

# Bowden House School

Firle Road, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2JB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Bowden House School is a maintained local authority school. It provides education, care and accommodation for boys between the ages of nine and 16+ who present with a range of complex social, emotional and mental health difficulties with characteristics on the autism spectrum, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and mild learning difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were 33 residential students. All the accommodation is on the school site.

**Inspection dates:** 9 to 11 September 2019

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,** taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of previous inspection:** 4 March 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Students benefit immensely from the staff's in-depth knowledge of each student, which enables them to receive effective individualised care and support. The staff are dedicated to consistently providing nurturing care, with a focus on promoting students' emotional well-being and removing barriers to their learning.

Positive relationships are the foundation of the successful support the staff provide, beginning with the sensitive engagement with students' families by the student and family coordinator. Connections with families remain strong throughout students' school life, enabling staff to understand students' needs and their behaviour. From the detailed knowledge of students' needs, successful information sharing and the specialist contribution of the emotional and well-being intervention team, staff across the school are able to provide targeted and directed support to advance students' development. Students make significant progress in all aspects of their lives. They are helped to develop suitable ways of expressing their feelings, to recognise the consequences of inappropriate behaviour and to take responsibility for their actions, thus improving their chances of educational attainment.

In a vibrant but calm environment, students enjoy their residential time after school. A wide range of activities enables them to pursue their interests and these provide opportunities to extend their social experiences. Students are active in putting forward their views, informally on a day-to-day basis with staff, and more formally through forums such as the Student Council. Managers and staff are responsive and act on students' requests, demonstrating that students are listened to and their views are important.

As students progress through the school, they have opportunities to develop their independence and daily living skills. Programmes for developing these skills are particularly strong for post-16 students, with the aim of preparing them for the realities of adult life. They are helped to acquire the necessary skills to confidently make the move from the school and participate as successful members of society.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

An ethos of safeguarding students is embedded in all aspects of the school. Systems for reporting concerns about students are strong. Staff understand their responsibilities for protecting students. They promptly pass on their concerns to experienced designated safeguarding officers, who take appropriate action, including referrals to external safeguarding agencies, when necessary. Successful partnership working between the school's safeguarding team, external safeguarding agencies and families promotes the welfare of students.

Educating students to raise their awareness of how to keep themselves safe is a priority for all staff. The staff's responsibility for protecting students is not confined to keeping students safe while in school. Taking a whole-school approach, they continuously strive to extend students' awareness and understanding of the risks they face in the wider community.

Relationships between students and staff are meaningful and sincere. Through thoughtful and consistent support from staff who understand students' behaviour, and clear routines and boundaries, students develop a sense of safety, protection and trust. Knowing the students very well, the staff are flexible and skilled in de-escalating difficult situations. Students respond to the staff's individualised support. The excellent joint approach of all staff helps students learn how to self-regulate their emotions, manage their difficulties and take responsibility for their actions.

Risk management is effective across the school. Individual plans and risk assessments for students highlight their specific vulnerabilities and provide staff with clear guidance to protect students. Incidents are closely monitored by managers, always from the viewpoint of analysing staff practice to improve the assistance for students. Physical support for students is used as a last resort to protect the student and others. The staff are well trained in this form of behaviour management to ensure safe practice.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

Led by a new headteacher who has recently been promoted from within the school, leaders and managers successfully maintain an inspirational culture in which students flourish. Leaders and managers show passion and ambition for students to develop and achieve to the best of their ability. Their vision unites the staff team in providing individualised support to prepare students for their futures and confidently face the demands of everyday life.

Leaders and managers have a determination to continually improve, to strengthen the provision for students and to make a real difference to their future lives. Creative and innovative approaches to the curriculum, and a dedication to providing specific interventions and support to meet students' individual needs, are at the forefront of new developments.

To achieve their vision, leaders and managers are focusing on empowering staff. In addition to a senior leadership team, there is now an extended leadership team. There is an expectation that members of this team develop significant and increased leadership skills and inspire, mentor and support staff to provide strong leadership throughout the school. A 'one school approach', with mutual respect across all teams, is inherent in the drive for high standards to enable students to make rapid and sustained progress. Collaborative and cohesive working across care, education and therapeutic services helps students develop a positive attitude to learning.

Staff are proud to be part of a dynamic team. Their personal development is fully supported by managers, through relevant training. They receive effective support in their roles through supervision, and informal, ongoing advice and guidance from managers, whom they report as being approachable and available.

A strong governing body provides effective scrutiny, challenge and oversight of the residential provision. The knowledgeable, skilled and experienced chair of governors closely monitors safeguarding matters and regularly visits the residential provision. Comprehensive reports of these visits, with recommendations for improvement, assist leaders and managers in maintaining and continuously improving high standards of care.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## **Residential special school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC050152

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Aaron Sherwood

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Jan Hunnam, social care inspector



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