

Inspection of Barndale House School

Howling Lane, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 1DQ

Inspection dates: 30 April to 2 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires Improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Barndale House School arrive at school eager and ready to learn. Staff greet pupils warmly. The school prioritises knowing pupils and their individual needs well. This is a caring place to learn. There is a community feel across the school. Pupils feel safe. They have adults who listen and support them. Adults' patient and careful approach helps meet pupils' wide range of needs.

Leaders have high ambitions for the pupils who attend. The curriculum ensures that pupils access learning to realise these ambitions. Pupils do well. They learn in classrooms where they focus on their learning. Adults support pupils effectively in order to access each aspect of the school's wide-ranging curriculum offer. The school helps pupils to regulate their behaviour well. This helps pupils to learn and play together effectively.

The school ensures that pupils learn beyond the academic curriculum. A wide range of further experiences and opportunities help pupils prepare for their next steps in learning. Visits to local facilities like hospitality venues and completing Duke of Edinburgh's Awards help pupils develop a wide range of skills. Work with local employers, including Alnwick Garden, help pupils understand the world of work. Pupils talk with confidence and enthusiasm about these opportunities.

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

Leaders have developed learning pathways to meet the special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that pupils have. All pupils have education health and care plans. Each pathway supports pupils to fulfil their potential through their curriculum. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad and ambitious. They have carefully planned the curriculum so pupils can build key knowledge and skills over time.

Teachers show the correct subject knowledge linked to the subjects they teach. In subjects such as mathematics, leaders have prioritised the key skills and knowledge pupils will need to be successful when they leave school. In other subjects, such as history, pupils talk in detail and with accuracy about their learning. They use research skills to look at how medicine has developed over time. Pupils confidently compare sacrifice in Mayan civilisation to aspects of war. In some subjects, the use of assessment is not closely linked to the knowledge and skills leaders intend pupils to know and remember.

The school uses a consistent approach to teaching phonics and communication. Adults support pupils to communicate using appropriate resources with precision. Some pupils use Makaton to share their needs and wishes, for example. Pupils benefit from staff who reinforce and embed key language. Pupils who are learning to read are well supported to read with fluency and automaticity. Older pupils recall the books they have enjoyed in class. They continue to read regularly as they move through the school.

Alongside lessons, leaders ensure that pupils make individualised progress linked to their own learning development needs. The expert knowledge of staff to nurture and foster pupils' development is clear. The school works collaboratively with other professionals to ensure that pupils' needs are well met.

In personal, social and health education (PSHE) pupils learn about healthy relationships. Leaders purposefully plan for pupils to build knowledge over time. Younger pupils learn about safe touch. Older pupils think about how social media can impact their relationships. Pupils contribute to discussions maturely. Carefully planned assemblies help pupils know about British values and protected characteristics.

Leaders use local businesses and attractions to develop pupils' understanding of the world of work. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about roles linked to hospitality or the hikes they have completed as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils who access the school's residential offer enjoy the social opportunities this gives them. Pupils behave well across the school day. Adults support pupils effectively in order to manage their behaviour. Pupils demonstrate an increased ability to regulate their own behaviour.

Leaders value the staff with whom they work. A planned training offer helps staff meet pupils' needs well. Staff are well supported to develop their own interests and training needs. Staff enjoy working here. They feel listened to. There is a strong sense of teamwork across the staff. Governors work with leaders to assure themselves of the school's work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the checks that are made on pupils' learning are not aligned to the curriculum that is taught. In these subjects, the school is not clear on the impact of the curriculum on pupils building knowledge and skills over time. The school should ensure that assessment enables the school to understand the impact of the curriculum they intend pupils to learn and remember.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	122384
Social care unique reference number	SC041487
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10290115
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Number of boarders on roll	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susan Wildsmith
Headteacher	Mark Phillips
Website	www.barndalehouse.northumberland.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 December 2019 and 15 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to leadership. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2020. There are new deputy head teachers, one took up post in September 2022 and another in April 2024. In addition, there have been a number of teachers and learning support assistants who have left and joined the school.
- The school is a special school that educates pupils from two to 19 years.
- The school provides for pupils with a range of learning difficulties. Some pupils have severe or moderate learning difficulties. Some pupils also have needs associated with speech, language and communication.
- The number of pupils on roll has increased since the previous inspection.
- The school's curriculum offers five pathways of learning for pupils who attend.

- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and PSHE. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and teaching assistants. They spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils at the early stages of reading with a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors gathered views of parents informally through phone calls and formally through responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. The views of staff were considered in meetings with them and through the staff survey. Pupils' views were considered through pupil meetings and during lesson visits.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classes, during the start of the school day and during breaktimes and at lunchtime.
- This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the residential provision.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jill Bowe

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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