

Bramfield House School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Robert Curr / Loleta Rascagneres
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 45 boys aged 10 to 18 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

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced inspection that was arranged at short notice. All of the key national minimum standards were checked and improvements made since the last inspection were noted.

As part of the inspection process, questionnaires were sent to parents and pupils to gain their views. Many of the pupils took part in the inspection process. Responses received were all extremely complimentary and indicated a high level of satisfaction with the care and support provided.

The school operates its residential provision to a good standard along with some outstanding features for its boarders.

The school demonstrates good attention to health care. Pupils feel well looked after when unwell. There are effective systems in place to safeguard pupils and promote their welfare. Pupils benefit from excellent levels of individual support from both staff and external agencies. A further strength of the school is the pastoral care and support. This factor, coupled with the strong, nurturing relationships that exist between staff and pupils, fosters a real sense of family living. The school demonstrates its commitment to anti-discriminatory practice, valuing diversity. There are a number of forums, both formal and informal, for pupils to contribute their views to the residential practice. Staff are encouraged and well supported to undertake training opportunities and have their performances reviewed on a regular basis. There is good leadership, oversight and monitoring of the care provided.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were two recommendations made at the last inspection. Areas highlighted for improvement related mainly to record keeping. The records of menus served indicate that a varied and nutritional diet is provided. The school regularly updates risk assessments relating to pupils' behaviour and activities as well as the safety of the premises and grounds, including fire safety.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The pupils' health is promoted through health plans and these are good working documents. The care plans demonstrate that physical health and emotional needs are identified, addressed and reviewed regularly. The school nurse oversees all matters relating to health and medication. However, the arrangements for the safe administration of medicines do not wholly protect pupils' health. Although records and procedures are in place for this purpose, there is no clear written policy on how to provide non-prescription medicines to pupils. Parents have provided written consent to first aid and medical treatment and staff who are suitably trained in first aid provide emergency treatment in the residence.

The welfare of pupils is further promoted by the highly valued input and accessibility of specialist services such as educational psychologists, psychiatrists, and speech and language therapists. In addition pupils have access to their own general practitioners, dentists and opticians, if required. Pupils learn about a range of health issues including sexual health, keeping safe and substance and alcohol misuse.

The pupils' health is enhanced by the provision of nutritious and varied meals. There are choices at each meal. Some pupils said that they could have an individual choice if ordered in advance. Special diets are also catered for. Fruit is readily available at meal times and for snacks. The catering team are aware of current healthy eating campaigns and have introduced healthier options and practices into the menu. Further examples of the commitment to healthy eating include posters in the building highlighting the importance of eating 'five a day' and the provision of fresh water to pupils at all times. Pupils are empowered to feed back comments on meals, including their likes and dislikes, to the catering team, who respond personally to each comment. The dining room and furnishings are suitable for the numbers and needs of the pupils. Meals are well-managed social occasions offering autonomy to pupils in a supportive environment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff respect pupils' privacy and dignity. They are discreet when dealing with sensitive matters, and respect privacy by knocking on doors before entering. There are policies covering areas of privacy, dignity and confidentiality which underpin and

encourage good practice. Pupils can have time alone in their bedrooms. They have their own lockable storage for personal items. All bathroom and toilet facilities have suitable locks. Pupils' privacy is further protected by the secure storage of all confidential records.

The pupils' welfare is protected through a complaints procedure. There is a clear culture within the school and the residence of listening to pupils and encouraging them, staff and families to raise any concerns they may have. Records demonstrate that staff at the school act swiftly, in line with their policies, to ensure that satisfactory outcomes are achieved. Effective monitoring systems further protect pupils' welfare. For example, formal and informal complaints and any causes for concern are promptly addressed and any patterns or trends that may arise are identified.

Although the pupils' welfare is protected through the child protection procedures adopted by the school, the policy and procedures that are available to staff do not clearly describe types of abuse or the staffs duty to report matters. It is clear that any issue relating to child protection is addressed in line with the local safeguarding children procedures. Staff receive child protection training at their initial induction and refresher training is regularly updated. The designated child protection officers for the school and the residence have undertaken specific training with the children's directorate of the county council. Staff are good at doing all they can to ensure the safety of pupils when they place themselves at risk either in the residence or in the community. There are detailed risk assessments relating to each young person's vulnerability and how staff minimise potential risks.

The pupils are protected from bullying through staff vigilance and the school's positive approach. Any form of bullying is taken very seriously and pupils have forums in which to raise concerns. Pupils say they can complete a form entitled 'I want you to know this!' Other opportunities include a daily pupils' meeting and one to one discussions. Clear records demonstrate action taken. Staff are familiar with the good Missing From Home procedures that promote the safety and welfare of pupils, should they go missing. Pupils are supported through a risk management approach which maintains good outcomes. Staff are vigilant and communication is good so that pupils are kept safe.

The pupils develop positively through the creative culture of the celebration of achievement. Staff use a variety of skills to encourage and positively reinforce good behaviour. Self esteem is built through the promotion of good behaviour. The school has policies on behaviour management and these support staff to promote acceptable behaviour. They include the use of approved sanctions and guidance on physical intervention. Not all sanctions and physical interventions are recorded appropriately as some of the records are vague and unclear. There are also a number of errors and changes made to the permanent records. This makes it hard to track some of the issues highlighted within the behaviour management process.

The welfare of pupils is protected by a comprehensive health and safety policy and effective risk assessments. Risk assessments are good working documents and cover

the grounds, buildings, fire safety, off-site activities and security issues. Maintenance issues are prioritised to ensure safety at all times. Pupils are further protected by taking part in regular fire drills to ensure they know what to do in case of fire. All electrical and gas installations are routinely maintained and all substances hazardous to health are securely stored. Pupils' welfare is promoted through various safety programmes, which include road safety training and cycling proficiency. Each young person has individual risk assessments relating to behaviour and activities undertaken.

Pupils' welfare is protected by a robust staff recruitment process. The school follows a very clear policy on recruitment in line with the current guidance. There is a detailed record of the selection process undertaken. This demonstrates that rigorous checks are in place prior to new staff commencing work. Criminal Record Bureau disclosures at the enhanced level are undertaken for all personnel at the school, who may have unsupervised contact with pupils.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The educational achievement of the pupils is greatly enhanced through the holistic approach applied across the school. Communication between care staff and the school support staff is excellent. Teaching and care staff attend annual review meetings to discuss pupils' development to ensure consistency of care and approach. The pupils further benefit from having a statement of educational need.

Many excellent examples of work both in the residential setting and throughout the school demonstrate how the holistic approach is promoted. Care staff are dedicated to supporting pupils outside of the class room. Following episodes where pupils have found it difficult to engage in the classroom, the teaching staff then offer educational support in the evenings. An independent living programme is available in the residence for post-16 students. This runs in tandem with the life skills curriculum. Care and academic staff prepare pupils for independent living and potential work placements.

Pupils benefit from excellent levels of individual support received from staff and external agencies. Staff support pupils within the residence, at mealtimes and when out and about either within the school grounds or in the community. Staff receive training in the role of the key-worker. They empower pupils to attend meetings and reviews regarding their future. Pupils benefit greatly from the wide range of leisure activities available to them. These include visiting local leisure centres, the cinema and youth clubs. Each evening the pupils are encouraged to choose from an extensive range of activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The pupils are fully involved in the consultation process, which helps to promote their welfare. For example they have a daily pupil meeting, which affects change. All pupils have key-workers who advocate, support and encourage pupils to attend informal and formal meetings, thereby ensuring that they are part of the care planning and reviewing process.

Pupils benefit from clear care plan packages which set out how the school will meet their assessed needs. The extensive referral procedures ensure that each pupil's needs are known and understood prior to entering residence. A wealth of evidence demonstrates how the school meets the needs of each individual pupil. Parents and pupils are involved in the care planning process and regular reviews are undertaken. Further documentation that demonstrates how individual pupils' needs are met is held on their confidential records. It includes assessments from professionals such as speech and language therapists and educational psychologists, as well as running records used on a daily basis in the residence.

The pupils' welfare is promoted further as they are encouraged and supported to maintain valued relationships with family. Parents and guardians are fully consulted regarding all aspects of the pupils' lives. This includes telephone contact whenever necessary. All contact is clearly recorded on individual case files.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The pupils are encouraged to develop life skills that prepare them for adulthood and independence. There are opportunities for older pupils to prepare for the transition to independent living. They state that they can contribute to 'my care plan', where staff aid pupils to highlight their aims in relation to moving on. One pupil stated that he is able to make more informed choices about his daily life and is beginning to feel empowered, motivated and more confident. The commitment of the care staff working in this area is commendable.

The residential areas that pupils use are very well-maintained, homely and comfortable and pupils like their bedrooms. For example, one pupil said: 'I like my bedroom as it's comfortable and warm'. There is a rolling programme of decoration, replacement and modification. Parts of the residence have been fitted with new shower cubicles and similar refurbishment is planned for other areas. A number of pupils made comment about the condition of the gymnasium that they use for recreation out of school time. The gymnasium was very cold on the day of the inspection. This is not a pleasant and inviting area to play in.

Staff support the pupils to have access to cordless telephones, so that pupils can make and receive free personal phone calls in the privacy of their own rooms, if they

choose.

The school promotes links with the community. For example, pupils attend a local youth club and football clubs in their leisure time. Residential care staff enable them to learn from experiences such as eating in restaurants and going to the theatre. The school is also involved with external groups that provide work experience opportunities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The residential resource is a well managed service which provides a safe setting for pupils with complex needs and a positive and supportive learning environment for staff. The staff are competent, motivated and professional. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

The Statement of Purpose and the pupils' guide reflect the service provided. However, they have not been reviewed regularly. The guide, 'An introduction to Bramfield House School' is well written, with good quality pictures but it does not describe all the services available in the school. It does not refer to the detached residence that is used by pupils. The guide provides relevant information on how the residence intends to meet the needs of the pupils.

The pupils' welfare is protected and promoted by sufficient day and night staff with experience to meet their needs. Rotas demonstrate that current staffing levels meet the school's Statement of Purpose. There are good arrangements for managing and supervising staff throughout the 24 hour day. There is continuity of staff to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils, and there is an effective on call system for summoning senior assistance should the need arise.

A committed and dedicated staff team promotes pupils' safety and welfare. The vast majority of staff have achieved National Vocational Qualification level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Upon commencement of employment, staff undertake an induction programme. All core training is provided, which includes child protection, fire safety, health and safety, first aid and behaviour management. Training records are easy to retrieve. The welfare of pupils is further promoted by staff who are suitably supported. All staff receive regular supervision; they attend regular staff meetings and whole school training days.

The head of care is responsible for monitoring pupils' care, including consultations with children and parents and recording of information. There is evidence that all action points are followed up and that these lead to improvements in practice.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- review the policy and procedures in relation to non-prescribed and household medicines (NMS 14.17)
- ensure that safeguarding procedures are fully consistent with Appendix 1 (NMS 5.4)
- maintain a clear and comprehensive record of any use of physical intervention (NMS 10.14)
- ensure that fixed play areas are well maintained, in particular provide sufficient heating in the gymnasium (NMS 24.3)
- review the pupils' guide to the Statement of Purpose, in particular outline any special features of the school. (NMS 1.4)