

Bramfield House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Bramfield House is an independent special school providing day and boarding facilities for up to 40 boys aged 10 to 16 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The majority of boys are resident for a maximum of four nights from Monday to Thursday. Some board on set nights and some are day pupils.

The school is situated in a rural setting, on the outskirts of Bramfield, a small village in the northern part of Suffolk. Set in 10 acres, the school premises include the main house and a range of separate buildings used for teaching and recreation. Other facilities include an indoor swimming pool, gymnasium and newly created horticultural area.

Summary

This was an announced inspection and all key standards were inspected. A large proportion of boarders participated in the inspection and contributed their views.

The quality of boarding at the school is good with all outcome areas judged as good. There is good leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement to enhance the facilities of the school and the outcomes for all pupils. Boarders are provided with a good level of care and pastoral support. Their views are sought in relation to their care and day-to-day life at the school and they feel listened to.

Children are helped to develop appropriate behaviour through individualised behaviour plans and supportive strategies. Health needs are responded to well and access to health care professionals is arranged as necessary. Staff provide children with a range of activities and opportunities to develop new skills both at the school and within the local community. Good management systems are in place in relation to staffing, staff support and the provision of training.

Records and documentation are well maintained overall. However, guidance is not in place and made available to staff when it is necessary to search a child's possessions and sanctions are not recorded in a firmly bound book. In addition, the school's Statement of Purpose does not contain up to date details of the designated member of staff for child protection and the professional qualifications of residential staff. Recommendations have been raised in relation to these matters.

The recommendations raised at the last inspection have been addressed.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection asked the school to provide written guidance regarding the management of smoking amongst pupils. A policy has been put in place and the head teacher reports that smoking amongst pupils has greatly reduced. The school was also asked to include all staff in child protection training, provide staff with regular opportunities to discuss the use of physical intervention and to provide comprehensive records of incidents resulting in restraint. The school was further asked to conduct fire evacuation drills occasionally using the fire escapes and at

night and to update the catering manager's food handling certificate. Each of these matters has been addressed. The actions taken in response to these recommendations contribute to the safeguarding of children's welfare.

In addition, improvements to the physical environment were identified together with the need to consider how best to utilise the large dormitories in the best interests of children. Consideration also needed to be given to the encouragement of children taking greater responsibility for certain aspects of their care. Action has been taken in relation to each of these areas and further work is planned to enhance facilities and to further develop the school's life skills programme. The school was also asked to appoint an Independent Listener for children. This has been done and the individual appointed has subsequently visited the school.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The physical and emotional health needs of children are promoted and supported well in partnership with other professionals and the school's nurse. Children receive advice, guidance and support on a range of health and personal care issues through the school's Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme, the school's nurse and care staff.

A medical history is held of each child and parental consent to medical treatment is obtained. First aid training is provided to all groups of staff, regular updates are accessed and qualified first aid staff are always available on duty. Staff follow clear procedures for the management and administration of medication. Appropriate records are maintained and medication is securely stored. Health problems are dealt with sensitively and children confirm that they feel able to discuss issues with individual members of staff and the school nurse. Children return home when unwell and parents report good communication from the school.

The school provides children with a balanced diet. Special dietary needs are catered for when required and systems are in place to monitor individual eating patterns. Mealtimes are well organised with clear routines to promote the development of social skills. Breakfast is also provided for day boys as many have long journeys to school. Drinking water is available throughout the day and evening. Children are able to communicate menu suggestions direct to the cook or through a variety of other forums. A number of pupils referred positively to favourite meals and the range of food provided.

Work is progressing positively in response to the Environmental Health Officer's visit and all catering staff receive appropriate training for their role.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's privacy is respected and staff handle confidential information appropriately. Staff receive guidance and training regarding personal care matters and are sensitive to gender issues when dealing with children of the opposite sex. It is not common practice for children's possessions to be searched. However, written guidance is not in place and made available to staff and children when it may be necessary to do so. Space is available for children to meet privately with parents and children can make and receive telephone calls without permission where appropriate.

Complaint procedures are provided to parents and children. However, the contact details of Ofsted need updating in associated documents. One complaint has been received by the school since the last inspection and this has been appropriately dealt with. No parent or child has contacted Ofsted regarding any concerns. Parents feel able to raise matters and feel they are listened to. Staff encourage children to discuss day-to-day issues at an early stage with a member of staff of their choosing or through the suggestion box or use of 'I want you to know' forms. Children identify a range of adults whom they feel can approach with their worries and are confident that staff will help them.

Policies and procedures are in place to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. Staff are fully aware of their duties and responsibilities and strong links are maintained with other professionals concerned with safeguarding children. All staff receive appropriate child protection training and regular updates.

Children do not identify bullying as a problem at the school and there is a clear understanding of what to do if someone is making them unhappy. Bullying is not accepted and staff work hard to promote tolerance and respect for one another across the school community. Individual risk assessments identify potential conflicts which are linked to handling strategies and the setting of targets with children.

Written guidance is in place regarding the action to be taken if a child goes missing. There has been no recorded incidents since the last inspection. Children's risk assessments take account of any previous history of absconding.

The management of behaviour is based on establishing positive relationships with children, communicating clear expectations and developing strategies of support. Staff receive regular behaviour management training, including the use of physical intervention. Acceptable behaviour is encouraged and a point system is in place to reward effort, behaviour and good attitude in addition to other qualities. Children are fully conversant with this system and view it as fair as it is also linked to their individual targets. Records of sanctions and the use of physical intervention are maintained and monitored. However, sanction records are not in a firmly bound book. Children are encouraged to discuss incidents involving the imposition of sanctions and the use of physical intervention and have their comments recorded.

Risk assessments, policies and procedures are in place to support the maintenance of a safe environment for children. Records demonstrate that regular safety and servicing checks are undertaken to fire, electrical, water and gas installations. Regular fire drills take place at different times and children are familiar with fire evacuation procedures.

Suitable procedures are in place for the recruitment and checking of staff. A record of visitors is maintained and proof of ID is requested where appropriate.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The school's boarding provision actively supports children's educational progress. Care staff are familiar with the educational needs and progress of the children in their care and contribute to children's annual reviews. Teachers, care staff and children come together at the beginning and end of the school day to exchange information and reflect on the day's events and children's progress. Information is constructively exchanged and children are able to contribute. Additional

meetings are held between care staff and teaching staff throughout the academic year to review children's progress.

Care staff actively promote children's engagement in education by supporting children in the classroom where necessary and helping with set work in the evening. Staff also support the school's preparation for independence programme within the boarding house by involving children in cooking and the development of other life skills. Developments are planned to widen this area further. The school's activity programme provides opportunities for children to keep active, develop social skills, build their self-esteem and broaden their cultural awareness as well as relax. Children are also supported and encouraged to follow their hobbies and special interests, including attendance at local clubs, gardening, attending music lessons and going fishing.

Children receive good pastoral care and individual support in line with their needs. External professional agencies including Educational Psychologists, counselling and health services are accessed where necessary. Parents and carers are supported by the school to attend meetings regarding their child. Children report that they can speak with a member of staff of their choosing and identify a wide range of adults to whom they would go with any worries, including the head teacher, the school's nurse and night waking staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are actively encouraged and supported to express their views and be involved in decision making. Formal and informal opportunities are available. These include daily community meetings, children's meetings, key worker sessions, spontaneous discussions with a range of staff and use of the suggestion box. Parents are also consulted and state that their opinions are sought.

Admission and leaving processes are planned and tailored to individual children wherever possible. The potential impact of a new admission into the existing school community is carefully considered.

Children's needs are assessed and written plans outline how these are to be met. The plans contain targets which are regularly evaluated and updated with individual children in discussion with their key worker. Children spoken with were aware of the targets they were working to and were able to explain how these can change.

Children are supported to maintain suitable contact with family and friends and are able to telephone home through appropriate arrangements. Staff maintain regular contact with parents and carers with regard to children's progress as well as concerns. Where appropriate, staff will undertake home visits and facilitate parents' attendance at meetings. Parents and family members are also welcome to visit the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarding accommodation is clean and well maintained. Staff work hard to provide a welcoming environment for children and continue to improve facilities as part of the school's overall development plan. No children with physical disabilities are accommodated at the school.

Dining facilities are suitable for the numbers of children currently attending the school. However, as numbers are predicted to rise with the school's expansion, communal areas within the school may not remain fit for purpose.

The spacious grounds are utilised well for organised activities but also allow for new projects to be tested and developed with input from the children. Recent projects include the addition of a cycle track and a horticultural area.

Positive links with the local community and neighbouring areas are promoted and maintained. Boys attend local youth and sports clubs and engage in work experience placements with local small businesses and beyond.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is good leadership and a clear commitment to continue to improve the school's facilities to enhance children's progress and their development. Children are looked after by experienced, well trained and competent staff who understand their needs and work closely with them to develop, progress and achieve.

The school's Statement of Purpose is detailed in its brochure and is regularly reviewed. However, the details of the designated member of staff and the professional qualifications of residential care staff need to be updated following recent changes. A booklet is provided to the boys and is reported by them as being useful, particularly when they first arrive.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school acknowledges the individuality of all pupils and positively promotes their integration in to the school and wider community.

Staff report that staffing levels outside of teaching time are sufficient for the number of boarders, their needs and the activities they are involved in. Children are made aware of who is on duty and who is responsible for them at specific times. Night waking staff are employed and are easily accessible to respond to the boys' night time needs. A number of boys refer to how re-assured they feel by the presence of night staff as some seek specific support at night.

A duty rota is followed in practice and suitable arrangements are in place for duty cover in times of staff sickness and absence. Staff are able to call for assistance, and back up support is provided to night staff by a member of staff sleeping in.

Staff are appropriately supported and guided to enable them to promote and safeguard children's welfare. External support is provided to the head teacher and a system of staff supervision and appraisal is in place. Written guidance is provided to staff, is easily accessed and regularly updated. Good training opportunities are made available to staff, including child protection, first aid, National Vocational Qualifications and wider pastoral matters. Job descriptions are in place and staff know who they are accountable to.

A range of systems is in place for the monitoring of children's welfare, both internally and by the wider organisation.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- provide written guidance, available to staff and children, on when it may be necessary to search a child's possessions (NMS 3.10)
- update the contact details of Ofsted in complaint procedures documentation (NMS 4.8)
- ensure sanction records are recorded in a bound book (NMS 10.9)
- review the dining facilities and other communal areas in light of the school's expansion plans (NMS 15.8)
- update the name of the designated member of staff for child protection and the professional qualifications of staff in the school's Statement of Purpose (NMS 1.3).