

Bowden House School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100986
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	376494
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Ian McAllister

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

The inspection of residential provision 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	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wendy Phillips
Headteacher	Gerry Crook
Date of previous school inspection	22 October 2008
School address	Firle Road Seaford East Sussex BN25 2JB
Telephone number	01323 893138
Fax number	01323 492057
Email address	admin@bowdenhouse.towerhamlets.sch.uk

Social care unique reference number	SC050152
Social care inspector	Anna Williams

Age group	9–16
Inspection date(s)	13–14 March 2012
Inspection number	376494



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Ian McAllister

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed seven teachers teaching eight lessons and some part lessons. Joint lesson observations took place together with the deputy headteacher. The inspector observed some interventions with specific pupils. He met formally with one group of pupils and spoke to a number of pupils during the inspection. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and with school staff, including senior and middle managers, and with additional specialist staff. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including those to do with pupils' behaviour and progress, the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, and policies relating to safeguarding and equalities. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection as well as six questionnaires from parents and carers returned during the inspection and questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Bowden House School is a smaller than average special school which provides residential education and care for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All pupils are residential. At the time of the inspection, there was only one pupil in Key Stage 2, he is taught within a group of Year 7 pupils. A small minority of pupils have autism spectrum condition. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Three quarters of the pupils come from a White British background. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. A few of the pupils are in the care of the local authority.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Bowden House is a good school. From their starting points, pupils make better progress than similar groups of pupils nationally. The very good induction arrangements enable pupils to settle in quickly. They develop their reading and communication skills well. Overall effectiveness is not outstanding because pupils make less progress in writing than in reading, speaking and listening, and a few pupils make inconsistent progress in mathematics.
- The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the pupils and provides a range of imaginative and exciting opportunities for learning. Recent improvements in planning ensure that pupils progressively acquire a wide range of skills relevant to their needs when they leave school.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good, and sometimes outstanding. As a result, the pupils achieve well over time. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and use their detailed knowledge of the pupils to plan effectively and set challenging tasks for individuals.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are good. Pupils’ behaviour improves significantly over time as they respond to the effective behaviour management approaches used in the school.
- Leaders and managers effectively monitor the work of teachers and staff and performance is well managed. As a result, teaching has improved since the last inspection. The rigour with which the school monitors the quality of its provision is not equally applied within the residential setting. The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is satisfactory, although not all of the national minimum standards are met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress in writing by:
 - taking full advantage of opportunities to promote writing in lessons throughout the curriculum
 - promoting writing in the planning for all subjects.
- Improve the consistency of pupils’ achievement in mathematics by:

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

- targeting focused support for those pupils who are underperforming relative to their capabilities
 - ensuring targets set for pupils are suitably challenging
 - increasing pupils' involvement in the target setting process.
- The school must ensure that it meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools which have not been met.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils make similarly good progress relative to their individual starting points, irrespective of their individual special educational needs. All groups achieve equally well. Parents and carers feel that their children make good progress in school, and inspection evidence, including work in individual exercise books, shows this is an accurate view. Pupils make good progress regardless of their age when joining the school. The very effective induction arrangements ensure that each pupil settles quickly and starts to learn and improve his behaviour as soon as possible.

On entry into the school, all pupils are taught the skills and attitudes that they will need in order to learn effectively later on. Very positive relationships are established, and the pupils quickly learn to focus on their work for increasingly extended periods, to follow instructions, to behave appropriately towards each other, and to communicate more effectively.

Pupils across the school make good progress in reading and in speaking and listening, but progress in writing is generally no better than satisfactory, largely due to there being limited opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across the curriculum. The school's leaders have already identified this as a weakness and have implemented strategies to address it. Although there are early signs of positive impact, these strategies are yet to bring about a significant improvement in writing across the school. In mathematics, the majority of pupils make good progress, with some making outstanding progress. A few pupils make more limited progress because they do not receive sufficient well-targeted support to ensure they fully understand key concepts.

Throughout the school, the pupils are keen to participate in lessons. Although the attention span of a few pupils is limited because of their special educational needs, the vast majority typically maintain their concentration for extended periods. They work well in groups, and are tolerant of others and able to make appropriate choices. As a result, by the end of Key Stage 4, all pupils are able to achieve appropriate externally accredited qualifications, including GCSEs in a range of subjects. All pupils successfully gain placements in further education, training or employment when they leave school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is consistently good, and sometimes outstanding. This is endorsed by parents and carers, who say that their children are well taught. In all lessons, the quality of relationships is very good and members of staff know the pupils very well. There are very effective mechanisms within the school for sharing information about each pupil's needs, and this information is used consistently by all teachers to plan appropriately for individualised programmes in classes. Teachers use assessments of pupils' progress to help plan tasks that enthuse and motivate the pupils. Pupils are involved in assessing their own progress and agreeing targets for improvement, but the school is aware that there is scope for pupils to take a more active role in the target-setting process, in particular to improve progress in mathematics. Occasionally, targets lack challenge and therefore have a limited impact.

In the best lessons, teachers create a sense of excitement about learning that fully engages pupils with the subject. This is clearly evident in art, science, physical education, design and food technology, and other subjects where the practical activities offered to the pupils are well matched to their needs. The teachers listen carefully to pupils, and their skilful questioning of individuals and groups deepens learning. Teaching assistants and other support staff work well to keep pupils in class and maintain the pupils' focus on learning. The planned curriculum has a positive impact on teaching; teachers skilfully adapt lesson content, and take advantage of opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Nevertheless, the school is aware of the need for teachers to plan more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across a range of subjects.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, carers, and pupils are generally positive about behaviour and safety, although a few concerns were expressed about the challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils. Evidence shows that pupils' behaviour improves significantly as they move up through the school. During the inspection, the behaviour of the pupils was good, and records show that behaviour is improving as a result of the school's effective support. Most pupils are typically considerate towards each other. For example, they listen quietly and attentively to each other's contributions in lessons. They are respectful of others and polite to staff and visitors. There is a calm, orderly environment that enables staff to deal quickly and effectively with any individual behavioural issues without disrupting the learning of the class. One pupil spoke for many others when he said, 'I was angry when I came, but I've found a way to solve that.' Pupils are able to communicate their views to staff when they are anxious or concerned about bullying.

Pupils report that there is no cyber-bullying or homophobic bullying, and school records confirm this view. All parents and carers who returned questionnaires think that the school is a safe place for the pupils, and pupils themselves feel safe in the school and the residential provision. Racist incidents are rare and are promptly and

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

effectively dealt with by staff. The school is committed to continuing to work with individuals, no matter how challenging their behaviour. Fixed term exclusions are rare and there are no permanent exclusions. Over time, pupils develop a growing understanding of right and wrong, of how their behaviour affects themselves and others, and what they can do to support each other. A Key Stage 4 pupil said, 'We try to help new pupils. We give them good advice, and tell them not to worry too much about being away from home.' The pupils know the school rules and what the consequences are for unacceptable behaviour. They understand the positive rewards system and what they have to do to achieve well within it. Consequently, pupils engage with the approach and there is a clear move towards improving behaviour.

Attendance is improving but remains below national averages. However, the school is working hard to improve attendance further. Unauthorised absence has reduced significantly over the previous year. Punctuality at the start of lessons is good. Everyone quickly gets down to work, which maximises the time available for learning.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders, including governors, have a clear vision for the future development of the school. They have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and of the improvements that still need to be made. They have ensured improvement, and the school development plan clearly sets out the current priorities for further improvement. Previous weaknesses in teaching and in the curriculum have been successfully addressed through rigorous monitoring and professional development of teachers and other support staff, and by the provision of a modern foreign language in the curriculum in Key Stage 3. Progress in English and mathematics is now good overall. Older pupils gain a wide range of externally accredited qualifications. These improvements demonstrate the school's capacity to improve further. Staff strongly promote equality of opportunity and carefully monitor the progress of individuals and groups. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

The broad curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of out-of-school visits, including residential trips, as well as activities and visits organised by residential staff as part of the '24 hour curriculum'. The 'outdoor curriculum' is highly valued by the pupils; it contributes well to personal, social and health education, as well as broadening the experience of the pupils, and helping them to develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Through these experiences, pupils gain an understanding of wider society, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in curriculum planning, with greater emphasis on matching the curriculum closely to the needs of the pupils, so that pupils progressively acquire a range of relevant skills as they move through the school.

Despite the distance from pupils' homes, the school communicates well with parents and carers and tries hard to engage with them in partnership in order to support their children's learning. The school organises community activities, such as sports

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

day and a fete to which all parents and carers are invited. The education social officer works closely with parents and carers to enhance communication and build strong links between home and school. Consequently, the school maintains the confidence of parents and carers in its ability to meet the needs of the pupils effectively.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding are rigorous and meet statutory requirements. Leaders and managers take a realistic, practical approach that enhances the pupils' ability to recognise, assess and manage risk for themselves, within a robust overall framework of safe working practices. The residential provision is satisfactory rather than good because it does not fully meet national minimum standards, due to a few administrative shortcomings.

Residential provision

Pupils benefit from residential provision which has a positive impact on the quality of their lives and speak positively about their boarding experience. Accommodation is well maintained. Catering arrangements provide a balanced diet, give choice and provide for pupils' cultural needs. Pupils make good progress in developing self-esteem and independence. They talk enthusiastically about the range of extra-curricular activities on offer, which promote their physical and emotional health. Overall, outcomes are good, and pupils are equipped with a range of skills to equip them for the future.

Pupils say they feel safe within the school, including the residential provision. Pupils report that bullying has reduced within the school over the past year. Members of staff demonstrate sound knowledge of safeguarding procedures. The school operates safe recruitment processes. This ensures pupils' safety.

There are a few administrative shortfalls against national minimum standards. These do not significantly affect the safety and well-being of pupils. Records of the administration of medication are inconsistently completed by staff. This practice does not ensure a robust audit trail and records do not demonstrate that pupils' medication needs are fully met. Regular fire drills are undertaken in school hours, but insufficient drills take place in residential time. This does not fully help pupils to understand what to do in case of an emergency overnight, although procedures are fully in place for evacuation outside normal education hours.

There are very few incidents where pupils are absent without authority. However, the school's absconding procedures are not compatible with the Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Also, the school does not hold the RMFHC procedures for the local authorities from which pupils are placed. This means that if a pupil is missing, staff may not complete actions or processes as required by placing authorities.

Incidents of restraint are recorded appropriately and monitored on a regular basis for patterns and trends. However, pupils are not consistently supported to discuss with staff any incident of restraint in which they are involved. This inconsistency means that some pupils receive time to reflect after an incident and others do not.

The previous recommendation that the record of sanctions includes the reason why a sanction has been imposed has been met. The previous outstanding practice within the residential provision has not been maintained. Internal quality assurance systems are not fully effective in monitoring the records specified in appendix 2 of the national minimum standards. Ineffective monitoring of records has led to a decline in the quality of care provided since the last welfare inspection, although the overall effectiveness of the residential provision is satisfactory.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- Ensure that medications given to young people are recorded consistently (NMS 3.8).
- Ensure fire drills are held in residential time at least once a term (NMS 7.2).
- Ensure a consistent approach to recording the de-briefing of pupils after a restraint (NMS 12.5).
- Ensure that appendix 2 records are maintained and monitored effectively (NMS 13.3).
- Ensure that the school’s procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) procedures (NMS 15.7).

These are the grades for the residential provision

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	3
Outcomes for residential pupils	2
Quality of residential provision and care	3
Residential pupils’ safety	3
Leadership and management of the residential provision	3

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bowden House School, Seaford BN25 2JB

Thank you for making me so very welcome when I visited your school. Many thanks to all of you who met me and told me about your life in school, especially about the lessons you enjoy most. It was good to see how your behaviour is improving and how most of you are taking the opportunities that you are given to make as much progress as you can.

Bowden House is a good school, and here are some of the good things I found.

- Nearly all of you make good progress during your time at Bowden House. You make good progress in English and other subjects, although in mathematics some of you make faster progress than others. The school has introduced new accreditation courses for the older pupils so you can gain qualifications before you leave.
- Most of you attend school well, and you are all keen to learn. You told me that you know what you have to do to improve.
- Teaching is usually good and sometimes outstanding. This helps you make good progress, but you learn best when you are given more practical activities. Some of you work well on your own.
- You feel safe in school and you behave well in lessons; you continue with your work, even if another pupil is not behaving as well as he should.
- Your headteacher and the governing body have worked successfully to improve your school, and I have asked them to continue that improvement by giving you more help to improve your writing skills, making sure that everyone makes equal progress in mathematics, and including you more in setting your own targets for improvement.

I really enjoyed meeting you all and I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian McAllister
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**