

# Bramfield House School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI
Social care inspector	Stephen Halliley

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

The inspection of boarding provision 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 the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>3, 4</sup>

## Information about the school

Bramfield House is a residential special school for boys aged seven to 18 years who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils have often been out of school for long periods prior to admission. Each pupil has a statement of special educational needs and is funded by their local authority. Ten pupils are looked after by their local authority. The school is situated in a rural location in Suffolk, where it was established over 40 years ago. Originally owned by a private individual, the school is now one of several similar schools owned by Acorn Care and Education. The school aims to provide outstanding education and care that supports pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development and special educational needs, within a supportive and caring school environment.

The school's registration was updated in August 2012 to increase the number of school places from 60 to 65. There are currently 60 pupils on roll between the ages of eight and 16. Forty-five places are available for weekly boarders and there are currently 38 boys in residence. The residential provision was last inspected in March 2012 and the education provision was last inspected in October 2009.

## Evaluation of the school

Bramfield House provides pupils with a good standard of education and a good residential experience. All other aspects of its work are also good, and the residential pupils' safety was found to be outstanding. Improvements since the previous inspections are clear in both the education and residential provision. In particular, there is now a well-coordinated approach between day and residential staff. This ensures that staff are well informed about the pupils' academic and personal development across the 24-hour period. Placing authorities, parents and carers are

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>4</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

very positive about the provision. All regulations for independent schools and the national minimum standards for residential special schools are met.

## **Quality of education**

The quality of education is good. Improvements since the previous inspection in the curriculum and teaching mean that pupils now make good progress in their academic and personal development, often from low starting points. Pupils gain some GCSEs and other nationally recognised qualifications, and there are secure plans in place to further widen these opportunities. Most boys go on to further education.

The curriculum is good. Changes over the past 18 months have helped pupils to remain in lessons for more of the time; less disruption means that more learning takes place. One of the most significant changes is the introduction of the Reflection Room to give additional, planned support for literacy and numeracy, as well as a calm place to go when things become difficult in class. This helps pupils to become more confident in their learning and to stay focused in other lessons. A revised approach to the curriculum for the youngest pupils, often new into the school, works well to improve their learning alongside a nurturing approach to their personal development. Across the school, pupils' progress in literacy is not as good as in other subjects. This is because the curriculum for reading and spelling is not structured enough. Having identified this as a weakness, changes have already been made and more will be implemented next term. In addition, senior staff recognise that lessons in the afternoon are too long and affect pupils' attitude to work.

The introduction of additional examination courses for design and technology, information and communication technology, English and science mean that pupils in Key Stage 3 are now well placed to leave school with a wider range and higher level of qualifications than previously. For example, early entry to examinations by pupils in Year 9 increases their rate of progress towards GCSEs. Subject specialists have improved their schemes of work, but opportunities for pupils to study and consolidate their learning through homework are not well organised.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall, with strengths in teaching and some weaknesses in assessment. Assessment is satisfactory because, although the systems have improved considerably, measuring pupils' progress and the use of targets to promote progress are not well enough developed. This makes it difficult to check that pupils make enough progress. Similarly, teachers assess pupils' work well using National Curriculum levels and the boys know what these levels mean. However, teachers do not use this information well enough to plan lessons with clear learning objectives that will take the pupils on to the next level.

Pupils benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge, good behaviour management, collaborative planning by class teams, and their good relationships with adults. The school places high priority on pupils being in class and concentrating on learning which is reflected in the rewards points awarded in lessons. Good improvement in using computers and laptops to enhance teaching and learning contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of lessons and for recording their learning. For example,

photographs on screen from their visit to London helped Year 6 pupils focus on the activities in the geography and English lessons, and kept the lesson moving at a fast pace. Similarly, in a science lesson on solar energy, pupils quickly recorded amp measurements on laptops and could then debate the results and weaknesses in the experiment. Pupils enjoy lessons, and not only the practical ones. Mathematics is popular and pupils are keen to write, including extended pieces of work.

Good teaching over time is evident in the quality of pupils' work in most subjects. Displays show what pupils have achieved, especially in design and technology, information and communication technology, and art. However, displays are not as helpful in supporting learning and improvement. The same applies to teachers' marking. Most gives little feedback to pupils on how to improve or why a certain level or objective has been achieved. Not all books and folders provide a good record of pupils' learning. Some presentation is poor, with insufficiently high expectations of careful recording, accurate spelling and joined-up handwriting.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development is good. Opportunities to enhance cultural and spiritual development are well organised across the 24-hour curriculum and provide experiences that the boys may not have had before. Examples include camping in the Peak District as part of The Duke of Edinburgh Award and the regular events to celebrate different cultures such as those in India and China. Boys are extremely positive about activities and trips. These make a significant contribution to improving their behaviour because activities are explicitly linked to reward points across the 24-hour period. Contributions to communities outside school are limited. Pupils raise funds for charity but are not actively involved in other community activities locally or further afield. The curriculum, including some activities and visits, provides opportunities for pupils to understand the meaning of a democratic society and which local services they might access for support in the future.

Pupils' behaviour is good in school and in the residence. Pupils are generally attentive in lessons and keen to learn and do well. Occasionally, there is some low-level disruption which can escalate into an outburst, but these instances are well managed by staff. Pupils respond very well to the behaviour management system. Some younger pupils worry about the behaviour of the older boys, and there have been occasional instances of bullying. However, pupils are very confident that they can tell staff about problems and that they will be sorted out, with fair consequences.

The reward system is well understood, well-liked and seen to be fair. In the residence and in school, boys understand that the points accumulated have a direct effect on what activities they can do. They understand which situations earn them points and which do not. However, the reward system is the same for boys of all ages. Older boys do not have the opportunity to work towards a more age-appropriate system in preparation for independence and further education.

For younger boarders, personal development starts from their first day with, for example, tying shoe laces, telling the time and personal hygiene. This effectively develops the boys' self-confidence, self-esteem, academic and self-help skills. The residential experience for Y11 boys is enhanced by semi-independent living. Nevertheless, they sometimes expect staff to do too much for them, and are not always encouraged to be responsible for getting themselves up in the morning, getting their own breakfast and sorting out their laundry.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The welfare, health and safety of pupils are good in school, with outstanding attention to the boys' safety in the residence. Collaboration and communication between school and residence staff to support boarders are good and contribute significantly to their well-being and academic progress. Attention to safeguarding and child protection is a particular strength. All required training is up to date and the school has excellent links to external services, including mental health teams, to protect and support pupils' safety and well-being.

There is a wide range of policies to minimise health and safety risks to pupils. However, some aspects are covered by several policies, such as those for handling complaints. This means that there is sometimes a lack of clarity and speed in accessing the information, or contradictions in advice. This is particularly so in the policies for administering medication. These do not follow good practice guidelines, although the procedures for recording and monitoring of medication are robust. In addition, not all policies give guidance on how good practice can be applied, such as for preventing bullying.

The reward system is well understood by all staff and pupils and the behaviour policy is consistently applied. Expectations for appropriate behaviour are generally high and routinely talked about and explained to the boys. Expectations of pupils of all ages to take responsibility for other aspects of their daily lives, such as wearing appropriate clothes and arriving in class with the equipment they need, are not always high enough.

The curriculum provides pupils with a good understanding of different forms of bullying and the actions to take to stay safe. Internet safety, sexual health and healthy eating are all covered in lessons and in the residence. Catering arrangements are very good and include kitchen facilities in the Year 10 and 11 houses for pupils' use. The boys have a healthy diet and an awareness of their own responsibilities for their health.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

Procedures for recruiting staff and checking their suitability to work with children are thorough. Records are well kept.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The residential and education accommodation enable pupils to live and learn effectively in a safe environment. Extensive grounds and a swimming pool offer ample facilities for sport and evening activities. The art room is a helpful recent addition and current building work will, appropriately, provide extra classrooms for the younger pupils.

## **Provision of information**

The school prospectus provides a range of clear, accurate and up-to-date information about the educational and residential provision. Additional information, including policies, can be found on the school's website. The quality of reports for reviews has improved and provides parents, carers and local authorities with a suitable range of information about pupils' personal development, well-being and academic progress.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The procedures for handling complaints meet all requirements.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. The senior leadership team have ensured that the areas highlighted for improvement in the previous inspection have been addressed. The aims of the boarding provision are clear and known to all. This ensures that the boarding provision is an integral part of the school and it is valued by boarders, their families and placing authorities.

Staffing levels are high ensuring sufficiently qualified and experienced staff are available to supervise boarders and provide a wide range of activities. Staff are effectively and efficiently managed through the duty management teams who are, in turn, supported by the Head of Care. Clear, well-established and consistent routines and structures further enhance the provision of a safe, inclusive and supportive environment. Staff have access to good support and guidance and the training programme is clear and ensures all staff are able to work in a consistent manner with boarders. Although staff have a very clear formal appraisal system to further support their professional development, the regularity of formal supervision has been reduced. The Head of Care does not now receive formal supervision to support his role.

Effective monitoring by independent visitors and evaluative reports compiled by the senior management team contribute to the ongoing development of the residential provision. Policies, procedures and guidance support staff practice and are regularly reviewed. However some of these policies are unclear and may be confusing to new staff. Appropriate, clear and informative records are maintained on boarders and these are securely stored. They provide a good overview of an individual's time spent at the school, their development and progress.

Parents, carers and placing authorities are regularly informed of boarders' progress and any concerns raised are addressed quickly and efficiently. Information regarding the school's complaints procedures is provided at the time of placement. Boarders are encouraged to raise any worries they may have and confirm they can do this with an adult of their choice. There are opportunities for the boys to express their thoughts, feelings and views on the boarding provision and running of the school.

Formal key worker sessions and day-to-day discussion with staff are supported by meetings with boarders, which are held each half term. Responsibility for this rests with a newly designated member of staff who is passionate about the boys' voices being heard. An agenda is compiled to give discussion points, minutes are taken, and feedback from discussions with the Head of Care is displayed prominently within two days of the meeting. A further meeting is then held to ensure all boys are aware of the feedback given. This is a far more robust system than existed previously and shows clear improvement from the previous inspection.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

## **National minimum standards**

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

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- make better use of information on pupils' academic attainment to track their progress and set them clear targets for learning
- enhance the information given to pupils about how to improve their work, and provide regular homework to consolidate and extend their learning
- ensure all policies provide staff with clear, non-contradictory guidance, in line with good practice and legislation, that informs their practice
- ensure all residential staff and managers receive regular supervision at appropriately frequent intervals.



## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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### Overall effectiveness of the residential experience

<b>Overall effectiveness of the residential experience</b>		✓		
Outcomes for residential pupils		✓		
Quality of residential provision and care		✓		
Residential pupils' safety	✓			
Leadership and management of the residential provision		✓		

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Independent special school for pupils with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	9 November 1970		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys		
<b>Number on roll</b>	Boys: 60	Girls: 0	Total: 60
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 38	Girls: 0	Total: 60
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 60	Girls: 0	Total: 60
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 10	Girls: 0	Total: 10
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£39,216		
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£51,882		
<b>Address of school</b>	Walpole Road, Bramfield, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 9AB		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01986 784235		
<b>Email address</b>	info@bramfieldhouse.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Dee Jennings		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Acorn Care and Education		

**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.**



23 November 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Bramfield House School, Halesworth, IP19 9AB**

I am writing to thank you for your help when we inspected your school and to let you know our judgements on how well the school is doing. We judge that Bramfield House provides you with a good standard of education and a good residential experience.

As a result of good, collaborative work by staff in school and in boarding, you make good progress in your personal skills and academic achievements. We know that you particularly enjoy a wide range of activities and educational visits, and that you feel the staff support you well to improve your behaviour. It is good to find out that you spend more time in class now and this helps you to achieve more.

In order to improve the school further we have asked education staff to assess your progress more thoroughly and to consider providing homework and marking that will help you get the most from your learning. We have asked the residential staff to look at changing the way that they give medication.

We wish you well in your future at Bramfield House and know that you will want to work closely with staff to make improvements.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley  
Her Majesty's Inspector