



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Brantridge School

**Staplefield Place
Staplefield
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH17 6EQ**

Lead Inspector
Mr Kevin Ball

Announced Inspection
29th November 2005 09:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Residential Special Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life.

Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of school	Brantridge School
Address	Staplefield Place Staplefield Haywards Heath West Sussex RH17 6EQ
Telephone number	01444 400228
Fax number	01444 401083
Email address	n.white@brantridge-school.co.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Grafham Grange Special Educational Trust Limited
Name of Head	Nick White
Name of Head of Care	Richard Godsmark
Age range of residential pupils	6 – 13 years
Date of last welfare inspection	January 2005

Brief Description of the School:

Brantridge School is a non-maintained residential establishment, providing education and care for primary age boys, all of whom have Statements of Special Educational Needs and having been assessed as having behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Some children have further learning needs including social and communication difficulties, mild forms of Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome and Specific Learning Difficulties. The school is part of the Grafham Grange Special Educational Trust Ltd, which is a registered charity. It has a Board of Directors and a Board of Governors.

The school can provide for up to 36 boys from the ages of 6 – 13 years from local education authorities throughout London and the South East.

The School aims to " ...help each pupil fulfil his potential in the hope that he can return to either a day special school or mainstream education". Children board on a weekly basis and all live within the main house that is separated into three discrete boarding houses.

SUMMARY

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

This was an announced inspection that took place over two days. Two Inspectors spent time examining records, talking with children and staff – care staff, teaching staff and the management team - at the school, as well as observing practice. Questionnaires were sent to all those with parental responsibility as well as placing authorities. This inspection has not assessed all of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, and readers may wish to refer to the school's previous inspection report should they wish to have a complete picture of practice and provision at the school.

What the school does well:

Through the work of committed, stable and established care staff, supported by a confident and robust management team positive outcomes are achieved for many children placed at the school. The school has sound monitoring systems in place that allow practice to be reviewed and amended when necessary. The school offers a very good selection of activities and opportunities for all children. The accommodation for children is of a high standard, well maintained and child friendly. One parent gave their view of the school as being "First class – we are extremely happy". Many parents responded in a similarly positive fashion.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school has been receptive and pro-active in addressing all the areas highlighted from the previous inspection, however recognises that there are still areas to improve upon in order to exceed standards. Of particular note, are the improvements in the accommodation for children, the appointment of a dedicated and qualified School Nurse and training opportunities for care staff.

What they could do better:

The school meets all of the National Minimum Standards, and exceeds many, however may wish to consider reviewing and improving the following specific areas; the quality and quantity of the food on offer to the children, care staff's knowledge of and capacity to respond and manage some of the more complex behavioural difficulties presented by the children on an individual and group basis, staff recruitment and vetting systems, systems for recording information on children's files.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted.(NMS 14)
- Children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs.(NMS 15)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

NMS 14 & 15

Children live in a healthy environment and the health and medical needs of each child are identified and promoted. Children's dietary needs are provided for, however the school recognise that they can make further improvements in this area.

EVIDENCE:

The School has recently appointed a dedicated and qualified School Nurse, on a part time basis, who holds responsibility for overseeing all medical and health related matters. This appointment has encouraged greater links with the care and teaching staff teams, as well as external agencies who are able to advise and guide on health related matters. It is anticipated that the role of the School Nurse will grow and she will be able to participate in curriculum activities concerning health and lifestyle matters.

Children's health needs are recorded and the information about health issues requested prior to admission. Each child has a distinct Health File and relevant information is held securely for appointed staff to see. The Health Plans cover the criteria as set out in this Standard. A sample of files were examined and found to be in very good order. Written consent to medical treatment is obtained for each child from the person with parental responsibility and evidence of this was noted on files. Comprehensive records are kept regarding the administration of medication, including incidents of refusal, accidents, illnesses and injuries. All medicines are securely stored with a separate storage facility for controlled drugs.

Appropriate support is given to children with special needs such as asthma and staff have received training in dealing with such matters whilst also holding a valid first aid certificate. One member of staff is qualified as a Trainer of first aid. The School has written guidance on promoting the health of children, and children are enabled to discuss these issues with staff, especially so in the schools Personal, Social, Health Education programme.

The services of a Consultant Family Caseworker and Art Therapist are available to the school. Staff spoke very positively about the benefits of these individuals. The school is also waiting for a new Speech and Language Therapist to be appointed to work with the school. Additionally the school aims to increase the therapeutic provision available to the children, in line with the Development Plan, and is set to increase the therapies on offer.

Children are provided with satisfactory food, having a choice between one hot dish or a salad at lunch and tea. Choices are made and recorded a week at a time, in advance. Care staff sensitively managed children's individual likes/dislikes. The Catering Manager and the school's Housekeeper liaise with care staff in order to monitor any specific food issues identified for individual children. A record is kept of the food eaten or refused by these children. The previous inspection highlighted some dissatisfaction with the range of food available, the nutritional value of the food and the manner in which it was presented. The school acknowledge this and have made some progress on improving the matter, however needs to maintain some impetus on continually improving this area.

No outstanding requirements by the Environmental Health inspectorate were reported. Catering staff have received appropriate training in food handling and hygiene.

The majority of parents that replied to the questionnaires sent were very positive about the school's capacity to manage health issues for their children.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled.(NMS 3)
- Children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration.(NMS 4)
- The welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.(NMS 5)
- Children are protected from bullying by others.(NMS 6)
- All significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified by the Head of the school or designated person to the appropriate authorities.(NMS 7)
- Children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return.(NMS 8)
- Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour.(NMS 10)
- Children live in schools that provide physical safety and security.(NMS 26)
- There is careful selection and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers.(NMS 27)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

NMS 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 26 & 27

Through robust policies and procedures, experienced care staff and effective management, children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted whilst in the school.

EVIDENCE:

The school has policies and procedures thereby assisting staff to appreciate the need to respect children's privacy and confidential information. Policies are also in place covering complaints, the protection of children, bullying and behaviour management. All staff are aware of these and appear to follow this through in practice. The school appear to be pro-active in reflecting upon the efficacy of such policies and will review and amend as necessary. Given the young age of many of the children and their particular needs good parenting strategies are implemented in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

Children are able to receive phone calls on portable phones, which can be taken to their bedrooms if required. Additionally there is a payphone for outgoing calls and a telephone for incoming calls only, dedicated just for the children's usage. Many children request that their parents contact them on this line. Children are also however able to use the telephone in the medical room if needed. This provides a further private and quiet area.

Children are not allowed unsupervised access to the Internet and monitoring systems are in place to ensure this. These systems have been found to be effective.

The school adopts a pro-active approach to dealing with bullying, with all children aware of the policy and the consequences of such behaviours.

Complaints and incidents often revolve around behavioural issues that have impinged upon other children and these were dealt with swiftly and appropriately. The school attempts to employ a consistent approach to managing behaviour across the educational and care settings, through the use of a behavioural reward scheme. This is an improvement upon the previous split system and does achieve greater consistency, however care staff did report that any system could be difficult to administer due to the complexity of the children's needs – at an individual and group level – but also the mix of children's needs. Staff expressed a desire for greater knowledge in the application of a behavioural reward strategy in order to provide effective and meaningful boundaries for children. Children stated "...you get a fresh start once on the landing "(i.e. out of the school day).

Health and safety records were examined and found to be in very good order, efficiently managed with an effective monitoring system in place. The school is to be commended on its approach to dealing with this area, thereby ensuring that children are accommodated in a safe and well-maintained environment.

A selection of staff files were examined and were, on the whole, found to be in good order, containing the necessary recruitment checks. Some minor gaps were noted and the school is advised to ensure a rigorous system is in place that does not allow minor deficits to occur.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- The school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school.(NMS 12)
- Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within the school and in the local community.(NMS 13)
- Children receive individual support when they need it.(NMS 22)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

NMS 12, 13 & 22

Children at the school benefit from a well-structured timetable and activity programme, offering considerable opportunities to learn and develop. Children also benefit from a high level of individual support.

EVIDENCE:

Discussion with both care staff and teaching staff revealed a developing collaborative relationship between education and welfare practice. This, as previous inspections has highlighted, is already strong, but set to become more embedded in everyday practice. Day to day interaction along with termly meetings facilitate strong links between staff. The Head teacher appears open to challenging established practices in order to develop a united and holistic approach to both children's learning opportunities and safeguarding their welfare. Incidents of staff illness or staffing deficits – either in the care team or education team - challenge the working relationships between care and teaching staff and the children profit from a committed staff team that offer to cover additional shifts to ensure consistent care.

The range of activities provided for children outside class time continues to be very good. All children interviewed clearly valued and enjoyed the wide choice available to them.

At the end of each school day, after the evening meal, pupils can choose from a range of in-house clubs. The weekly timetable may include table tennis, bowling, digital comic book, acrylic painting, football training, swimming, bowling, gymnastics, cookery, board games and puppets. Children also attend local youth groups. All school groups are organised and run by members of the care staff team. Further activities are provided for any children not attending a timetabled club. Children on each unit have access to a good choice of age-appropriate books, magazines, DVDs, videos, play station and the TV.

Summer holiday trips were made to Butlins and to France. The accommodation has many photographic displays exhibiting trips, activities, school journeys and sports matches. All activities are subject to detailed written risk assessments. Children benefit from a great deal of individualised support in line with their assessed needs. Upon admission they are allocated a Focal Worker who will assist in developing the Placement Plan. A detailed core assessment matrix is completed for each child. The Focal Worker also completes a weekly record-keeping sheet that incorporates comments and observations made in respect of progress that week. A social report is completed before each Annual Review. Of the children that left the school at the end of the last academic year, 50% moved in to mainstream education, highlighting the success rate of the school at reintegration and promoting social skills and opportunity. One parent stated " ...I have had staff take time to phone to tell me if my son has done well ...". Many parents reported similar positive views. The contact details of an Independent Visitor are displayed throughout the school. All children asked stated that they would be confident in contacting the Independent Visitor if they needed to do so. However they also stated that they were comfortable to approach other members of the staff team about personal or welfare concerns, not solely their Focal Worker. Individualised support may be provided for children by an Art Therapist and a Speech and Language Therapist (although this post is waiting to be refilled by the local authority on a contractual basis). As stated, the school intends to expand its therapeutic provision in the near future, once building developments are completed. The Consultant Family Caseworker is qualified in psychiatric social work, and can also provide confidential individual therapeutic support for children. This person provides a valuable bridge between parents/carers of children and the school staff team. All spoke highly of his ability and involvement.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. No child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views.(NMS 2)
- Children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect.(NMS 9)
- Children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes.(NMS 11)
- Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school.(NMS 17)
- In accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while living away from home at school.(NMS 20)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

NMS 2, 9, 17 & 20

Children live in a structured and contained, yet nurturing environment that facilitates growth and development. Children are treated with respect and are encouraged to participate as well as build positive relationships.

EVIDENCE:

Children are allocated a Focal Worker who will oversee and coordinate their care. Discussion groups highlighted that children were positive about the support they received from the allocated Focal Workers, but also other members of staff. Each house will hold regular meetings where children are encouraged to voice their views. Mealtimes provide an opportunity for children to share any issues and these were noted to be sociable, yet highly structured, occasions. Throughout the inspection children were noted to be comfortable and confident in approaching adults to ask for help or discuss an issue. The previous inspection highlighted that some children appeared keen to be involved in their formal reviews. The school have responded by offering greater encouragement to children to attend as well as created an open and receptive culture whereby children's views are valued. This has built upon existing good practice, however the school recognise that they must strive to improve opportunities for children and significant others to participate and be consulted. This is especially so given the increasing problems being noted in the profile of children being cared for by the school regarding communication difficulties.

As already stated, the staff group is, on the whole, established and stable thereby offering consistent care, achieved through efficient teamwork and effective communication. This results in a settled and contained environment where children are able to feel comfortable and express themselves. Mutual respect was apparent and a consistent approach was adopted although children were treated as individuals. The relationship between children and staff was noted to be warm and positive. Care staff were clear that they were committed to the task of caring for children, but that they faced daily challenges in managing difficult behaviours mixed with learning and communication difficulties. This meant a flexible and adaptive approach was required at all times. Staff would be very receptive to further guidance and training opportunities to improve their skill and knowledge. All staff receive training in positive care and control.

Each child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and other significant information is obtained at the point of admission and updated as the placement progresses.

The School has developed Placement Plans that comprehensively detail all of the criteria as required of this Standard. These plans will dovetail with the placing authority's plans for the child. These are relatively new and are in the process of being implemented for all children.

Discussion groups with children confirmed that all were able to maintain contact with their parents, carers or significant others throughout the week. All children go home either every weekend or every other weekend. Parents, carers are actively encouraged to attend annual reviews, and the school holds an annual Open Day. The Consultant Family Caseworker provides a valuable link between home and school life.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money.(NMS 16)
- Children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living.(NMS 21)
- Children live in well designed and pleasant premises, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.(NMS 23)
- Children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use.(NMS 24)
- Children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity.(NMS 25)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

NMS 23, 24 & 25

Children live in a clean, tidy, well-maintained environment that is child friendly.

EVIDENCE:

The School is set in a large house with outbuildings, just off the A23 London to Brighton road.

The School does not accommodate children with physical disabilities and the current design and layout would preclude this. The school has however made the best use of the space and age of the building in creating a comfortable home environment for children. The school has a comprehensive Development Plan that outlines future intentions for improving the physical environment. The School has a security system at entrances, including CCTV to ensure that children are adequately protected from unauthorised persons. Visitors are required to sign in a Visitors book and are then provided with a pass. This was noted to be the practice.

The School attempts to maintain positive links with the local community as well as other local schools. Examples were noted on previous inspections as well as this one. These included children playing in a football match with an ex-teachers new school, children from the local primary school visiting to play a football match on the School's all weather pitch, children from Brantridge commemorating Armistice Day at the local village.

Living and sleeping accommodation is provided in the main house and is divided in to three discrete boarding areas, Jungle Book, Aladdin and Senior Landing. The younger age groups occupy the two lower floors and the seniors live on the upper floor. Each separate area has its own living room and these are comfortable, well decorated and homely. There are lots of toys and the style suits the age group of the children. The atmosphere in the building was light, colourful and airy. Children are able to personalise their sleeping areas and all rooms were very clean, tidy and well decorated. Each child has a facility to store personal possessions. Improvements for respecting privacy have been implemented. The overall accommodation for the children is of a high standard.

A central laundry is used for linen and clothes and a member of staff is employed to undertake these duties. Facilities for older children to do their own laundry are offered in the form of a washing machine.

Staff have designated sleeping-in rooms and separate personal accommodation. The School employs a waking night member of staff. All children were clear and confident about who to contact and how to contact an adult during the night if needed.

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils.(NMS 1)
- Children's needs, development and progress is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.(NMS 18)
- There are adequate records of both the staff and child groups of the school.(NMS 19)
- Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently.(NMS 28)
- Children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs.(NMS 29)
- Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare.(NMS 30)
- Children receive the care and services they need from competent staff.(NMS 31)
- Children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools.(NMS 32)
- The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school.(NMS 33)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

NMS 28, 29, 30, 32 & 33

Children benefit from a caring and committed staff team, who are themselves supported by a strong and receptive management team. The school has effective monitoring strategies in place that respond to issues as they arise.

EVIDENCE:

Sufficient care staff were on duty at the time of the inspection and children confirmed that a similar number were always on duty at other times. A member of the senior management team was also on duty or available at all times. Waking night staff are also employed as well as the day staff who undertake sleeping-in duties. Clearly the School will need to review and amend the staffing levels, if necessary, should increased numbers of children be accommodated in the school. The staff team does comprise of both genders however there are more male staff than female. Again the School may wish to consider this if and when any recruiting is undertaken.

All children who leave the school site do so under supervision as appropriate. A written register of children was noted for each boarding area.

All staff receive professional development days each year and previous inspections have revealed that staff training is ongoing and much valued by the care staff. Training for care staff has been provided over the last 12 months. Ongoing training comprises of child protection awareness, fire safety training, speech and language training. The school has also prioritised NVQ Level 3 study programmes, with some staff looking to undertake the NVQ Level 4 Award. This needs to remain a priority. Care staff expressed a desire for further training and knowledge on managing the characteristic behaviours of the children they are caring for, as individuals, but also as a group. Staff have Personal Development Plans/ appraisals in place and received regular supervision. Care staff described the school as "...productive and forward thinking ...".

Records seen by the Inspectors demonstrated that the Head teacher, or delegated individual monitors school records as detailed in this Standard. Some minor gaps were noted on children's individual case files in respect of legal status/parental responsibility, and the school will need to ensure information is recorded in the relevant sections where appropriate.

The school is open and receptive to constructive scrutiny as an opportunity to develop and improve practice. Care staff considered that they were "...aware of the need for change ...". Evidence of internal monitoring was provided for the Inspectors and this was comprehensive and thorough, highlighting trends and patterns. Action is taken to remedy any concerning or negative trends, and the Governors challenge staff and the school management team where issues are highlighted. One example of this was the prevalence of physical interventions in the last summer term. The school has been proactive in reducing the numbers of incidents on this matter.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	3
15	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
4	3
5	3
6	3
7	X
8	X
10	3
26	4
27	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	4
13	4
22	4

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	3
9	4
11	X
17	3
20	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
16	X
21	N/A
23	3
24	4
25	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	X
18	X
19	X
28	3
29	3
30	3
31	X
32	4
33	3

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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