

# Bridge School, Longmoor Campus

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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**Inspector** Joanne Vyas

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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.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

This school is a maintained primary special school. The site provides education for boys and girls aged between two and 11 years of age who have severe or profound learning disabilities; some children also fall within the autistic spectrum. The children who attend the residential unit have all been identified as having severe learning difficulties with a wide range of other needs, including communication difficulties.

The residential provision is available between Monday and Friday for up to six children on a term-time basis. The residential provision provides six week targeted intervention residential placements for those children who are deemed to require additional support. The school is a Birmingham City Local Authority school. It is close to local amenities and children also access the wide range of leisure and other facilities in the city.

The residential provision was last inspected on 14 July 2011. The school was last inspected on 16 November 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>good</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
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 school's ethos and underpinning philosophy is strong throughout, ensuring residential pupils are in a supportive and caring community within which they are valued and safe. Residential pupils develop good relationships with staff. They enjoy their experiences in the residential unit.
- Residential pupils share communal areas well, showing acceptance of one another's differences. There are high levels of supervision which ensures residential pupils are supported at all times by staff who understand their individual and complex needs.
- Staff work in partnership with parents providing a consistent and cohesive approach ensuring residential pupils learn new skills which they continue to practice and develop at home.
- A parent said that the residential provision 'Helped me massively'. All parents agreed that the residential provision have made a significant impact on the lives of their child and subsequently their family. Their children have made substantial progress as a direct consequence of staying in the residential unit. Residential pupils make significant progress towards socially acceptable behaviour, independence, communication, health and academic achievement.
- Safeguarding is a priority at this school. Residential pupils feel safe and are safe.
- The residential provision is well organised and the senior management team are focussed on improving the service.
- The school has made substantial progress from the last inspection and has now met all and exceeded many of the national minimum standards.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Residential pupils enjoy staying in the residential unit which is evidenced by the amount of smiling they do whilst there. Parents also report that their child looks forward to staying in the residential unit. A parent said, 'It's like a second family.' Residential pupils benefit from excellent relationships with staff which means they are happy and relaxed around staff. A diverse staff team and multicultural references around the unit help residential pupils to become accustomed to people from different races and religions.

Residential pupils make significant progress with regards to their health and wellbeing. For example children who struggle to sleep are encouraged into a good routine which enables them to settle well at night. Furthermore, parents' report that progress made with their child in the residential unit is also made at home. Staff support parents to implement structure, routine, rules and boundaries. They recommend appropriate equipment which will help children become more independent at home. A parent said, 'We would have gone under if it wasn't for this school.'

Residential pupils mostly behave well within the unit. Challenging behaviour is managed effectively and staff ensure the child learns more acceptable behaviour. Challenging behaviour is managed calmly and professionally. Staff provide a consistent approach and communicate effectively with parents and school staff regarding appropriate and effective strategies to manage behaviour that challenges. Residential pupils learn respect for each other, themselves and the adults around them. Parents value the service provided within the residential unit and say that their children make outstanding improvements to their behaviour.

Residential pupils contribute to the best of their ability to the running of the residential unit. Staff skilfully seek their views and note their reactions to ascertain their views on topics such as new children coming in to residence, forthcoming festivals and menus. They also are actively encouraged to choose clothing, food, drinks and activities on a day to day basis. The views of residential pupils are very important to staff. Furthermore, the views of parents are actively canvassed regularly to ensure a high quality service which is tailored to the needs of each child and their family.

The health of residential pupils is highly promoted. Staff know the children well and know the signs that indicate if they are unwell. Furthermore they initiate healthcare reviews to ensure the child receives the correct treatment for their condition. For example, staff ensure medication reviews occur to ensure prescribed medication remains appropriate. A healthcare professional said of the residential staff, 'Always ahead of the game' meaning that residential staff are able to determine quickly whether a child needs referring for a medical review.

Residential pupils are extremely well prepared for their transition into secondary school. They make visits out into the community, visiting places like the cinema, bowling, meals out and the local shops. This provides residential pupils with opportunities to experience their local community which parents may find difficult to provide. Furthermore, children from the local community visit the residential unit providing the residential pupils with opportunities to make friendships with their peers. These inclusive experiences provide residential pupils with stimulating opportunities to participate in activities which enable them to achieve their full potential.

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

Staff provide a cohesive package of education and care for residential pupils. Residential pupils benefit from a high quality of provision which ensures the personal and academic development of the child is central to all practice. There are effective links between residential and academic staff ensuring a seamless package.

Residential pupils benefit from experienced and caring staff who are knowledgeable and highly skilled in delivering targeted support. A parent said, 'Staff are fantastic, very reassuring.' Staff implement effective care and educational programmes which help residential pupils to develop their communication skills, personal care, social, behavioural and independent skills. The staff should be commended for their commitment towards each residential pupils' family; promoting excellent relationships, supporting and guiding parents with life at home with their child. This has proved particularly effective and has helped to stabilise family life.

Staff work in partnership with parents to ensure an holistic, consistent targeted approach. Parents felt that communication with them is exceptional which ensures residential pupils are provided with a high quality of care. A parent said, 'I have a good rapport with staff, I can ask them anything.' Staff visit the homes of residential pupils and parents are also invited into the unit for 'family play' each week. This means families can join the staff and their child at the school and utilise the school facilities with the support of the residential staff. Parents said they are able to 'come in to the school a lot and feel involved.'

Residential pupils appear to enjoy their meals which are based on what each child likes to eat. They are encouraged to try new foods thereby promoting a healthy diet. Meals are healthy and nutritious. Staff and residential pupils eat together at the dining table to enjoy a sociable and relaxed mealtime. They benefit greatly from this experience as they learn to sit at a table, wait patiently for their meal and conform with mealtime etiquette. Residential pupils are well supported by staff at mealtimes and are provided with appropriate equipment to ensure they can eat as independently as possible.

The residential accommodation, although small, is homely, bright and well resourced.

There is good evidence of the use of communication systems which the children understand such as symbols, signs and objects of reference. Residential pupils have single bedrooms which are highly personalised.

Residential staff work closely with parents, health and social care professionals to ensure pupils are provided with a high quality of care and support which they require to develop and promote their emotional and physical health, independence and academic achievement.

Pupils benefit from a gradual introduction into the residential unit. Staff complete a comprehensive assessment at the child's home. This ensures they have enough information to enable them to fully promote the safety and wellbeing of the child whilst staying in the residential unit. Staff support parents when looking for secondary provision, for example, staff will search for places and visit them with parents to provide support, advice and guidance as to the placement suitability.

Residential pupils benefit from an excellent range of leisure opportunities. A parent said, 'Staff will take them out to the cinema, bowling, out for dinner and concerts. They don't exclude them from anything.' Within the school they also have access to a sensory room, a hall where they can play sports, arts and crafts materials as well as puzzles, books and games.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

Safeguarding students is a priority at this school. Staff have a comprehensive knowledge of the safeguarding procedures. The designated safeguarding person overseeing residence has a comprehensive knowledge of all safeguarding concerns affecting residential students and manages these effectively ensuring the appropriate services are involved where necessary. However, the safeguarding policy is not currently explicit about the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Residential pupils feel safe and are safe in this school. The high staffing ratio means pupils do not go missing from the residential unit. The senior management team ensure pupils are appropriately matched in the residential unit to ensure bullying is not an issue and they get on well together.

Behaviour that challenges is managed competently and professionally. Staff celebrate achievement and reward good behaviour. Residential pupils begin to understand and develop socially acceptable behaviour. Staff receive training in physical intervention but rarely use it. The training focuses on de-escalation techniques which help to prevent the need for physical intervention. When physical intervention is used, it is for the right reasons and carried out in the right way. Staff use clear rules and boundaries which are consistently applied on an individual basis to ensure the safety of all pupils.

Residential pupils practice evacuating the building during fire drills to fully prepare

them should there be a fire. There are good fire safety procedures in place. The school also has robust health and safety procedures ensuring pupils are safe from identified hazards.

There are effective procedures in place for the safe recruitment of staff which ensures the safety of pupils. Furthermore, all visitors are asked to show identification and sign in and out of the building. Anyone who has not got an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check is supervised at all times.

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

The residential provision is an integral part of the school which has clear aims which are translated into practice. Staff are passionate and committed to providing a high quality service for the benefit of residential pupils ensuring their health, wellbeing and educational achievement.

The senior management team have made significant progress since the last inspection which has resulted in better outcomes for pupils. These have included improved child protection procedures ensuring all staff know who to report concerns or suspicions to; improved ways of ensuring residential pupils contribute their views to the care planning process; improved staff supervision and appraisal systems to ensure staff feel fully supported in their role; and improved monitoring by governors who are now starting to visit the residential unit half termly so they can report back to the governing body on the conduct of the residential provision.

Parents of residential pupils report that they know how to complain and who to complain to. Furthermore, the complaints procedure is accessible to all residential pupils. No complaints have been recorded.

Staff are qualified, caring, professional and competent. They attend a variety of training courses throughout the year including mandatory and more specialist training covering topics such as autism and health related topics. They feel well supported by each other and the senior management team. This means that they are provided with opportunities to reflect and improve practice ensuring a high standard of care is provided to residential pupils.

The senior management team has a strong commitment to improving practice and ensuring the quality of the service provided. They are currently working closely with the local authority to establish a clear vision for the future of the residential provision and how this can be implemented.

The school has good monitoring systems in place such as regular meetings between key members of staff and regular monitoring of records by the senior management team and governing body therefore driving up standards. However, the school's evaluation of its performance against the national minimum standards does not

currently demonstrate how the school exceeds the standards or where practice can be improved.

## **National minimum standards**

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

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

- ensure the safeguarding policy is explicit about the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer
- ensure the school's evaluation of its performance against the national minimum standards demonstrates how the school can exceed the standards and where practice can be improved.

**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.**



20/11/2012

Dear pupils in residence

**Inspection of Bridge School, Longmoor Campus**

Thank you for helping with the recent inspection of the unit at your school. I enjoyed meeting you all.

As a result of the inspection the overall judgement for residence is good.

You seem to enjoy staying overnight at your school and particularly enjoy the activities. I can see you are safe and that you get on well with staff.

Staff help you to stay healthy and make sure you eat well. You like the meals you have. Staff help you to do things by yourself and your mums tell me you also try to do things by yourself at home too.

When an inspector next visits you will be able to discuss how things are going for you again.

Yours sincerely,

Joanne Vyas