

Bramfield House School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection 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, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Bramfield House is an independent special school providing day and boarding facilities for boys aged 9 to 18 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Presently there are 39 residential pupils and 19 day pupils. 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, a senior boarding house and a range of separate buildings used for teaching and recreation. Other facilities include an indoor swimming pool, gymnasium and horticultural area. The previous inspection of the school's residential provision took place in March 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for residential pupils	good
Quality of residential provision and care	good
Residential pupils' safety	good
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is good. The provision has a positive and effective impact on pupils' personal and social development and their educational progress.
- Pupils are provided with a good quality of care to meet their individual needs in an inclusive and supportive environment.
- The safety of pupils is given a high priority. Pupils feel safe at the school.
- Strong working partnerships across the school community and with external agencies effectively support pupils and contribute to their development, progress and well-being.
- A broad range of activities provides pupils with opportunities to keep physically active, develop social skills and build their confidence and self-esteem.
- There is good leadership and management of the residential provision. All recommendations raised at the last inspection have been suitably addressed or work is in progress to do so.
- Staffing arrangements ensure continuity of care.
- Pupils are happy with the care and support they receive. Parents, staff and external professionals give high praise to the work of the school.
- There are a number of strengths in the provision. The school meets all of the national minimum standards.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. Pupils positively benefit from their residential experience and the individual support they receive. The vast majority of pupils speak very highly of their residential experience and the positive impact this has on them as individuals. For example, they refer to better self-control and improved relationships with their parents. Specific reference is also made to the wide range of activities on offer, the positive relationships pupils have with staff and the support pupils receive in relation to managing their behaviour. Each of these aspects contribute to pupils making good progress in developing their self-esteem, social skills and emotional resilience and in turn contributes to their educational progress.

Regular community meetings encourage pupils to reflect on the highs and lows of the day/week and how events have impacted on individuals and the school community. This practice promotes an understanding and tolerance of others, the ability of pupils to accept praise and the further development of pupils' self-management.

Pupils benefit from positive, nurturing relationships with male and female staff who provide good role models and consistent routines. The health and well-being of pupils is supported by an informed staff team and through effective partnerships with other professionals. Pupils report they feel particularly well cared for when feeling unwell or anxious at night. A broad range of activities provides pupils with opportunities to keep physically active and develop new interests. For example, a group of pupils are currently taking skiing lessons in preparation for a forthcoming skiing trip.

Pupils' views are sought on a regular basis in relation to menus and activities and they are encouraged to make suggestions for the development of the residential community through regular boys' meetings and discussions with staff. Current consultation includes contributions to the revision of the pupils' handbook. These practices provide pupils with a sense of belonging and self-worth.

Pupils develop and acquire life skills to help prepare them for independence and adult life. These initially include making their beds, sorting their laundry and keeping their bed space tidy. As pupils progress through the school, expectations and targets increase to encourage them to take on more responsibility for themselves. These areas are developed and supported by the school's curriculum, work experience and preparation for independence schemes. Daily routines in the main dining room have recently changed in response to an increase in pupil numbers. As a result pupils' contributions to meal time routines have diminished which is frustrating for some. These matters are currently under consideration and review as part of the ongoing development of the school.

Comments from parents and external professionals in relation to the school are very positive. These include, 'pastoral care is a strength of the school;' 'staff know

children well;' 'staff are good at involving young people in annual reviews;' 'staff keep me informed' and 'staff have gone above and beyond their duty to provide support.'

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of boarding provision and care is good. Admissions are planned and sensitively handled through effective procedures involving home visits and visits to the school. Pupils are provided with written information and there is designated peer support to help them settle in. Pastoral care is a real strength of the school and pupils benefit from a committed and caring team of staff with a range of experience and interests. Effective working partnerships between care and education staff ensure pupils are provided with appropriate support tailored to their needs and any issues are promptly dealt with. This practice also ensures consistency of approach and contributes to the positive maintenance of individual placements.

Individual care plans are updated as required and reviewed in consultation with pupils. Staff value each pupil as an individual and demonstrate good knowledge of their character and needs. A key worker system is operated and contributes to the efficient co-ordination of information and attendance of individual pupils at meetings and reviews.

Pupils' health and well-being are positively supported across the school community. The importance of a healthy lifestyle is promoted through the curriculum and reinforced by care staff. Health care plans are in place where appropriate and staff maintain effective links with specialist services supporting individual pupils. Medication is securely stored and administered by designated staff who have received appropriate training. Written procedures provided to staff have been updated in response to the last inspection; further work is being conducted in relation to the administering of homely remedies. It is evident that practice in some areas relating to the safe management of medication goes beyond the current policy in place. These practices are worthy of inclusion in the policy to endorse good practice. Pupils confirm they are cared for appropriately when they feel unwell and arrangements are made for them to return to home.

Pupils are provided with healthy meals offering choice and variety. Menus take account of pupils' likes and dislikes through information gained from questionnaires and boys' meetings. Individual dietary needs are catered for where required and staff sensitively monitor food intake. Meal times are social occasions and are set up to encourage the development of social skills and positive interaction between pupils. Catering staff have a good rapport with pupils and receive appropriate training for their role. The team has received a five star award for food safety standards.

Residential accommodation is spacious, clean, pleasantly decorated and provides a welcoming environment. Pupils are able to personalise an area of their bedroom with pictures and photographs if they wish. Premises and outside areas are regularly

checked and maintenance matters promptly attended to. Work has taken place in relation to the school gymnasium since the last inspection. A new roof has been added and the interior painted with pleasing results. Pupils are provided with lockers to keep their possessions safe; staff hold the keys and also provide additional storage for items of value in the staff room. Efficient provision is made for the laundering of pupils' clothing and bedding. Pupils benefit from access to a range of school facilities to support aspects of the activity programme. These areas, together with a choice of recreational rooms within the residential provision, provide pupils with opportunities to participate in noisy or quiet pursuits and space to be on their own if they wish.

Pupils are able to retain contact with their families/carers and can make and receive telephone calls in private. Support is provided where necessary. Staff maintain at least weekly contact with parents and carers to promote the well-being of pupils and to keep them informed of any issues and positive achievements.

Residential pupils' safety

The arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare and safety are good. Robust recruitment procedures are efficiently operated and visitors and contractors on site are monitored. These practices help to reduce the risk of unsuitable people having contact with pupils. Effective policies, and procedures and risk assessments promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils and are regularly reviewed and updated.

All staff receive child protection training and regular updates appropriate to their role. Bullying is not tolerated and is not identified as a problem at the school. Any form of bullying is taken seriously and pupils report that the school deals well with any such issues. Pupils identify a range of adults across the school community they would go to for support if needed. Pupils feel safe and are able to talk to a member of staff of their choice. Details of outside contact numbers are provided in the pupils' handbook. However, these do not include the contact details of the Children's Rights Director.

Individual care plans and associated assessments identify risks and strategies to address them. These are regularly reviewed and updated. Staff are vigilant and incidents of pupils going missing are extremely low. Staff are familiar with the school's procedures for dealing with such incidents and take appropriate action. However, the school is not familiar with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocol and procedures and does not hold a copy on file. This shortfall has not impacted on the safety and welfare of pupils in view of the extremely low rate of incidents since the last inspection and the circumstances surrounding them.

Pupils are effectively supported to develop appropriate behaviour through clear expectations, reflective discussions and consistency of approach. The school's points system encourages and positively rewards good behaviour, achievement and being helpful. Pupils are familiar with the expectations placed upon them and daily opportunities are provided to discuss any difficulties encountered and to praise achievements. Records of incidents, including the use of physical intervention, are

appropriately maintained and include pupils' comments. The standard of recording in relation to the use of physical intervention has improved since the last inspection. Physical intervention is only used as a last resort. Effective monitoring and analysis of data show that incidents of physical intervention reduce in number throughout the academic year. In addition, individual physical intervention numbers are shown to generally decrease year on year indicating an increased emotional maturity and development of alternative strategies by individuals for dealing with their anger and frustration.

Regular safety and servicing checks are carried out to support the maintenance of a safe environment and pupils are familiar with fire evacuation procedures. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and pupils are aware of safety matters affecting them. For example, pupils demonstrate knowledge of the school's bounds, appropriate use of play equipment and safe internet use. Premises are secure and residential accommodation is reserved for the use of pupils designated to use it.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. The provision is an integral part of the school and is efficiently and effectively managed. There is a strong focus on continuous improvement and equal and fair treatment for all pupils. The senior leadership team is strongly committed to providing a quality service to pupils, families and placing authorities. The school's aims are clear, communicated to all interested parties and translated into practice. Work is underway to extensively review the pupils' handbook and the school's statement of boarding principles and practice in consultation with staff and pupils.

Well-established routines provide pupils with consistency and contribute to a safe, orderly atmosphere and supportive environment. Staffing arrangements are effectively managed and ensure there is sufficient staff on duty at all times to supervise boarders and support activities. Recent significant changes made to duty rotas have been positively embraced by staff who consider the changes to be of considerable benefit to both staff and pupils. All staff have access to good support, guidance and training to support them in their role and systems are in place for the review of individual performance.

Parents, carers and placing authorities report they are kept regularly informed of pupil progress and any concerns. They enjoy positive relationships with the school and are made to feel welcome. Information regarding the school's complaints procedures is provided to pupils, parents and carers. Pupils are encouraged to raise any worries they may have at an early stage with an adult of their choice.

Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to express their views about the daily life and development of the residential provision. Opportunities include pupil meetings, daily contact with staff and key worker time. In the main pupils feel their views are listened to and things change as a result where possible. Agendas are

compiled but it is not always clear that minutes are taken or are prominently displayed for pupils to refer back to.

Effective monitoring by independent visitors and evaluative reports compiled by the head teacher and head of care contribute to the development of the school and residential provision. Regularly reviewed procedures and guidance are in place to support the work of the school and are readily accessible to staff. Appropriate records are maintained and securely stored. The compilation of pupils' working files has recently been reviewed and many of the recording systems improved. Files examined provide a good overview of an individual's time spent at the school, their development and progress.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What should the school do to improve further?

- ensure a copy of the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located are held on file and brought to the attention of staff
- include the contact details of the Children's Rights Director in the revised pupil handbook
- ensure the school's administration of medication policy and procedures fully reflect the positive practices of staff
- ensure clear minutes are taken of boys' meetings and are prominently displayed together with any feedback from senior staff.

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.



06/03/2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bramfield House School

We enjoyed our recent visit to your school. You made us feel welcome and we are grateful for the time you spent talking to us and showing us around.

You told us you really enjoy being able to take part in a wide range of activities and trips out with staff and other boys. Staff regularly spend time with you and talk to you about how you are feeling and progressing. They involve you in planning for your future and you are able to make suggestions about the running of the school. Good behaviour, effort and achievement are rewarded. You work hard to achieve points and enjoy having targets and incentives to work towards. Many of you told us how much the school has helped you and how supportive staff are. When you find things difficult, staff discuss things with you, listen to you and together you try and move forward.

You are encouraged to eat healthily and keep active. You told us you like the food and are able to make suggestions to menus. The residential areas are spacious and welcoming. They are kept clean, are well looked after and you are pleased with the choice of spaces where you can play, do activities or have some quiet time. Staff talk to you about keeping safe both when at Bramfield House and when out with staff or friends. You know about fire drills and safety at Bramfield House and the areas where you may play in the grounds.

This is a good school and you are happy with the support and care you receive. We enjoyed meeting you all and wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely,

Dorrit Andrews