

Bowden House School

BOWDEN HOUSE SCHOOL, FIRLE ROAD, SEAFORD, EAST SUSSEX, BN25 2JB

Inspection dates	14/07/2015 to 16/07/2015	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Leadership and management of the residential provision are strong. Staff are well qualified and experienced to meet the needs of young people they care for. They are child focused and motivated to make improvements in young people's lives, incentives such as privileges points are effective.
- Young people make good progress motivated by tangible rewards recognising small achievements and major accomplishments. Young people are encouraged to recognise the changes they make and the impact such as their increased self – esteem.
- Quality of care is excellent, young people live in a homely environment with personalised bedrooms and a family feel, meal times are social events for young people in their key groups.
- Young people engage in a wide range of social activities, both on site and in the community. They can channel their risk taking through safe but adventurous activities; examples are abseiling, caving, and mountaineering.
- The student and family co-ordinator works closely with professionals and parents to ensure that they have up to date information at the beginning of each young person's admission to the school. Young people are involved in the decision process; an example of this is that young people speak to staff prior to admission to confirm that they want to attend the school.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Ensure that restraint records are recorded accurately to include the actual date of the incident.-

Liaise with the Local Authority Designated Officer in regards to an agreement when a pupil makes an allegation against staff.

Information about this inspection

The inspection was announced by telephone, to the deputy head of the school on the morning of the first day. An initial meeting was held with the deputy head teacher and two head of care. The inspector held discussion with the head, residential care staff, the senior leadership team, speech and language therapist, domestic bursar and senior administration officer. The inspector observed, and when appropriate took part in activities with young people, including going off site, in addition to having group and individual discussions with them. The inspector held telephone discussions with the Local Authority Designated Officer, social workers and parents. A range of documents and records were also examined during the inspection.

Inspection team

Suzy Lemmy

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

This is a residential special school maintained by a local authority. It provides education, care and accommodation for boys, with an educational statement or Educational, Health and Care Plan for social emotional and mental health difficulties, between the ages of 9 and 18. There are currently 31 weekly boarders. All the accommodation is based on the school site, which is located within the town of Seaford. The residential provision was last inspected in July 2014.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Young people live in a positive environment, which supports them to make good progress. Progress of young people is robustly tracked, recorded and analysed to ensure that each young person's achievements are celebrated. Individual risk assessments, positive handling plans and end of year reports show this. Young people are active in this process; they take responsibility for improvements. One young person said 'I was very difficult when I first came here, wouldn't stay in class and would hide but now I am able to manage much better'. Another young person when asked by his teacher who had made the changes to his behaviour said 'I did'. Staff award certificates to recognise success. Point systems used to give young people privileges for meeting targets are successful, examples such as a cup of tea in bed, or special outings are effective.

Young people's emotional well-being is central. They have open access to an on-site student counsellor; young people value this provision. This increases their emotional resilience. They feel valued by staff, one young person wrote 'you helped me get back on my feet and carry on, I will always remember you'. Young people report that staff listen to them.

Young people are treated with dignity and respect; their views, wishes and ideas are integral to the weekly plan. A number of young people lead the student counsel, food and anti-bullying committee. Staff listen and respond positively, examples such as adding more choices for evening meals and making changes to the privilege points system are acted upon. Young people demonstrate an ownership of the school.

The quality of care and support

Good

The quality of relationships between staff and young people is a strength of the residential provision, which assists them to make progress. Young people make trusting relationships with staff who understand them and meet their needs well, one young person said 'it's like a family'.

Admissions to the residential provision are individualised and welcoming. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms. The quality of accommodation is excellent. Staff supervision sessions include checks on bedrooms to ensure a consistent high standard. This enables young people to feel nurtured and increases their self-esteem.

Young people enjoy meals within their key group, which help to create a relaxed and important aspect of the day, where staff can promote good social skills. A strength is meals that are healthy, varied and of good quality. Young people choose from a wide range of menus. Kitchen staff liaise with residential staff to ensure dietary and cultural needs are met.

Staff in the residential provision work as a team, which effectively meets the needs of all young people staying here. They are thorough in gathering information from parents and carers, education, social workers and health professionals prior to placement, to form a comprehensive approach to care. Young people are requested to call the school to say they would like to accept a place. This enables them to actively commit to the school. A detailed care plan devised and regularly reviewed ensures that the young people continue this engagement.

There is good liaison with education staff, through handovers prior and post school day to ensure practice is consistent across both settings. Pupil morning and evening updates discuss positives and areas for young people to improve on; this gives them a sense of self-worth and responsibility.

Young people enjoy a range of stimulating activities, supplementing their educational timetable. They enjoy trips to the park, banger racing, watching the local football team, swimming and picnics. More adventurous activities are promoted safely with robust, regularly reviewed risk assessments and comprehensive checks. Staff report how young people are able to overcome their fears during these holidays; an example is one young person, who is less active within the key group, climbed Snowdonia.

Young people are able to keep in touch with their families, carers, and friends via a number of routes including the house phone and internet. Staff encourage contact with parents and carers, a young person said 'I can contact my mum when I want to'. Parents report that there is good communication from staff and they are kept well informed. One parent commented 'I am very happy with the school, I couldn't praise it enough, and my son misses it when he isn't there'.

All staff are trained in first aid with clear protocols should a young person fall ill. Medication recorded and administered accurately keep young people safe, robust systems are in place. Staff take care of student's general health care needs, registering them with a local GP and dental services.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Young people say they feel safe. Robust procedures ensure suitable protection without limiting young peoples' ability to engage fully in life within the residential provision and local community. Young people can earn time away from the home and can access areas of the school with permission. They are able to report any worries through a variety of means, examples such as the complaint process or an anonymous box are readily available. Observations showed staff are skilled in diverting unwanted behaviour and are willing to spend time with individuals to work through anxiety and concerns at their own pace. An example of this is a young person who struggled to leave the key group living environment. He was afforded time to reflect and then to join staff on an activity but only when he was ready.

Suitably trained designated persons within the school take the lead in child protection

matters. This results in a consistent approach to keeping young people safe across the school. Parents state they feel their children are safe when staying at the school. A team manager from the local authority commented about the staff timely reporting of safeguarding concerns. Good links are in place with safeguarding partners including the Local Safeguarding Children Board. In one case a consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) would have clarified any need for investigation. The head teacher recognised this and will consult with the LADO to agree procedures.

Young people do not go missing from the residential provision or when out. This is due to good and organised planning, interaction and supervision. All staff know who they are responsible for young people when on site and in the community. The missing policy includes the protocol in line with the runaway and missing from home and care (RMFHC) for the area where the school is located. Staff show knowledge of this policy, which is practiced if young people are absent and to prevent missing episodes.

Individual risk assessments reviewed and updated result in an environment where the welfare of young people are protected. Staff members are aware of challenging behaviours and how to implement strategies and avoid triggers. This has led to young people making progress to reduce their negative behaviour such as the need to hurt staff or others. Restraints used as a last resort are scrutinised by an external professional. Reasonable force records are completed in timescale but dating does not reflect this. Some dates of incidents are inaccurate. This shortfall did not pose any risk of harm to young people and were amended during the inspection.

Young people are safe from environmental risks through robust risk assessments of the school and grounds. Regular checks of fire prevention systems, electrical, water and gas installations further ensure their safety. Recruitment procedures include robust pre-employment checks and regular updates of disclosure and barring service checks help to ensure staff remain suitable to work with vulnerable young people.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

Leadership and management of the residential provision are strong and consistent. Managers and staff are well qualified and experienced to meet the needs of the children and young people. Established systems and routines ensure the residential provision runs smoothly. The compassionate and motivated staff work consistently and support each other as a team. Managers are committed to supporting young people to make progress from their starting points, clear attainable goals and measurable targets achieve this.

Staff have effective, regular supervision, which focuses on the young people as well as staff performance and development. Recent supervision training resulted in better recording systems. Accountability and reflection underpins the learning for supervisees, which increases their confidence and skill base. The impact of managing challenging behaviour on their own physical and emotional well-being is recognised. Weekly, team meetings, attended by key school staff, keep residential staff up to date on any

developments in young people's learning, current goals and targets.

The heads of care aspire to lead a strong skilled staff group. They are committed to ensuring that the staff group increase their knowledge by keeping up to date with research, policy and practice. Staff are encouraged to gain qualifications, examples such as an acting senior care officer being enrolled on the level five qualification demonstrates this. The induction training programme is robust with a week-long induction before newly appointed staff work directly with young people. Observations of newly appointed members of staff showed them to be confident and knowledgeable about the young people in their care.

Managers and those responsible for the school ensure monitoring of standards of care. Routine checks of records are completed by senior staff, which is further complimented by observations of staff practice during residential time. Regular monitoring by the Chair of Governors, who also devise policy and procedures, is constructive, critical and evaluative. An issue regarding recording of restraints highlighted in the Chair of Governors report led to change. Managers update development plans aiming for improvements in all areas. The head teacher and senior staff meet daily, with additional weekly team meetings ensuring effective communication and continual strategic planning.

The statement of purpose clearly states the range of needs for young people at the school and residential provision, the skills and experience of staff, ethos and aims. Every young person has a welcome pack, individualised to their particular key group, which includes an age appropriate and informative student handbook. This ensures that expectations of the school and residential provision are clear.

Inter –agency working is strong. Good professional relationships exist with stakeholders, which results in highly effective multi-professional working ensuring the best possible care and experiences for the young people. A respite residential care manager said 'communication is excellent; we receive regular updates by telephone and comprehensive weekly reports'. A social worker commented 'the young person use to struggle to go back to the school but now there is no problem'.

The head teacher and heads of care are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and residential provision and are keen to put systems in place to make improvements and continually develop.

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

Unique reference number	100986
Social care unique reference number	SC050152
DfE registration number	439921

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.

Type of school	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	31
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	9 to18
Headteacher	Gerry Cook
Date of previous boarding inspection	07/07/2014
Telephone number	01323 893138
Email address	admin@bowdenhouse.towerhamlets.sch.uk

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