons are very carefully planned to stimulate and involve all pupils in the class. Teachers and support staff work very well together, using many different ways to develop pupils' communication skills. In all classes, support staff are very important members of the teaching team and make a major contribution to the progress pupils make. Most lessons are well paced and teachers use questions very well to challenge pupils and to encourage them to express

their own ideas. In Years 9 to 14, teachers continue to plan carefully for pupils of different abilities and develop their literacy and numeracy skills well. However, the pace of pupils' learning is limited by the lack of opportunities for them to use and apply their basic ICT skills, to take part in practical science activities and to work towards the goals set by the challenge of working towards external accreditation.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 4**

The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 8 is good and provides them with a broad and balanced range of experiences, although teacher's capacity to develop pupils' ICT skills is limited by poor levels of resources. The school has adapted the national guidance for literacy and numeracy well to meet the special needs of pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress in these aspects of their learning. In all classes, pupils have plenty of opportunities to visit places of interest linked to the topics and take part in sports. These opportunities are extended well after school by residential staff. However, in Years 9 to 14, the taught curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements or the needs of all pupils effectively enough. Pupils in Years 9 to 11 do not have enough opportunities to take part in practical and investigative activities in science, or have access to the required programme of work-related activities. The school is currently setting up work placements for a few students in the sixth form, but this is not provided for all students. No external accreditation is in place for pupils in Year 11 to provide goals for more able pupils to work towards.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school accurately judges this aspect of its work as good and reflects the school's ethos as a caring community which puts the individual and personal needs of each pupil first. Very good attention is given to ensuring that the school and the residential facility are safe places for pupils to live and work. Statutory requirements for child protection are securely in place, and the residential facility fully meets the National Standards of Care. Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. Parents are really confident that the school, as one parent wrote "nurtures the personal development of my special child". The opportunities for pupils to be directly involved in reviewing their learning are not consistent across the school, but recently the school has begun to involve pupils in school development by setting up a school forum. Pupils have had some good ideas, but the forum is in its very early stages and has not had sufficient time to have a significant effect on the school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

In a very short time, the acting headteacher has worked hard and successfully to begin to tackle urgent issues such as the weaknesses in the accommodation for the sixth form and workforce reform. In this he has been well supported by a small group of

governors. However, he has been hindered by a lack of time and has had to react to emerging issues. The school has comprehensive procedures to record the progress pupils are making and to set new targets for pupils to work towards. However, this information is not used effectively enough to track their progress over time, to identify key weaknesses in their learning or to measure the effect of new initiatives on achievement. The contribution of staff to school self-review is in its early stages of development and governors are not sufficiently involved in checking the performance of the school to ensure they have a clear view of strengths and weaknesses. Overall, school self-evaluation is not focused sharply enough on raising standards and there are significant shortcomings in school development planning. The plan does not set clear objectives for strategic improvement and is not linked to the intended effect on pupils' achievement. Similarly, shortcomings are evident in the residential development plan. Significantly, many of the weaknesses identified by the inspection such as the need to widen staff involvement in school evaluation procedures and the deficiencies in ICT resources were identified in a local authority monitoring report twelve months ago. Overall, the acting headteacher knows what needs to be done and has a clear vision for the school and staff are very keen to be involved in new initiatives. Due to this shared commitment and the very good behaviour of pupils, inspectors are fully confident that the school has the resolve and the capacity to improve.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	4	4
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	No
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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3 November 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your school this week. I enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the things you do. You were very polite and friendly and I would liked to have been able to stay longer. The things I particularly liked were:

You behave very well and you learn how to look after yourselves, eat well and have plenty of exercise.

The school really cares for you all equally and looks after you superbly.

All the adults in school work together very well so your school is a happy place to be.

Teachers make sure you do well in reading, writing and number.

I have asked your headteacher and the governors to make your school even better by:

Setting up better systems to find out what your school does well, how they want to make it better and to check that the things they do to improve the school have a good effect on your learning.

Make sure that all of you in Years 9 to 14 have opportunities to find out about the different jobs people do and what it is like to work.

Make sure that there is more investigation and practical work in science.

Improve the facilities for the school leavers' group.

Thank you again for helping me so much with the inspection.

With best wishes

Andy Margerison

Lead inspector

Annex B