

Barndale House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122384
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327714
Inspection date	15 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Mel Blackband

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Boarding provision
Social care URN
Social care inspector

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	28
Sixth form	11
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Rutherford
Headteacher	Mr Les Gair

Age group	4–19
Inspection date	15 December 2008
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Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Howling Lane Alnwick Northumberland NE66 1DQ
Telephone number	01665 602541
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Age group	4-19
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Introduction

This was a single integrated inspection of education and social care (welfare). Social care was inspected under the Care Standards Act 2000. The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors and a Social Care Inspector.

Description of the school

The school provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties, many of whom have additional needs such as communication difficulties or complex physical and sensory disorders. The school has residential provision for up to 16 pupils. Virtually all the pupils are of White British origin.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Barndale House is a good school. There has been consistent improvement since the previous inspection. Most pupils achieve well in their studies and a few make excellent progress. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) get off to a satisfactory start. Pupils then continue to make good progress throughout the school and into post-16 provision. Although standards are very low when compared to pupils in mainstream schools, the gap closes by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning and in their confidence to tackle new work. They make outstanding progress in their personal development. This underpins their good achievement. Teachers manage the pupils' behaviour well and the very positive quality of relationships between staff and pupils is a significant strength of the school. The school has effectively developed its provision for pupils with communication difficulties and for those pupils with complex physical and sensory disorders and these pupils also make good progress.

Teaching throughout the school is good. Lessons are generally interesting and well managed. The pupils enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. There are good procedures for the assessment and recording of the small steps in pupils' progress in basic subjects such as English and mathematics. As a result, teachers set specific learning targets in these areas and tailor activities well to meet the learning styles and abilities of each pupil. In other subjects, this is less consistently well done and as a result, sometimes the pace of learning slows. Teachers, however, make it clear to pupils when they have done well and what they need to learn next. This has a very positive impact on their motivation and enthusiasm. Parents are happy for their children to attend, knowing that they will be well cared for and that the school has high expectations of their success. One parent's comment was typical of many: 'Since joining the school, he has continued to blossom'. Pupils feel secure and well supported. They learn very well how to remain healthy, to keep themselves safe and to take responsibility for their own behaviour. They value the school and enjoy their education. This is evident through the very good relationships found throughout the school and the excellent attendance of most pupils. The residential care facility makes an important contribution to the pupils' enjoyment and to their personal development.

Weaknesses in the curriculum which were identified at the previous inspection have been dealt with and curriculum provision is now good. For instance, the resources and learning programmes in science and information and communication technology (ICT) are much improved and they meet the needs of the pupils effectively. There has been particular improvement in the provision to teach older pupils about the world of work and life after school. The pupils in Years 11 and 14 have greater opportunities to gain an appropriate range of qualifications. There are also some emerging links with mainstream schools and with colleges that the school is developing further. The pupils' learning is enriched by the many opportunities they have to interact with the community, such as in the visits to the Fire Service control room. Teachers make good use of national strategies to ensure rigour and progression in programmes for the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

The headteacher has led the improvements to the school's performance with skill and boundless enthusiasm. He and his deputy, for example, have made substantial improvements to their procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. As a result, they have developed clear plans for continuing school improvement that address the right issues. The effective assessment procedures enable teachers to track and analyse pupils' achievements accurately. However, the school's leaders have not yet developed effective ways to coordinate this

information to give a clear overview of every pupil's progress. The governors of the school have significantly improved the quality of their strategic management since the previous report and have instituted appropriate procedures to monitor the school's performance. The school is well set to build on the good progress made since the last inspection and there is a good capacity to improve provision further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students make excellent progress in their personal development because of well planned procedures to help them gain the necessary self-confidence and independence to make their own choices and to prepare for adult life. The good teaching results in many of them continuing to make good progress in literacy and numeracy, in their life skills, and in their grasp of work-related learning. The students are able to achieve their potential through a range of accredited qualifications. As a result of their good progress, many students leave with the confidence and skills to go into further education. The provision is managed effectively.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision for EYFS children has only been in operation for one term. Children make satisfactory progress; however, procedures to meet children's learning and other development needs are in the early stages and are not yet fully established. The range of curriculum opportunities satisfactorily reflects the EYFS requirements. The children's personal development is good. They feel safe and happy because they know they can turn to an adult for help. They are keen to take part in exercise such as 'Activate'. The children clearly enjoy school and the activities it provides; photographs of their activities show them with beaming faces. They learn to help each other in daily routines and as a result make good progress in skills that will help them later in school. The children are well looked after. There are secure daily routines to ensure their safety and well-being. Assessment procedures are new this term and teachers have made an appropriate start to plotting the children's progress. The management of the EYFS provision at this early stage of development is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 3

The quality of the boarding provision is satisfactory and there are some good features. The school meets most of the key national minimum standards but there are shortfalls and some of these could potentially compromise the welfare of the young people.

Admissions to the boarding unit are well planned and arranged to meet the specific needs and preferences of each pupil. The school is good at monitoring and promoting the health of the pupils and they are encouraged to have healthy lifestyles. There are good arrangements for storing, administering and monitoring the pupils' medication. These arrangements help protect pupils' health and meet their health care needs. However, some pupils do not have suitable care plans outlining how their assessed needs will be met when they are staying in the residential unit. Also, some of the pupils do not have appropriate risk assessments covering the potential risks arising from their health needs. Because of this staff may not take appropriate action to reduce the risks to these pupils.

Teaching and care staff take action to safeguard pupils and to make sure the school provides a safe and consistent setting for them. For example, pupils' privacy is promoted, staff are good at supporting pupils to develop appropriate behaviour and they create an atmosphere where bullying is known to be unacceptable. Pupils said there is no bullying and they feel safe when staying in the residential unit. However, some staff have had no training covering how to protect young people from abuse and respond appropriately to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Although there have been no complaints concerning the boarding unit, the school does not have a sufficiently robust complaints procedure for making sure all complaints will be addressed appropriately. The school makes sure that equipment such as hoists are kept in good working order and that there are regular fire drills to safeguard pupils and staff from the risk of fire. However, suitable records of fire drills are not being kept. Consequently, it is not possible to confirm that staff take part in drills as often as they should. There are satisfactory procedures covering the recruitment and selection of staff to make sure the school only employs suitable people. The school has not kept all the appropriate records to demonstrate these procedures are being followed.

Care staff are good at supporting and promoting the education and achievement of pupils. For example, they ensure pupils attend school punctually and contribute to each pupil's annual education review. A parent said their child 'has gone from strength to strength since beginning residential activities'. Staffing levels provide very good opportunities for staff to give the pupils support and assistance to meet their individual needs and wishes.

The school is good at consulting pupils and their families and preparing pupils for moving into adulthood. Pupils are actively encouraged and supported to develop skills in daily living and to have their say about their day to day lives on the residential unit and how the school is run. There is good communication between the school and pupils' families. This helps staff to keep up to date about each pupil.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a strong commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. The school has a satisfactory system for monitoring the residential service and the care and welfare of the young people. However, the school governors do not carry out monitoring visits as often as recommended and they do not always carry out the recommended checks. Staffing levels are flexible to ensure sufficient staff are on duty to meet the individual needs of the young people. The opportunities for staff to take part in relevant training are satisfactory but the care staff do not receive appropriate support and guidance in safeguarding and promoting pupils' welfare.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils have clear, focused learning targets in all aspects of the curriculum.
- Ensure that senior staff collect evidence of each pupil's achievement regularly in order to track the rate of their progress more easily.
- The school must ensure that it meets the National Minimum Standards currently not met, as detailed in the boarding section of the report.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well, particularly in developing the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy. Because of their learning difficulties, the standards attained by most pupils are far below those expected of pupils of similar ages in mainstream schools. However, the pupils,

including those with a range of additional difficulties, make good progress throughout their school career because of the good support they receive, which helps them to overcome the barriers to their learning. Pupils in the primary department get off to a good start in learning basic skills and this continues into the secondary phase. By the start of Year 10, pupils begin successfully to adapt these skills towards gaining external qualifications. By Years 11 and 14, the pupils reach their potential by gaining a range of nationally accredited Unit Awards and where possible, Entry Level qualifications. The older pupils make good progress in all aspects of work-related learning. Progress in some subjects, however, is slower because teachers do not always use clear targets to adapt learning specifically enough for each pupil's ability and attainment. All the pupils make outstanding progress in meeting challenging targets for their personal development.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school has been increasingly effective in promoting all aspects of the pupils' personal development. The pupils' excellent moral and social development reflects the school's emphasis on positive values and teachers' skilful management of pupils' behaviour. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is very good. They enjoy the opportunities to take part in dance and drama days and they listen attentively and join in enthusiastically during assemblies. They make extremely good gains in social skills through a wide range of communal activities such as the recent Christmas concert in the local church. The pupils' forum gives them a very good opportunity to make their views known, for instance in helping to design improvements to the outside play areas. Similarly, the older students in Years 10 and 11 and in post-16 provision significantly increase their economic awareness through their good progress in work-related learning.

Pupils are calm and well behaved because they feel safe and confident and know what is expected from them. They learn how to keep themselves safe and those pupils spoken to reported no bullying or intimidation, telling inspectors, 'Everyone is friendly here'. The pupils have a very good understanding of the value of exercise and healthy eating because of the extensive personal, health and social education (PHSE) programmes and opportunities to take part in physical exercise. Pupils make very good use of the opportunities presented by the extended day and residential provision to experience a whole range of extra activities and to learn how to socialise with a variety of other pupils. Above all, the pupils report that their learning is fun. This results in their outstanding behaviour and attendance despite the continual illnesses and debilitating conditions from which some suffer.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers and their assistants work in very effective teams and they have an excellent understanding of their pupils' learning needs. Although there is a wide age range of pupils in each class, the planning for lessons is good because teachers work from clear schemes of work. Teachers and their staff effectively record the small steps in the progress of each individual pupil in the basic subjects. Consequently, they are able to create challenging learning targets that help promote good progress. However, this detailed assessment and target setting is not always carried over into other lessons and this occasionally slows down the pace

of learning. Individual pupils receive a high level of support when necessary. As a result, pupils become much more confident in attempting new things and this has a positive impact on their achievement. Pupils with communication difficulties and those with profound and multiple difficulties are able to take a full part in classroom activities because staff provide good visual clues and make good use of facilities to enable them to learn through sensory experiences. Pupils respond well in lessons because they like their teachers and the support staff. Pupils understand and respect the clear routines, which assist in keeping a strong focus on learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been significantly improved since the previous inspection. There is a good breadth and balance of learning programmes throughout the school and teachers' long term planning is effective. Primary and secondary aged pupils gain a good grounding in basic skills and this is strengthened by the teachers' good use of national strategies which bring rigour and progression to learning activities. The arrangements for vocational and work-related learning are good and much better than at the time of the previous report. Pupils now have many more opportunities to gain work experience and to follow courses that lead to nationally approved qualifications. This provides an effective bridge to further study when they leave school. There are increasing links with other schools and with colleges, although the school is aware that these could still develop further. The resources and learning programmes for science and ICT have also been improved for older pupils and this too has resulted in their better achievement.

The pupils' learning is enhanced well through the good range of extra activities and there are frequent visits and events, which the pupils enjoy. These support pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures and also teach them that new things can be learned in a variety of situations. Those pupils with additional difficulties are fully included in activities. Programmes in personal, health, and social education (PHSE) have a significant impact on the development of pupils' personal skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pupils are generally well cared for, although there are some procedures in the residential care provision which are not yet secure enough. Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. Pupils are helped to make very good progress in their social and moral skills because of skilful behaviour management and the support they receive from all staff members. The pupils with additional communication and sensory or physical difficulties are well supported. As a result, over time, they make very good progress in their personal skills. Teachers consistently try to ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. This has a positive effect on their motivation and progress. The many parents who returned questionnaires, with a very few exceptions, praised the school for its positive impact on their children's lives. A number expressed their gratitude for the high standards of care and teaching which their children experience.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has led the management team very well and has ensured that substantial improvements have been made in each identified area of weakness noted in the previous report. Since the previous inspection, the school's leaders have greatly improved the accommodation and outside recreation and play areas. They have improved resources for science and ICT and have supported staff in their work to develop better and more appropriate provision for the older pupils. Most importantly, the headteacher has developed effective strategies to help staff monitor and evaluate their own work. This has led to a greater awareness of strengths and weaknesses and clearer planning for making improvements. This in turn has had a positive impact on the level of all the pupils' achievements. Although staff have established secure procedures to ensure that the pupils' progress is monitored and tracked, the school's leaders do not yet make sufficient regular use of this information to maintain an overview of provision or to identify any key weaknesses. Communication within the school is good and the high quality of professional training is effectively linked to procedures for managing the performance of teachers and other staff. This has made a significant contribution to improving the consistency of teaching and, in turn, the pupils' good achievement. Resources are used well and the school gives good value for money. The governing body has become more effective than at the time of the previous inspection, in monitoring each aspect of the school's performance. Governors now provide an increasing level of challenge and support to the school's leadership.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	3	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3	

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	2

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

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	2

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Barndale House School, Northumberland, NE66 1DQ

When we came to your school recently, you made us very welcome and we enjoyed meeting some of you in the classrooms and at lunchtime. Thank you for your friendliness towards us, your excellent manners and the way you helped us with our work. It is obvious that you all enjoy school. I am pleased to tell you that you go to a good school, which does many things well. Here are a few of those things.

- The teachers encourage you to work hard and so you make good progress in your work.
- You make excellent progress in learning to behave well and look out for other people.
- You have a good range of activities, which teach you about the local and other communities.
- Lessons are interesting and you are well taught. This means that you enjoy learning and do your best.
- The older students amongst you have good opportunities to learn skills, which will be useful when you leave school.
- All the adults at the school look after you well.

I have asked the school to look at some things which I believe will further improve it.

- School managers should check more regularly how well you are doing.
- Your teachers should set you clearer targets in all your learning activities.

You can help too, just by going on working as hard as you have been doing and by continuing to support each other so well. Please thank your parents for their helpful comments.

Best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband

Lead inspector