

# Bowden House School

Firle Road, Seaford, East Sussex, BN25 2JB

**Inspection dates** 8–9 July 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students achieve well in English and mathematics. They make exceptionally good progress in their communication skills and in developing confidence in their ability to read.
- Teaching is never less than good. There is much that is outstanding and teaching assistants make a significant contribution to students' progress.
- Students say they make better progress at Bowden House than at their previous schools because of the good teaching and support they are given. They thoroughly enjoy many interesting activities organised by the school and say they feel safe.
- Behaviour is managed exceptionally well and students are confident that the teaching and care staff will help and support them.
- Very strong leadership by the headteacher, well supported by senior staff, results in a continuous drive for improvement.
- There is a very effective focus on improving students' academic progress and on providing them with opportunities to undertake vocational activities that will improve their life chances.
- Governors provide the school with outstanding support and challenge.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' progress in writing and mathematics, although good, is not as rapid as it could be.
- The new procedures for recording sanctions have not yet been implemented.
- Teachers do not consistently identify how students might improve their work and ensure students act on their comments.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited eight lessons, all of which were joint observations with the the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with students, teachers, senior leaders, care staff, teaching assistants, the Chair and another member of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority. Inspectors talked informally with students and staff throughout the two days.
- There were insufficient responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, to gather the view of parents. The inspection team took account of 28 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including self-evaluation and plans for future development. Inspectors checked the school's records of students' progress and achievement. Behaviour logs and attendance records were analysed and all aspects of procedures relating to the safeguarding of students were scrutinised in detail.

## Inspection team

Paul Edwards, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jan Hunnam

Social Care Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Bowden House is a smaller-than-average special school. It provides residential care for boys with severe behavioural, emotional and social disabilities. A small number of boys have been diagnosed with autism and a significant minority has speech and language difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs. They are all residential, with most students arriving back on Sunday evening. Students in Year 10 and Year 11 progress to independent travel on a Monday. At the time of the inspection there were no pupils in Key Stage 2 and none in the sixth form.
- Most students come from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, although an increasing number are from other local authorities.
- Almost all students are supported by pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for those pupils eligible for free school meals or in care). The proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. A very small minority speak English as an additional language.
- All students are currently educated on site, although the school uses a wide variety of alternative providers for short placements, according to students' needs.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate students' progress in mathematics and writing further by:
  - ensuring students have time to practise and consolidate basic addition, subtraction and multiplication skills
  - ensuring students have more time to write at length in different subjects
  - avoiding the use of too many worksheets which limit opportunities for students' writing.
- Improve the quality of teachers' marking by ensuring students know what they have to do to improve and that students act on the teachers' written comments.
- Ensure the new system introduced by the care staff for recording sanctions is fully implemented at the start of the new academic year.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with standards in English and mathematics that are exceptionally low. They generally make good progress in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). A significant minority enters with very weak speaking skills. Increased speech and language therapy, together with well-targeted activities during the expressive art sessions, have rapidly increased their progress.
- Progress in mathematics is not as rapid as in other subjects, particularly for those students who have spent less time at the school. Weaknesses in basic addition, subtraction and recall of multiplication facts hinder their progress. Similarly, students who struggle with writing when they arrive at the school progress more slowly.
- The school is very effective in helping students to gain awards and qualifications. Students achieve GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics, science, art and design, and physical education. Several gain BiDA qualifications in information and communication technology. All students gain a BTEC level 1 qualification in science. They now recognise the value of qualifications as a 'passport' to future employment.
- A number of students aspire to enter the world of catering. This has been driven through their enjoyment of food technology sessions. In one session students demonstrated accuracy in measuring out ingredients; they were keen to talk about the process of cooking a pizza and were knowledgeable about the ingredients they used.
- All students are encouraged to read every day and the ready availability of books in classrooms, the library and the accommodation block is contributing to their improved rate of progress. Senior leaders are about to introduce a session on the timetable where everyone, including staff, reads at the same time in order that students see that reading is valued by all.
- The most able students are challenged well. For example, three students read confidently from the book *Of Mice and Men* and were beginning to understand the characters.
- The additional funding is used effectively to provide support, such as speech therapy, so that all students achieve equally well. There is no difference in the achievement of students from minority ethnic groups, including students who speak English as an additional language. All students are treated equally and encouraged to do their best.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers know their students well and plan work that is closely matched to what students know and can do. They check students' work often and to ensure future lessons are neither too easy nor too hard. They understand how to get the best out of their students, expecting them to work hard and do their best. All staff are particularly good at managing and encouraging students and, consequently, teaching over time is good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and understand well what motivates their students to learn. They provide a good balance between subject theory and its application. As a result, students begin to understand more clearly why they need to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills. For example, one student was very proud of the object he had made out of wood and recognised the need for accurate measuring.
- Teachers ensure that seating arrangements in classrooms are well organised. All staff are in their classrooms on time and expect students to be prompt so that time is not wasted. The use of rigorous procedures ensures that this is always the case. Students' work is displayed attractively around the school and there is an absence of graffiti. Work in books is presented neatly and there is no scribbling on covers – because teachers expect nothing less.
- There are clear procedures for dealing with behavioural issues and students value the consistency of their implementation. Consequently, there is minimal disruption to learning, both

for the individual concerned and to other students.

- Teachers are very effective in building on students' strengths and this is very effective in building their self-esteem and confidence. For example, all students love to sing because the teacher encourages them so well. For all, it has improved their confidence, and for some it has helped to improve their ability to communicate more easily with adults. They say how proud they were when they sang to their parents and carers at the summer fete.
- Teaching assistants are extremely well deployed. They have a high level of skill and know when to offer support or guidance and when to encourage students to persevere. They are very effective in working alongside the teachers to ensure students behave well and that time is not wasted.
- Teachers focus well on teaching English and mathematics and this has resulted in improvements in both subjects. However, students are not given time to use their writing skills in subjects other than English. Sometimes the use of worksheets limits the space students have to write longer pieces of work.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly and frequently, with a clear indication when they have done well. However, occasionally they do not highlight how students might improve their work or ensure that students act on feedback to avoid repeating errors.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Students' behaviour in and around the school is good. The handover by carers to teachers is handled very well, so students are in the right frame of mind when school starts. Most students attend regularly and exclusions are low. Immediate contact is made with parents when a student is absent from school, and every effort is made to encourage an early return.
- Students are encouraged to develop their own strategies for managing their conduct when they need to calm down. Some choose to walk quietly around the school field, whilst others go and talk to a senior member of staff.
- All staff are trained in behaviour management and the key to its effectiveness are the checks that staff make on what might unsettle students. These careful checks enable staff to calm down situations that are likely to cause upset. New strategies for recording sanctions have been produced, but the school has yet to implement them.
- Students say that they enjoy school. The opportunities for visits, for example to the Science Museum, add variety and interest. They are particularly enthusiastic about the External Leadership activities that lead to them participating in climbing, canoeing, archery, wakeboarding and other outdoor pursuits; some of which lead to awards.
- Lunchtimes are a social occasion where staff and students dine together. Visitors comment on the pleasant atmosphere. There is a good range of activities at lunchtime and after school that provide the students with the opportunity to relax and learn the important skills of socialising with one another.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All aspects of safeguarding are given high priority. All staff, including those responsible for students out of school, have a secure understanding of the procedures to follow to ensure students are kept safe and secure. Students say that they feel safe and know what to do and who to talk to if they have a problem. They understand how social networking sites can be used for bullying and the need to use the internet safely.
- They acknowledge there is a small amount of bullying, usually name calling, but are confident that it is dealt with effectively. School records show this to be the case.
- Students are proud of their school and, mostly, they take good care of it. There is no litter and they do not deface classrooms and their accommodation.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher is extremely ambitious for the school. He is well supported by the senior leadership team and governors. They have driven improvement successfully since the previous inspection. They are ensuring that students are gaining more qualifications and are better prepared for their next stage in education or to enter the workforce. The local authority provides effective support for this good school.
- Senior and middle leaders have an accurate view of the school's work and there are outstanding procedures in place to check on the quality of teaching and how well students are learning. The school has developed its own procedures to check the students' personal and social well-being. These are extremely detailed and provide staff with a clear picture of the links between their academic achievements and well-being. Staff with subject or management responsibilities fulfil their responsibilities effectively, ensuring there is a clear focus on the academic progress of students.
- The school's priorities influence the training programme. All staff have recently undertaken in-house training on autism, providing them with a better understanding of how to adapt their teaching to the needs of specific students. Performance management is solidly in place. The training requirements of individual staff are met through attendance on courses or meetings held with partner schools.
- Distance could be a barrier to ensuring good communication with parents. This is not the case. Annual reviews, regular letters, frequent telephone calls and the occasional home visit ensure staff are able to keep parents up to date on their child's progress. Parents are also able to keep staff informed of incidents that might affect their child's learning. There are strong links with outside agencies that provide students with social and health support.
- The curriculum has a clear academic focus and the senior leaders have made a concerted effort to ensure all students gain academic qualifications. They are now rightly working on improving the grades students achieve in these examinations. They have also identified the need to ensure students' basic numeracy and writing skills improve more rapidly to enable them to be better prepared for work.
- The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. The sanctions and privileges programme provides students with a clear understanding of right and wrong. The expressive arts programme is a particular strength of the school and is used very effectively to develop students' cultural awareness.
- The school works hard to ensure a smooth transition to college. Students have been provided with vocational placements that have covered among others, agriculture, painting and decorating, music technology, building and construction, vehicle maintenance and animal care. The placements change according to availability of places, but also to the needs of students. For some, the placements are close to home while others are within easy reach of the school.
- Almost all students are supported by the additional government funding. The funding is used very effectively to improve the basic skills of all students. For example, the employment of additional speech and language support has made a significant difference to the increasing number of students who arrive with communication difficulties.
- Safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Child protection procedures are implemented thoroughly and all staff are fully aware of the procedures to ensure pupils' safety and security.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are supportive and provide high quality challenge. They have a very detailed understanding of all aspects of the school. They look closely at the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning. Governors recognise the importance of how progression along the salary scale should be linked to pupils' achievements.
  - Governors understand the school's assessment information and regularly challenge the leaders to ensure students are making the progress of which they are capable. They compare the performance of Bowden House to that of other similar schools.
  - Finances are managed very effectively. This has helped to ensure ongoing maintenance keeps

the premises in good order and also to develop the facilities to improve students' learning. Governors ensure additional funding is spent appropriately and linked to raising students' achievement. The money is used well to enrich students' experiences and to provide additional therapies.

- There are difficulties in recruiting parent governors because of the long distance they have to travel. However, the school has been effective in recruiting from the local community. All governors undergo training so they are kept up to date. They fulfil all statutory duties, including those related to safeguarding.

<b>Outcomes for residential pupils</b>	<b>are outstanding</b>
<b>Quality of residential provision and care</b>	<b>is outstanding</b>
<b>Residential pupils' safety</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Leadership and management of the residential provision</b>	<b>are good</b>

- Outcomes for residential students are outstanding. Students thrive within a nurturing and supportive environment where they develop confidence, self-esteem and trust. Students have exceptionally good quality relationships with staff and enjoy being in the company of staff who respond to them with warmth and respect. Consequently, students listen to staff and accept the support they offer, enabling them to make significant progress in relation to their starting points.
- Students thoroughly enjoy their residential experience and actively participate in the wide range of activities available to them. On-site activities provide varied leisure interests for students to relax and have fun. Activities in the local community provide opportunities for them to participate in new leisure pursuits, follow their personal interests and enrich their social lives.
- Students flourish in a setting where they are valued as individuals and where their views are appreciated. All students have a key worker who consults with them on an individual basis. All staff, including senior managers, are extremely responsive to students who clearly appreciate the informal interaction with staff. This bolsters their self-confidence and sense of appreciation. Various student forums, such as the student council, food committee and anti-bullying committee, provide opportunities for students to put forward their views and influence day-to-day matters at the school.
- The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Excellent support by an experienced, stable and committed staff team provides nurturing, sensitive and highly individualised care. Education and care staff work closely together and communicate effectively, ensuring students receive consistency and continuity of approach through a 24-hour curriculum.
- Staff know the students exceedingly well and this is reflected through the care planning process. Staff identify students' specific needs in all areas with strategies to support their progress and development. Students are actively involved in setting and reviewing their goals and targets with care and education staff every two weeks. Students fully engage with the incentive system which promotes significant individual progress.
- Accommodation is of an excellent standard and well maintained. It provides a well-designed, spacious, comfortable and well-resourced environment, which students clearly enjoy.
- Arrangements to meet students' health needs ensure students receive appropriate support, physically and emotionally. Excellent liaison with external health professionals ensures they receive specific health care to meet their needs. Staff promote healthy lifestyles through encouraging healthy eating and active routines.

## What inspection judgements mean

<b>School</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

  

<b>Residential provision</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	100986
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC050152
<b>Local authority</b>	Tower Hamlets
<b>Inspection number</b>	439921

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community Special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	29
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	0
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	29
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Wendy Phillips
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gerry Crook
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13–14 March 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01323 893138
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