

Bridge School, Longmoor Campus

Bridge School, Longmoor Campus, Coppice View Road, Birmingham, West Midlands, B73 6UE

Inspection dates	08/07/2013 to 10/07/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Residential pupils make excellent progress in all areas of their lives. Through high quality relationships with staff, they develop their social and communication skills and access a wide range of activities in and outside of the residential provision. The residential unit provides a nurturing and homely environment.
- Residential pupils are safe and feel safe. The staff team place great emphasis on safeguarding practice and all required checks are in place. Regular and thorough audits ensure that the health and safety of residential pupils is robustly promoted at all times.
- The management arrangements for the residential provision are excellent. Regular audits ensure that any areas for improvement are identified and acted upon. The principal care officer is highly effective at managing a service that meets the residential pupils' varied needs. Excellent links between education, parents, carers and the residential unit engenders an environment where residential pupils receive highly consistent care.
- Parents and carers value the input from the residential team; they recognise and value the significant progress that their children make. A parent commented, 'the support they offer me as a parent is excellent.' Another parent commented, 'the staff work really well with the education team, the consistency is fantastic.'
- The school has ensured that progress since the last inspection has been excellent. The two areas for improvement have been robustly addressed and further improvements have been made to the service. As a result of this inspection, two further improvement areas have been identified. These relate to updating the school's website and the residential pupils' guide to the residential unit.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

One residential unit, accommodating up to six pupils, was inspected following notification to the school on the morning of the first day of inspection. A range of inspection activities took place including meetings with various staff members, discussions with governors and the school's senior management team, observations of pupils and speaking with parents and carers. Records were looked at as part of the inspection and included care files, policies, records of environmental checks, menus, staffing files and health and safety documentation. Direct observation of residential pupils and their interaction with the residential staff was completed and the inspector spoke to children as part of the inspection.

Inspection team

Pete Hylton

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this 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 single residential unit have all been identified as having severe learning disabilities 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 22 November 2012. The school was last inspected on 16 November 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the school's website is updated and includes up to date contact information regarding the governing body.
- Ensure that the guide given to residential pupils is updated with more recent photographs of the residential unit.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Residential pupils make exceptional progress in developing their social skills. As a result of staying at the school, they develop their tolerance of others and access a wide range of community activities. Pupils play an active part in the local community and enjoy new experiences. For example, pupils enjoy trips to the cinema, bowling and to restaurants. Parents and carers value the progress that their children make. Comments from parents include; 'the difference in my child since they have been staying at the school is amazing' and 'my child has made massive improvements with social skills and communication.'

The residential unit encourages residential pupils to socialise with children from other schools in the local community. As a result, they develop and maintain friendships with a wider group of peers. A head teacher from a local school commented that the benefit of this link is that, 'children are learning to play together and share their experiences.' A pupil from another school values the friendships with the residential unit and commented, 'their disability fades away when you play with them.'

Residential pupils are actively involved in having their say about how the residential unit is run. A member of staff commented, 'we ask the children about choices, they have an input into their lives.' Regular council meetings involving residential pupils ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are explored, recognised and recorded. This creates an environment where all residential pupils, irrespective of their communication needs, feel involved and part of the school's residential provision. Furthermore, where new children are going to stay at the unit, this is discussed with pupils. As a result, residential pupils are fully supported with changes to their routines and physical environment. This results in pupils being able to access the residential unit with predictability and familiarity. As a result, they access the unit without undue anxiety or distress.

The emotional needs of residential pupils are promoted at all times. Families are encouraged to play an active part in the residential unit and pupils are fully supported in maintaining links with important people in their lives. An independent visitor commented, 'parents are extremely supported and pleased with the residential service.' Residential pupils make excellent progress with regards to their health. Their health needs are fully met and the individual needs of the children are clearly recorded and acted upon.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The staff team are committed to ensuring all pupils, irrespective of their communication or mobility needs, access the residential provision with success. A member of staff commented, 'we work hard to meet different needs.' Parents value the input from the staff team and the impact the residential unit has had on their families. Comments from parents include; 'I don't know how I would have coped without them,' 'staff are just amazing. Nothing is too much trouble.' Another parent said, 'the support they give to us as a family is simply staggering.'

Where appropriate to do so, the staff team fully support independence. For example, residential pupils are encouraged to dress themselves, access the toilet with greater independence and make their own choices about who provides their personal care at the residential unit. This empowers children to develop their awareness of their own privacy, confidence and self-esteem.

Regular visits from independent visitors ensure that pupils are able to raise any concerns that they may have. Furthermore, these visitors also ensure that parents are spoken to so that any concerns can be raised on behalf of residential pupils. There have been no complaints since the

last welfare inspection. The school's complaints policy is openly promoted around the residential unit and all pupils are encouraged to access this should they wish to.

The admission of new pupils to the residential service is well managed. Pupils are given a booklet that clearly explains the residential unit and this is provided in appropriate formats based on the pupil's communication needs. However, the guide uses photographs of the residential unit that are now out of date. For example, where areas of the unit have been refurbished or new items added.

Mealtimes are a social occasion in the residential unit. Children are encouraged to sit together with the staff and are encouraged, where appropriate to do so, to develop their eating skills. A parent commented that their child has, 'made massive progress with their eating'. Another parent commented that their child is 'able to feed themselves now.' Food provided to residential pupils is varied, nutritious and healthy. Where children have specific allergies, food intolerances or medical needs, appropriate provision is made. Residential pupils are fully supported in making choices for their meals and this further underpins an environment where children are respected, valued and listened to.

The residential unit is homely, appropriately decorated and highly personalised. This ensures that children enjoy staying in a bright, attractive environment. Specific adaptations ensure that the environment is safe for residential pupils to move around and explore. The outside space is large, well-appointed and enjoyed by the pupils. In addition to the outside activities, a range of books, games and other indoor activities ensure children enjoy their stay at the unit. An independent visitor commented that the residential unit 'is a home from home.'

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

A safety-conscious staff team ensures that residential pupils are safe and feel safe. Parents value and recognise that their children are safe in the residential provision. Comments from parents include; 'no concerns about safety, I know that my child is totally safe at the school'; and 'safety is at the centre of what the staff do.'

All staff are well-trained and clear in their responsibilities with regards to ensuring that residential pupils are safe. A detailed safeguarding policy is embedded into staff practice. Any concerns about the pupils' safety are swiftly and robustly acted upon. Bullying is not experienced by any pupils in the residential unit. Appropriate policies are in place to combat bullying, should this ever occur. The staff team are extremely knowledgeable about the children and any changes to behaviour or other indicators of a child being unhappy are immediately addressed.

Detailed behaviour support plans ensure that all staff provide a consistent approach to managing incidents of challenging behaviour. Proactive strategies, including sensory interventions and distraction techniques are used to skilfully manage any incidents of challenging behaviour. There have been no restraints since the last residential inspection. All staff are suitably trained in the school's chosen method of restraint and behaviour management. As a result, residential pupils develop a strong sense of emotional security in the residential provision. A parent commented, 'the staff have given me lots of strategies to help manage my child's behaviour.' As a result, residential pupils benefit from a high level of consistency between home, school and the residential unit. This ensures that pupils are settled, familiar with routine and their behaviour is consistently managed at all times.

Staff recruitment procedures are robust and ensure only suitable adults are appointed by the school. This is underpinned through excellent security arrangements for the residential unit. High staffing ratios ensure that all children are appropriately supervised at all times. Where visitors access the residential unit, they are supervised at all times. This further promotes the residential

pupils' safety.

The residential area is safely maintained and appropriately monitored. Regular checks of the environment ensure that any defects or potential hazards are quickly identified and resolved. A dedicated operative ensures all health and safety matters are robustly addressed at all times. As a result, residential pupils benefit from a safe and homely environment that fully promotes their safety and welfare. Regular fire drills ensure that all residential pupils and staff know how to safely evacuate in the event of fire. All required checks on electrical and gas installations are in place. Areas of the school where residential pupils access, including the swimming pool and outdoor play equipment, are thoroughly checked and maintained.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

A dedicated, enthusiastic and passionate principal care officer ensures that the residential service provides an excellent resource for pupils and their families. Regular and robust checks are made against the minimum standards for residential special schools. As a result, the principal care officer is able to review where the service meets, and exceeds, minimum standards. This informs planning and service development. For example, feedback from parents has led to the inclusion of outreach support to families where pupils are supported in their home environments. This supports pupils when they access the residential provision, as they are already familiar with the routines and expectations. Furthermore, the school's safeguarding policy explicitly defines the role and responsibilities of the local authority designated officer. As a result, the residential unit has demonstrated a commitment to improving the service.

Regular audits of the residential unit identify areas to improve and identify good practice. Visits from independent visitors ensure that an impartial view of the service is obtained and is used to further develop the service. This further drives improvement in the residential setting. An independent visitor commented that 'the residential management are constantly looking to make improvements.' The residential unit is a prominent part of the school community. It is valued by pupils, teachers, parents, carers and outside agencies. A school governor commented, 'I am very proud to be part of this school.' Residential pupils make exceptional progress as a result of staying in the unit and the school's senior management team is directly involved in the management of the service. The school's deputy head supports the principal care officer and this relationship ensures that there is an excellent link between education and the residential service. A teacher commented that residential staff 'are very proactive at sharing practice' and that 'children are really happy in residential.'

The residential unit has a comprehensive range of policies that are known to staff and embedded into practice. This results in a service that is consistent, safe and appropriately meets all regulations. All residential staff are well-trained, supported and supervised. The school nurse commented, 'staff are active at updating their training.' This ensures that the children's needs are met through a suitably competent and knowledgeable staff team.

The principal care officer ensures that the staff are able to share their ideas of improvement, raise any concerns and discuss the progress that children make. Detailed records are kept for residential pupils and progress reports are shared with parents, carers and teachers. As a result, the progress that pupils make is recognised and celebrated. Furthermore, regular discussions between the residential staff, parents, carers and teachers ensure that children are provided with consistent care. This, in turn, ensures that ideas for maximising the progress of children are identified and swiftly acted upon. All information relating to residential pupils is appropriately and securely stored at all times.

Communication with parents is one of the residential service's key strengths. Parents are exceptionally complimentary about the staff team and the service that they provide. The school's

policies and website clearly explain the residential service and its aims, objectives and ethos. However, parts of this website are not fully updated. For example, the governing body has changed and this is not reflected on the website. This has not impacted on the outcomes for residential pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	103624
Social care unique reference number	SC017172
DfE registration number	330/7049

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.

Type of school	
Number of boarders on roll	6
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	3 to 11
Headteacher	Mr A Coleman
Date of previous boarding inspection	20/11/2012
Telephone number	0121 353 7833
Email address	head@bridgesp.bham.sch.uk

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