

Broomhill Bank School – North

Broomhill Bank School – North, Rowhill Road, Swanley, Kent BR8 7RP

Inspection dates 22 March 2016 to 24 March 2016

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Requires improvement	3
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Through a gradual and bespoke introduction to the residential provision, new pupils who had not accessed education for some considerable time are beginning to attend school. Parents and carers commend the skill, tenacity and creativity of the residential staff. They said, 'We had home visits, lengthy discussions and slow introductions at my child's pace. Whatever it took' and 'It just got to the stage where he was ready to start himself because everyone was so patient.'
- Strong and effective partnership working between the head of school and the head of care creates a culture and ethos of a whole-school approach towards the care and welfare of the residential pupils. Despite the school's infancy, this culture is already embedded.
- Residential pupils are responding to consistent behaviour management techniques which focus heavily on reward systems. Their comments include, 'They (the staff) really try to make me behave well because they spend ages talking to me. I don't feel like I'm always in trouble.'
- Strong links exist with external mental health professionals, such as The Maudsley Hospital, and local child and adolescent mental health services. Combined with the head of care's drive to deliver research-based care practice, residential pupils' often complex needs are respected and never underestimated.
- Residential pupils feel safe and well cared for. Lines of responsibility and accountability for safeguarding and child protection are understood by all staff and are implemented in practice. A governor with a safeguarding lead role demonstrates a strong understanding and appreciation of this key role.

- Monitoring arrangements are beginning to identify areas needing improvement. The rapid success of the residential provision is resulting in a steady increase of referrals. Current staffing levels and resources are at risk of being overwhelmed in the absence of sufficient contingency planning.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain satisfactory levels of staff on duty who have sufficient experience and skills to meet the needs of the residential pupils.
- Secure the hazardous areas within the school grounds.
- Complete the care plan and risk assessment formats for each residential pupil.
- Review the current administrative workload of the head of care.
- Review the impact and value of current monitoring systems.
- Implement a system to evaluate and monitor the learning, patterns and trends from safeguarding and child protection incidents.

Information about this inspection

The school received three hours' notice of this inspection. Interviews were conducted with the head of school, the head of care, who is also the designated person for safeguarding, the school leadership consultant, the safeguarding governor, the executive head teacher, members of the residential staff team, teachers, and catering and maintenance staff.

Parents were spoken with, in person as well as over the telephone, and all of the residential pupils joined in with individual and group interviews. After-school activities were observed and meals were taken in school and residential time. Every parent of a residential pupil asked to be contacted following the announcement of this inspection, including a parent who was away on holiday. The positive impact of the residential provision on their child's experience, progress and development was commended by every parent spoken with.

Individual case-tracking exercises involved document sampling, and a full tour of the premises was led by one of the residential pupils. Information was received from the local authority designated person (LADO), and this was further explored with a telephone discussion.

Inspection team

Sophie Wood

lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Broomhill Bank School is a well-established Kent County Council maintained special school based in West Kent. In September 2015, it expanded a satellite provision into North Kent (Broomhill Bank (North)), on the vacant site of a former special school that had closed, and it acquired registration as a residential special school. Residential provision at the school is currently only offered at the Broomhill Bank (North) satellite. The school is led by an executive head teacher with a head of school on each site having responsibility for day to day matters.

Broomhill Bank (North) currently provides education, care and accommodation for pupils between 11 and 16 years of age who have autistic spectrum disorders, some of whom have additional behavioural difficulties. A total of 39 pupils are currently on the school roll, five of whom are using the residential provision. All residential pupils are boys, staying in one designated boarding house. The refurbishment and opening of additional houses is part of the school's ongoing development plans.

Broomhill Bank (North) is situated in semi-rural surroundings on the outskirts of Swanley, Kent. At the time of the inspection, a new pupil was visiting as part of their introduction to the school and refurbishment was ongoing in preparation for the expansion of the school's sixth form provision, planned for later in the year.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

The residential provision is having a significantly positive impact on the lives of residential pupils and their families. Comments from residential pupils included, 'I didn't like school before this one' and 'The staff here are really helpful and understanding'. Parents said, 'The stress has been removed now that my child is happier and back to school' and 'He is making terrific progress which is great for the whole family'.

New pupils get to know significant staff members before they visit the school. Bespoke arrangements include home visits and, where necessary, a lengthy introduction process. Some new pupils need help and support to make the journey to the school entrance a few times before they feel able to cross the threshold. Others need to familiarise themselves with the grounds well in advance of entering any of the buildings. During this inspection, one new pupil visited the residential provision for the first time. Following his tour, he confirmed that he will be back after the half-term break. His mother said, 'I cannot thank the staff enough for their time, energy and patience. They are all so supportive and understand my son.'

This timely and thorough approach allows the residential team to consider carefully how it will receive individuals into the setting. Current residential pupils are also fully consulted and included in welcoming newcomers. Everyone is valued, anxieties are allayed and a cohesive residential provision is evolving, based upon mutual respect and consideration for others. These valuable life skills are slowly being learned by pupils through excellent role modelling by the staff team.

Residential pupils are still settling into school and residential life. As such, the nuances of their needs and personalities are yet to become fully known. The whole staff team adopts a pragmatic approach. Each staff member accepts that there will be challenges and difficulties as new pupils test out unfamiliar routines and people. Consequently, staff are quick to inform each other when a planned approach has needed to change or the unexpected has occurred. This results in pupils receiving mainly consistent messages, whether in the school or the residential setting. A member of staff said, 'Everyone is still getting to know each other, but the pupils need to know we can be trusted as a team, just like good, strong parents.' Regular staff handovers and swift communication provide residential pupils with a safe and trusted environment.

Residential pupils described the residential provision as 'Homely, welcoming and good fun'. Evening meals are taken together, with time spent discussing the school day, confirming evening plans and getting to know each other. Staff encourage and role model appropriate social behaviour and everyone has household tasks to complete before evening activities commence. Essential life skills are skilfully woven into everyday occurrences.

Warm, nurturing relationships are the bedrock of the residential provision's success. Residential pupils enjoy an abundance of spontaneous, fun activities combined with safe rules and boundaries. Parents said, 'He knows where he stands. He genuinely loves the

staff and they love him.' As residential pupils are becoming more settled, their school attendance is on the rise and they are rekindling their desire to learn.

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement

Strong admissions processes involve detailed dialogue and information collection from all relevant parties involved with the prospective pupil. Parents said, 'There is no rush, it's all done at the right pace.' Upon joining, bespoke school timetables ensure that residential pupils begin to access school in a well-planned and gradual manner. One pupil said, 'When it gets too much for me in class, I can come back to the house for a bit and sort myself out.' In such examples, pupils who may have previously escalated difficult situations in school are learning to take positive control of their own feelings. They are starting to make better choices by removing themselves from negative situations. Teaching and residential staff communicate regularly on this topic and monitor each individual circumstance. One explained, 'We have to strike a balance between giving pupils an appropriate get-out, but we also want to see attendance rising and an improvement in their ability to see difficult situations through.'

Some members of the residential team also work in the school, some as teaching assistants and one as the catering manager. The head of care is also actively involved and physically present in school during the day. Residential pupils like this visibility. It gives them an added sense of security, and these staff are fully aware of how the school day has gone. While this practice helps the residential team to really get to know the pupils, it leaves insufficient time for the other necessary tasks they need to complete. Although residential staff can describe the needs of the residential pupils from first-hand knowledge, they have insufficient time to document this through written care plans or daily records. Individual progress is not being fully explored or captured as a result. The quality and impact of the school's care planning system cannot be accurately measured.

The head of care is similarly affected. Residential staff benefit from her excellent role modelling and the amount of time she spends directly supporting residential pupils and staff. One member of staff said, 'It's like having constant supervision and just watching and learning how to deal with situations and work with the pupils.' There are benefits to this model. However, the head of care is also the designated person for safeguarding and she has a significant monitoring role for the overall residential provision. Many of her responsibilities carry significant administrative tasks, but sufficient time and resources are not being factored into her work schedule. This risks drift and gaps in the school's oversight of its residential provision.

Residential pupils enjoy good overall health because it is effectively supported and very well promoted. There is a superb catering provision, and residential pupils eat healthily and engage in plenty of physical exercise. Many pupils have significant additional medical, emotional and psychological support needs, often involving external healthcare professionals. Necessary appointments are very well coordinated and supported by staff, in conjunction with parents and carers. The nuances of their conditions and diagnoses are clearly explained within care files, and required medication is suitably stored and safely administered. Most noteworthy is the staff's educative approach with the residential pupils. They are learning to take greater responsibility for their own health

and well-being. Examples include learning to recognise their own symptoms of feeling mentally unwell, cooperating with a restricted diet and starting to engage with smoking cessation guidance.

Residential pupils are busy, active and very well occupied after school. A small number of day pupils also benefit from the extended day programme, where they join the residential provision for after-school activities. One pupil said, 'I absolutely love coming here, it would be my dream come true to board.' Pupils were observed to enter the house eagerly at the end of the school day, ready to engage with warm and welcoming staff. During this inspection, all of the residential pupils made their own pizzas, some used the games room and others went out to the cinema. Their own interests and hobbies are fully acknowledged and valued. Staff use these times as an opportunity to solicit pupils' views and opinions to shape and develop the provision. Pupils learn to negotiate, which is a good and necessary life skill. One residential pupil is currently liaising with an external IT consultant about the type of internet required, and another is putting together a proposal for the school to purchase a horse. One staff member commented, 'The hamster and goldfish just aren't cutting it!' This humorous approach typifies the culture of the residential provision. In between challenging and difficult times, residential pupils relax, laugh and enjoy this caring, child-focused environment.

Residential pupils are proud of their house. One pupil took delight in conducting a full tour for the inspector and seized this opportunity to play his guitar throughout. He said, 'I can play this in my room but the staff like to hear me as well.' Other pupils confirmed that the house is well resourced with plenty of communal areas for their individual and group use. Their collective interest in music has resulted in another part of the school currently being developed into a separate music studio, in response to residential and day pupils' requests. The majority of the residential pupils also attend the local Mick Jagger Centre weekly.

Residential pupils have a very real say with regard to their immediate surroundings. Communal rooms and areas are currently part-decorated and not fully completed. This replicates any typical home undergoing redecoration. Sample wallpaper designs and paint colours currently adorn the walls of the dining room while the residential pupils are continuing to vote on their final choice. Their input is highly valued. Many areas of the whole school site, including the residential provision, are in need of refurbishment, and a planned programme of improvement work is ongoing.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Strong safeguarding practice underpins the day-to-day operation of the school. This begins with the pragmatic and thorough approach of the designated person. Her previous working experience and background in child protection work is particularly relevant. A high number of pupils have complex histories, challenging behaviours and circumstances which routinely involve external safeguarding agencies. The designated person is unfazed by these demands. She manages incidents and situations with confidence and skill because she understands, and is conversant with, the wider system and with safeguarding agencies.

This approach instils confidence throughout the school. It encourages a culture of

openness, so that staff across all departments report incidents, ranging from a welfare concern to a serious safeguarding incident, without delay. A number of consultations and referrals to the local authority have already been made, as well as three allegations against staff being reported to the LADO. Dialogue between the inspector and the LADO confirms their confidence in the school's ability to recognise safeguarding matters and to manage them appropriately. The LADO stated, 'The consultations and referrals thus far received have been clear, prompt and relevant. The school acts on the advice we provide.'

Internal reporting mechanisms are clear. Procedural guidance is widely advertised in the main school office, supported by laminated guides, and concerns and referral sheets for staff to complete. While individual incidents are well documented and tracked to their resolution, there is an absence of sufficient monitoring to gather good oversight in terms of identifying potential patterns and trends, and to learn lessons. This is another weakness which is attributed to the current lack of administration time and support for the head of care.

Good staff practice is underpinned by a wide range of internal and external training. This combination keeps topics fresh and reinforces their continuing relevance. Recent training includes recognising signs and symptoms of different forms of abuse, the school's 'Prevent' duty and child sexual exploitation. Consequently, staff are able to describe how specific safeguarding risks affect individual residential pupils. Whole-school training on safeguarding and child protection matters is closely monitored by the safeguarding lead governor, who commissions regular reports and also speaks with staff during her visits to test their understanding.

Despite poorly completed individual written risk assessments, key workers talked about individual pupils with clarity, citing real and tangible risks and how these are being minimised in practice. One staff member said, 'He is vulnerable. He wants to fit in with others, so we talk all the time about keeping himself safe online.' One staff member had a lengthy discussion with a residential pupil about how his seemingly innocent sharing of a friend's personal details on social media could make them vulnerable. On another occasion, a residential pupil started a discussion during dinner about Donald Trump and this led to a lengthy debate about extremism. Another recent discussion point, instigated by the residential pupils, centred upon the legalisation of prostitution. Open and frank discussions feed enquiring minds and create a culture of healthy debate and learning.

Many of the residential pupils have experienced bullying in their previous schools, either as an instigator or victim. Staff are acutely aware of this fluid dynamic and are sensitively attuned to the relationships between the residential pupils. They understand how individual pupils might perceive unintended but hurtful remarks and teasing, so much discussion occurs at the dining table on such topics. Individuals are encouraged to consider the impact of their own conduct upon others in a non-threatening yet appropriately challenging way. This aspect of staff practice is subtle yet powerful and gives a strong message to pupils about their own responsibilities.

All staff are suitably trained in the use of physical restraint intervention, but they rely more heavily upon negotiation and de-escalation techniques. A number of examples of this practice, observed during the inspection, demonstrated the time, patience and energy which staff devote to encouraging pupils to consider better ways of exploring and

expressing their feelings of anger and frustration. This practice is commended. It values pupils and fully recognises their need to be heard and taken seriously. Consequently, residential pupils are learning to negotiate and manage their feelings in appropriate ways. A designated teacher maintains an overall responsibility for the monitoring of all behaviour management systems and practices currently in use. Although fixed term exclusions and other sanctions have been necessary, no residential or day pupil has been permanently excluded and serious behavioural incidents are on the decline for the majority of the pupils.

Many residential pupils flatly refused to attend school previously. Some exhibited risky behaviours, involving running away and refusing to engage with services aimed at supporting them. To date, there have been no missing episodes from the school and pupils' general attendance in the school and residential provision is increasing. Parents attributed this success to the skill and creativity of the staff team. One said, 'My child trusts the staff, so he feels safe and wants to go there.' A residential pupil said, 'I like it here. I'm understood and they take time with me.'

Residential pupils are protected from potentially unsafe adults through the school's implementation of robust recruitment procedures. Visitors are chaperoned and residential pupils say they feel safe in school. The whole school site requires extensive upkeep and ongoing maintenance. One area of the grounds that poses potential safety risks is accessible to pupils. Staff's close supervision is a protective factor, but this is a waste of a valuable resource. Their time and energy should be spent on more pressing matters. Areas of current occupancy, including the residential provision, are prioritised in terms of routine health and safety checks. A recent fire safety audit resulted in priority action being taken against identified high-risk areas. A targeted approach to all other matters raised is continuing. Residential pupils routinely practise fire evacuation drills, so they know what to do in the event of an emergency.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

A new and relatively inexperienced residential staff team is extremely well supported through the 'hands on' approach of the well qualified and experienced head of care. Individual staff members routinely speak about 'excellent support, superb role modelling and dynamic leadership'. These descriptions also extend to the head of school. Together, these two leaders are shaping a culture which recognises and highly values the impact of a strong residential resource upon pupils' ability to learn in school. Residential pupils are highly valued and their improving behaviours demonstrate the impact of this caring and nurturing provision.

There are six people in the residential staff team, equating to a full-time equivalent of four people. Every staff member has completed core mandatory training, two hold a relevant childcare qualification and four are undertaking the level 3 diploma. Their commitment to their own continuing learning and professional development is strong. Comments included, 'I'm loving this role, I just want to be the best I can' and 'I am learning every day, the training and support is excellent'.

The team's drive and commitment is commendable, but there is a shortage of prior

learning and experience within the current team. Consequently, the head of care cannot yet safely delegate responsibilities, and her administrative and monitoring tasks are falling behind. Examples of gaps include staff supervision meetings. While informal practice discussions are extremely valuable, staff development cannot be fully evaluated due to the lack of a formal, recorded process. In other aspects, core policies and procedures have been brought across from the other school site in order to implement a uniform approach. The head of care recognises that some minor amendments are required to reflect the subtle differences between the two settings, but has not had time to amend these documents.

Monitoring systems are in place. For example, the school leadership consultant is supporting the residential provision to measure its progress against the national minimum standards. An external visitor conducts termly visits and produces a report about the quality of the provision. Both processes give the head of care indicators of the residential provision's progress. However, both mechanisms lack sufficient depth and evaluation. For example, behavioural incidents are mentioned in terms of the number of occasions but there is no further exploration as to why and how these occurred. Sufficient analysis, leading to the recommendation of necessary changes and improvements, is missing.

Additional oversight is provided by an extremely dedicated governing body. Regular committee meetings scrutinise expenditure and seek to ensure value for money. Parent governors provide an additional layer of expertise, from their professional backgrounds as well as from a parental perspective. The governor responsible for safeguarding is rigorous in her approach and holds the school to account in this regard.

This is the school's first welfare inspection under its new designation. Since the satellite provision opened and the school acquired registration as a residential school, its residential placements have risen and continue to do so. Residential pupils are making progress but this increase in numbers has not been sufficiently explored in terms of its impact upon resources. The school is becoming reactive and this risks compromising the quality of the care provided.

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	119026
Social care unique reference number	SC041787
DfE registration number	

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	Five
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Ms Emma Leitch
Date of previous boarding inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01322 662 937
Email address	

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