

Grafham Grange 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

Grafham Grange School, situated in Surrey, is a non-maintained residential special school for up to 44 boys aged from 10 to 19 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The Grafham Grange Special Educational Trust administers the school.

All pupils attending the school have complex and challenging needs. Many will have experienced breakdowns of previous educational placements and have had periods out of full-time education. Boarding provision is currently organised into two living units, one within the main school and the other, for older pupils, located nearby, close to the main school campus.

The residential provision was last inspected in March 2012.

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	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- Pupils live in a highly inclusive boarding environment where there are very good quality relationships. They have a strong affiliation to the residential environment and feel part of the family. The positive residential experience promotes pupils' personal, social, cultural and social development. Each pupil is seen as unique. Individuality is celebrated and responded to with a range of interventions and sensitive interactions.
- Pupils keep as fit and healthy as possible and there are extremely effective health care arrangements in place with a qualified nurse on site. There is a wide range of support available both externally, in effective working with other professionals, and internally, for example through the therapeutic support service. Wider family support is available through the family support inclusion team.
- The views, wishes and feelings of pupils are readily taken into account through day-to-day contact, regular meetings and the school council, as well as contact with their key worker. Their views make a difference such as choice of activity, spending of money on equipment or food choices.
- There is a comprehensive and detailed approach in preparing pupils for the next stage of life after school. Pupils move on successfully to further education or work experience. A comprehensive life skills programme and detailed pathway plans prepare pupils for adult life.
- Boarding accommodation is an excellent standard, safe and well maintained. A rolling refurbishment programme is managed effectively to maintain standards. On the whole, the environment is homely. However, the carrying of large bunches of keys by staff is not always conducive to supporting relaxation in a homely

environment.

- Food is of adequate quality and good portion size. There are clear changes planned for the catering arrangements to further improve the quality, quantity and variety of food on offer.
- Pupils' safety is at the heart of the school and there is excellent practice in making safeguarding alerts. All staff are fully trained in child protection and receive regular refresher training. They follow procedures diligently and alert possible concerns to the relevant agencies.
- Positive and proactive behaviour management strategies are consistently applied. There is a robust procedure on the use of physical restraints which are only used when necessary. Instances of physical intervention are followed up appropriately with all involved including the pupil. Some of the internal jargon used in the reporting process is well understood by staff. However, this may not be clear, on every occasion, to other professionals without interpretation. This has no impact on the quality of care.
- There is a robust approach for countering bullying and a full understanding and commitment by all staff to provide an anti-bullying environment. Group dynamics are carefully considered and staff are on hand to de-escalate any issues.
- There is exceptional leadership. Senior staff are fully committed and enthusiastic about the value of boarding, have high expectations and ensure routines run smoothly. Pupils are extremely well cared for and fully supported. The leadership team evaluates its own performance and uses independent visitor findings to constantly drive for improvement in pursuit of excellence.
- The diverse nature and needs of pupils are met and everyone has the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential. Extremely individualised transition and support plans are in place for pupils entering the boarding environment. These are successful and pupils, who have not accessed education for some years, are now receiving an education. All national minimum standards are met.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for pupils are very good. Pupils benefit from a supportive and nurturing environment where they develop skills, independence and confidence. The boarding experience enables them to develop these skills to a significant standard and develop constructive, tolerant relationships with their peers as well as the adults caring for them. Parents say, 'They got my child's life back.'

The behaviour of pupils significantly improves during their time at the school. They develop alternative ways of expressing their difficult and challenging emotions and receive close support from understanding staff and other internal and external professionals. Clear boundaries and expectations of behaviour mean that standards

are maintained.

Pupils are more confident and independent because of the wide range of opportunities for them to develop personal and social skills. Pupils say they enjoy the stimulating and purposeful activities. They are empowered because they are able to choose their favourite activities and extend their social skills through effective links with the wider community. Building up life skills is positively embraced in the routines and activities offered.

Pupils' opinions are valued. They have numerous members of staff to voice their thoughts and feelings to. Pupils are able to speak out as individuals or as a group and feel they have a voice in the school. Additionally, they have ready access to senior members of staff who are present throughout the school day and to an independent visitor who makes very regular visits to the school.

Pupils are encouraged to develop understanding of their own health needs. For example, they are aware of the need for good personal hygiene and healthy eating. They learn about growing up and various health needs. Pupils are encouraged to do regular exercise and particularly enjoy sports such as football. Staff liaise with relevant health agencies, professionals and parents to ensure comprehensive health care plans are in place.

Pupils benefit from particularly well-planned and structured transition plans. Support for pupils during this time is excellent. This ensures that they receive opportunities to become independent and become responsible members of society.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision is good. Pastoral support offered to pupils is supportive and nurturing. Each pupil receives a thorough induction in order to prepare for life at the school. Individual plans outline the strengths, vulnerabilities and strategies for support which is inclusive of cultural and spiritual needs. A range of on-going pastoral support is offered to pupils. Good communication between education and care staff ensures all staff are kept up to date with the most recent information about each individual pupil. This means pupils make significant progress and grow in their confidence and self-esteem.

Great care is taken to ensure that pupils have opportunities to experience positive and challenging activities and develop their life skills. Leisure time is spent productively with a range of nurturing, fun and interactive activities offered in consultation with education, staff and parents.

Pupils enjoy improvements in their physical, emotional and psychological health. Staff liaise effectively with relevant health agencies and other professionals including child and adolescent mental health services. Other internal professionals and access to a range of therapeutic services ensures that pupils' emotional well-being is promoted

to a particularly high standard. Systems to ensure the medication is recorded and administered are robust. Individual dietary needs in relation to health or culture are met. Mealtimes are well ordered social occasions, which are seen as an opportunity to develop social skills. Clear plans are in place to improve further the quality, quantity and variety of food on offer and encourage pupils to take more responsibility for personal hygiene, such as washing their hands before meals.

The quality of the residential accommodation is a strength of this school. There is a rolling refurbishment programme that is managed extremely effectively.

Accommodation is comfortable, well-furnished and maintained to a good standard. Pupils are able to personalise their own rooms. One point of improvement is to review the arrangements for the locking of doors, as staff carry a large number of keys around with them. This may give the accommodation an institutional feel.

Parents are fully involved in the life of their child at the school. Parents say, 'It's all of us together.' There is regular monitoring and review of care plans and agreement reached on how pupils can be supported to promote the best possible outcomes. Plans focus on clear targets including managing behaviour and supporting independence. Pupils are able to contact families, carers and loved ones easily.

Residential pupils' safety

There is excellent provision at the school for ensuring pupils are safe and protected from harm. The culture embedded in the school ensures that pupils benefit from a robust and rigorous approach which treats their emotional and physical safety as paramount. Designated staff take the lead responsibility for child protection and receive training relevant to the role. There is close collaborative working with others, such as the family inclusion support team, to identify any concerns. In addition, effective links are formed with external agencies so that the welfare of pupils is promoted and protected to an excellent standard. The rigorous safeguarding policy is known to all and this is followed meticulously should any concerns arise. Records kept of any incidents are very well-organised and of high quality.

There is a comprehensive procedure in place in the event of pupil goes missing. However, this is not identified as a current issue. People say they feel safe and content in the school and have people they can talk to about any concerns.

The school operates a rigorous approach to bullying. Pupils are aware that bullying is not acceptable. Any incidents of bullying are closely monitored and action plans to prevent it are put in place. Pupils say they feel safe and are confident staff deal effectively with any problems with group dynamics.

Positive behaviour is encouraged and celebrated. There are very clear boundaries in place and pupils know what the behavioural expectations and rules are. Incidents are carefully recorded and monitored by senior staff. Excellent records are maintained of any incidents requiring physical intervention. However, the use of some internal

phrases, or jargon, does not accurately and fully describe the intervention or sanction used. This has no impact on safeguarding or the quality of care. All physical interventions are carefully analysed as to their appropriateness and pupils are able to add their views and comments related to incidents they have been involved in. This ensures that strategies under constant review and amended to suit individual needs and progress. There is a significant reduction in the number and frequency of incidents involving physical intervention.

The safety of the school and residential provision is monitored effectively. Fire precautions and fire equipment are checked on a regular basis. Fire drills are held regularly. Detailed risk assessments are in place for the environment as well as on-site and off-site activities. This includes high risk activities such as motocross. Pupils are able to participate in the activities they enjoy with acceptable levels of risk and are kept as safe as possible. Visitors are signed in and monitored while on the premises and closed circuit television system provides additional security.

The consistent on-going support at a senior level ensures that the well-being of the whole school community is promoted and protected on a daily basis.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the school are of an outstanding calibre. This is a key strength and influence on driving forward improvements and high expectations of staff and pupils. As a result, pupils are experiencing consistent, well-planned care across a 24 hour curriculum. Staff are motivated to care for the diverse needs of pupils sensitively.

The school has a dedicated board of governors. They undertake unannounced independent monitoring visits and produce a report about their findings. This contributes to the on-going development of the school. Pupils not only know who the governors are, but meet with them regularly. Governors are seen as an integral part of the school community.

Pupils benefit from the consistent and committed staff team who have excellent opportunities for professional development. Pupils are supported by a staff team who are themselves well supported through regular supervision. A comprehensive induction programme ensures new members of staff are very well prepared to work at school. Staff are clear about the roles and responsibilities. Staff are effectively deployed to ensure the individual needs of pupils are able to be met effectively. Policies and procedures support and promote excellent practice across the school. Parents report excellent communication with the school. They said, 'The school understands my child's needs.' There is a formal and robust complaint systems in place should be a need for parents to complain.

Detailed monitoring system and clear lines of responsibility ensure that performance is analysed with a view to achieving high standards. This also contributes to

improving on performance and delivery. Practice is analysed and areas for improvement identified and acted upon.

All information is appropriately and safely stored to ensure that confidentiality of records is maintained. Records kept are thorough and give a comprehensive account of each pupil's time, experience and progress at the school.

The school has met comprehensively the areas for improvement identified at previous inspections. These include to ensure all electrical items bought into the school are checked, to complete records of sanctions consistently and to develop the independence and life skills programmes for pupils.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- review the arrangements for the locking of doors and cupboards
- implement the planned changes in the catering arrangements to further improve the quality, quantity and variety of food on offer
- use accurate terms to fully describe each agreed behaviour management intervention.

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.



17/10/2012

Dear All pupils at Grafham Grange School

Inspection of Grafham Grange School

It was a pleasure to meet with some of you during my recent inspection of your school.

I found your school to be good overall. The school is led and managed by an extremely competent head and head of care. They are fully committed to meeting your needs and achieving the best possible outcomes. Likewise, their enthusiasm is captured by staff who are equally dedicated to meeting all your individual needs.

I found there is a good commitment to keep you healthy with a wide range of activities available to you. I was pleased that management have recognised the need to improve the catering arrangements and I have asked them to make sure they do this.

I found there is good pastoral support available to you within the school and also outside the school. Many of you take advantage of this and find alternative ways to deal with your difficult and challenging emotions. It is very pleasing to see that the number of difficult incidents is significantly decreasing.

The accommodation is of an excellent standard and it was good that you are able to personalise your bedroom area. I've asked the management to review whether the staff need to carry so many keys around at all times which sometimes gives the school an institutional feel.

Some of you said bullying is an issue. I found that the senior managers and staff do all they can to make this an anti-bullying school. There are very good systems in place for you to report your concerns and to make sure that any incidents are dealt with quickly and to your satisfaction.

I've asked the management to accurately describe any sanctions that are put in place and to avoid the use of terms such as 'gating'.

I was pleased that care staff and education staff work closely together to improve your life chances. The boarding provision is effective in supporting you to access your education. It was particularly pleasing to see the comprehensive life skills programme in place. You are learning life skills as well as academic skills.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Riley