

Brantridge School

Brantridge School, Staplefield Place, Staplefield, HAYWARDS HEATH, West Sussex, RH17 6EQ

Inspection dates	11/11/2015 to 13/11/2015	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Requires improvement	3
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Children speak very positively about their residential experience. They make good academic and personal progress as a result of their time at this school.
- The senior leadership team is dynamic in how it challenges a stable staff team to further improve their hands-on practice. Staff feel supported and re-invigorated by this approach.
- A wide range of after-school activities provides residential pupils with opportunities to try new experiences. This builds self-esteem and develops their social skills.
- Children benefit from an environment where residential staff work in effective collaboration with academic and therapy staff. Residential pupils' voice is strong within the school. Their views are valued and listened to.
- Parents speak positively about the impact the school has had on their children both academically and personally.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools

19.2 All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within 3 months of confirmation of employment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure safeguarding and child protection procedures are followed consistently and that records capture clearly what actions have been taken
- Ensure recruitment and vetting checks for any new role within the residential provision are undertaken consistently
- Continue with the strategy to reduce the use of restraint within the school, with particular reference to the use of front ground holds
- Revise testing procedures for portable appliances to ensure that all items are tested within identified timescales
- Consider more in-depth self-harm training for staff
- Ensure records of residential pupils' house group meetings consistently record actions taken and if residential pupils are satisfied with the responses.

Information about this inspection

The school was given four hours' notice of the inspection. Both boarding house groups were visited. Children's feedback was obtained through shared meals and taking part in evening activities with boarders. The inspector met with the senior leadership team including the head of care and head teacher. Residential staff, the school nurse, speech and language therapist and the independent visitor were also interviewed. There were meetings with governors, the catering premises managers. Parents' feedback was obtained through telephone calls and Parent View responses. Documents relating to the welfare and safety of children were sampled.

Inspection team

Anna Williams

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

The school is a non-maintained residential special school. It is situated close to Haywards Heath in Sussex. The school provides education and care for boys who have special educational needs. Some boys have complex needs including learning disabilities and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school supports boys from the age of 6 to 13 years. Residential pupils are weekly boarders. Residential accommodation is located on one site in the main school building. Currently there are 14 residential pupils.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

The school motto is 'live, laugh, learn'. The experiences of residential pupils positively reflect this. Relationships between residential pupils and care staff are warm and constructive. Residential pupils identify adults in the boarding house they would speak to if worried.

Residential pupils' progress is closely monitored by key workers. They make progress academically and personally. Some pupils' attendance improves through the boarding experience. Another pupil's reading age has improved through additional input from care staff with reading and homework. For some pupils, they have put weight on appropriately as a result of their time boarding. This supports their physical health. Staff work effectively with other departments in the school to ensure the child is at the centre of all they do and plan.

Residential pupils benefit from the good range of activities on offer. 'Enrichment week' in the summer term provides exciting opportunities such as bush craft and adventure play. Parents also take part. One parent commented 'my son and I really enjoyed the camp. For me as a parent, it gave me an opportunity to speak to other parents and listen to their experiences and realise I was not alone'.

Independence skills are well-promoted. Residential pupils make good progress in accordance with their age and understanding. Some have developed better self-care and washing skills. This benefits them now and in their future. Other pupils now share toys and wait turns in activities without prompts. Conversational skills and listening skills are also improved. This positively develops social interactions and friendships. Residential pupils value the friends they make when staying overnight at school. No bullying is identified.

Positive feedback has been received from parents about the impact the school and residential provision has had on their sons' lives. One parent stated 'the school it's like a loving family and boarding is another extension to that. It's like one big family'.

The quality of care and support

Good

Residential pupils are very positive about the activities on offer. Good planning by the care staff team ensures that early evening activities, which are also available to day pupils, are successfully and safely facilitated. Engagement with the local community is promoted through regular use of leisure facilities and shopping excursions. On-site, residential pupils have access to a wide range of games, clubs, the extensive grounds and sports facilities. This provides them with new opportunities and experiences.

New 'social emotional learning programmes' tailor specific targets for each pupil to work towards. Residential pupils make good progress in achieving their personal goals. Each week they spend time with staff reviewing together how they are getting on. Residential pupils add personal comments to their records such as 'cake making is good fun'.

Residential house group meetings take place regularly. They provide a forum for residential pupils to raise issues and talk together. These meetings are pupil led and minutes are handwritten by pupils. Records show that residential pupils raise a variety of matters ranging from menus, wanting more toys, and giving feedback on staff. Records do not consistently demonstrate if all matters have been actioned by staff and if residential pupils are satisfied with responses given. Residential pupils' views are also sought in a variety of other ways. For example, a ballot on the recent change of names of the accommodation areas and a menu survey. This demonstrates to residential pupils that their thoughts and opinions are valued.

Mealtimes are orderly, social occasions where residential pupils sit together with staff and talk about their day. Catering arrangements are good. Food is plentiful and individual diets are catered for. Residential pupils say they like the food and put forward their own meal ideas. They take turns to help with clearing up after a meal time, which helps them learn basic household skills.

Residential pupils keep in contact with family and friends appropriately. Parents confirm that they are kept up to date with how their child is progressing through regular contact from individual key workers. Arrangements for the administration of medication are safe and effective. The health needs of residential pupils are identified and met. This includes liaison with external health professionals such as a local general practitioner and child and adolescent mental health services.

Residential pupils stay in good standard accommodation. They like their bedrooms and personalise their own spaces. For example, new boarders help to choose their own duvet sets and pictures for their walls. This assists with them settling into the boarding experience. Some children display their own artwork or have pictures of family and friends around them. This creates a colourful and unique space for each child. The school has a rolling programme of redecorating bedrooms. Rooms which have been renovated so far benefit from new beds and matching furniture. This further enhances the sleeping accommodation.

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement

The designated child protection leads and senior leadership team within the school have built good relationships with local safeguarding professionals. Representatives from the school, including the head of care, attend relevant child protection meetings such as conferences and core groups. This ensures the school both inputs into these meetings and keeps up-to-date with relevant information from wider sources. In the vast majority of cases the head of care appropriately refers information which indicates a residential pupil may be at risk. In one case, the school safeguarding policy was not followed. The senior leadership team took immediate action during the inspection to share this information. Records kept by the school of safeguarding concerns do not consistently and clearly record who has taken action and when. This makes the oversight of safeguarding matters more difficult when trying to consider if responses are timely and appropriate.

Recruitment practice is not yet good. One recruitment file sampled demonstrated a good

level of pre-employment scrutiny. Another file did not have the same level of rigour. The senior leadership team took immediate action to address this. This inconsistency compromises the effectiveness of checking the suitability of new staff.

There has been a continued whole school focus on reducing the use of restraint since the previous inspection. The overall trend across the school is downward. There is a newly appointed 'behaviour lead' in the school who is working with staff, providing direct observations and feedback on practice. Rigorous analysis takes place of incidents, looking for patterns and trends. The use of restraint in residential time is lower than within education time. However, restraint is still used on occasions and still includes higher-risk front ground holds. Observations during the inspection showed a good standard of behaviour. Residential pupils were polite, helpful to staff and encouraging to peers in activities.

The premises and grounds are maintained to a good standard. Routines are in place to ensure regular maintenance checks take place and are recorded, such as fire equipment. The use of an external health and safety consultant assists the senior leadership team in identifying risks and taking appropriate action; for example the securing of all blind cords. Processes for portable appliance testing are not effective across the accommodation areas. Some items have been tested within identified timescales, while others have not. This inconsistent approach risks some items not being tested for some time.

Staff receive safeguarding training on a regular basis as part of school in-set training days. Recent training included a focus on radicalisation and female genital mutilation. Staff display a good awareness of the risks around child sexual exploitation. A recent incident involving one residential pupil attempting serious self-harm was responded to appropriately. However, residential staff only receive basic training in different types of self-harm and how to respond.

There have been no residential pupils reported missing from the school since the previous inspection. Risk assessments highlight if a residential pupil may be at risk of running off and they alert staff to remain vigilant. Procedures are in place which direct staff in actions to take if a child's whereabouts are unknown.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The head of care has effective systems in place to monitor the quality of care. These include sampling records, attending handovers, plus formal direct observations of staff. This direct feedback on practice is new since the previous inspection. It offers staff both praise and constructive development ideas and is formally recorded. Staff responses to this approach are positive. One staff member commented 'I have been here a long time, it's a new way of working. I feel I have evolved and it's a helpful process to be shown how to improve. It's healthy'.

Staff undertake regular training such as termly medication competency tests and behaviour management training. This keeps their skills relevant and up to date. All but one care staff have achieved a level three diploma, or above, in childcare. The one

member of staff without a relevant qualification is not yet enrolled and has been in post for many years. This does not ensure residential pupils are cared for at all times by care staff who have achieved a recognised childcare qualification.

The head of care receives both supervision from the head teacher and support from an external professional mentor. This good level of support has assisted the head of care to successfully implement some significant changes. For example, the introduction of new in-house 'residential care professional standards'. These capture the high expectations of leaders and managers hold for care staff. They provide staff with indicators of what good professional practice looks like. One staff member commented 'new [in-house] care standards are making us think about our work and get better...the head of care is a brilliant support'. Staff receive regular supervision and appraisal which are of good quality.

Previous recommendations have been met. The peer mediation programme has re-started. A number of residential pupils are involved. Pupils are trained in simple mediation interventions. A residential pupil said he liked having the responsibility of being a mediator and it helped him think about getting along with others. Accident recording systems are improved. Records now contain more detailed information. They clearly demonstrate the level of care given to children following an accident or injury. Change within the residential provision has been considerable since the previous inspection. The introduction of in-house professional care standards and new measurable targets for pupils show that the senior leadership team is committed to developing and strengthening the residential provision using inventive ways.

A newly appointed independent visitor is in place. Previous external visitor reports demonstrate that residential pupils are involved in these visits and their views sought. The governing body has lead governors for boarding and safeguarding. Additional visits are made by these governors to the residential provision to meet with children, staff and review specific themes such as key working. This offers the senior leadership team an additional level of both professional challenge and support. This links with the overall culture of monitoring, learning and review to further improve standards.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	134063
Social care unique reference number	SC042663
DfE registration number	938/7019

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	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	41
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	6 to 13
Headteacher	Gina Wagland
Date of previous boarding inspection	07/10/2014
Telephone number	01444 400228
Email address	schooloffice@brantridge-school.co.uk

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