

Broomhill Bank School – North

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

Inspection dates	15/03/2017 to 17/03/2017	
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	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- The children make progress in all areas of their lives. Their attendance and engagement at school have significantly improved since becoming residential students. Improved examination results indicate the positive impact of residential on their academic performance.
- The children learn to manage and control their emotions, live together harmoniously and resolve disagreements peacefully. They are able to negotiate with staff and recognise that they may not always get what they want, but are confident that they are being listened to.
- The staff are skilled at establishing relationships with children. They encourage them to express their feelings and reflect on their behaviour. Children learn to recognise when they are at risk and increasingly know how to keep themselves safe.
- The staff consistently promote routines that are based round the school day. The staff understand the need for good physical care that promotes children's well-being. This means that children are rested, calm and prepared for learning.
- Children are encouraged to lead a balanced life. They benefit from a wealth of activities and leisure pursuits. They gain confidence in knowing how to behave in the community. They develop positive friendships and build a social life.
- Children are starting to plan for their future lives as adults. They are learning about setting up bank accounts, using public transport and producing a CV, so

that they can apply for jobs. Some children are starting work experience, which has contributed to their career plans.

- Staff have undertaken purposeful training in safeguarding and apply the principles confidently, particularly in regard to internet training. Detailed and helpful risk assessments and behaviour management plans help staff manage negative incidents. There have been no incidents in residential of physical restraint or children going missing since the last inspection.
- An experienced and suitably qualified head of care leads the staff, who are ambitious and purposeful. They have the confidence to meet the changing needs of the children.
- Some shortfalls have been identified during this inspection. The head of care still holds the role of safeguarding lead officer. This does not leave adequate time for her other duties as head of care of the residential service at a time when the service is being expanded. The children's care plans do not provide a clear summary of progress or future targets. A matrix of both supervision and training specifically for the residential team would improve managerial oversight of the professional development of staff.

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?

- Review the current administrative workload of the head of care to allow them sufficient time to manage the residential service and lead on plans to expand the service. This work is part of ongoing work to resolve the role and responsibilities of the designated safeguarding lead officer.
- Compile and maintain a record of training for staff in the residential service specifically.
- Compile and maintain a record of supervision sessions for staff, along with dates for future sessions.
- Include in the monthly overview of each child in residential a clear summary of what goals they have achieved and what they still need to work on and identify new targets for the following term.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of the residential provision took place within two hours of announcement. The inspection activities included meetings with children, residential care staff, the school's executive headteacher, the head of school, the head of care, the independent visitor and the caretaker. Telephone interviews were conducted with a governor with responsibility for the residential provision and another with responsibility for safeguarding, external professionals and parents. Observations included a tour of the premises, activities, mealtimes and residential routines. Information was gathered from attending daily joint meetings with all staff, including education and residential staff. Additional information was taken from children's care plans, risk assessments, other documents and a safeguarding review commissioned by the senior leadership team.

Inspection team

Fiona Littlefield

lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Broomhill Bank School is a split-site residential special school maintained by Kent County Council. It provides education for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders and are aged between 11 and 19 years of age, and residential care and accommodation at the north site which is situated in semi-rural surroundings on the outskirts of Swanley, Kent. At the time of the inspection there were 55 pupils on roll at the north site, 12 of whom occupied residential places.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

The head of care, assistant house leads and staff are clear that the purpose of the residential service is to enhance a child's ability to learn. They focus on developing relationships with children so that they express their views and wishes confidently, and can deal with challenge and manage their emotions. The staff consistently promote daily routines which are organised round the school day, so that children are calm and receptive, and can commit to their education.

The senior leadership team (SLT) scrutinises data which compares attendance, engagement in lessons and academic results for residential children with the other children of the school. The children who use the residential service make better progress in some core subjects while matching the performance of their peers in others. The SLT has recently developed a tool to measure a child's progress under headings of well-being, attendance and communication. This has yet to be fully embedded, but will provide a more comprehensive picture of a child's progress. In the meantime, there are some striking examples of individual progress. For instance, the records for one child in residential stated, 'He is growing in confidence and his ability to focus and learn. Generally positive attitude in lessons. Very high attendance. Predicted passes in English, maths and computing. Can clearly express his thoughts, is more trusting of adults and has a girlfriend.' The children learn to work together and deal with conflict peacefully. Mealtimes are social events where staff are skilled in encouraging children to interact, talk about their day and negotiate events and activities. The children learn to be courteous to each other, and are confident that all their opinions will be taken into account and that everyone will be respected. Children are high-spirited, but staff use humour and reassurance to settle them down. The atmosphere is lively, but the staff are clearly in control. The children enjoy themselves. The mother of one child said, 'Staff have told him that he is one of the older ones now, so he needs to set a good example. He has a bit more responsibility and he likes that.' This helps the children feel comfortable and secure.

The staff work hard to help the children keep themselves safe. Children learn to recognise situations or behaviours which may place them at risk. In addition, the children are starting to plan their future adult lives and to acquire skills that will support them, such as managing money, using public transport and applying for jobs. Some of the children have had the opportunity to do work experience in the school. This has led to other opportunities for work placements in other colleges and has contributed to their academic work. This, together with their enhanced ability to manage their emotions, enables the children to view their future optimistically.

Feedback from the parents and the external professionals is enthusiastic about the impact of the partnership between the residential service, the rest of the school and other agencies. Planning includes parents, so that everyone feels part of a team with the child at the centre. The mother of one child summarised his progress, 'He is a different child. I can't quantify the change. It is just remarkable.'

The children benefit from their time in residential because they are looked after by staff who understand their needs and developmental milestones. Effective arrangements are in place to introduce children to boarding. The head of care, assistant house leads and staff gather full background information and children attend extended visits to the accommodation, where they are introduced to staff and their peers, learn about the routines and see their rooms. For some of the children this process can take longer than it does for others, but the process is flexible, with an absolute focus on helping them feel valued from the outset. One child said, 'I'm getting used to it and building up my days. It feels comfortable.' As a result, they settle in their new surroundings.

The staff are skilled at building supportive relationships with the children. On occasion, the children may be challenging, but the staff are empathetic and recognise that this often reflects a history of trauma and anxiety. The children turn to the staff constantly for firm boundaries, but also for reassurance and support. Each child has an individual care plan which identifies specific areas for work and themes to be explored in key-worker sessions. Every opportunity is taken to encourage a child to reflect on their behaviour and build emotional resilience. Many of the children are developing social skills and learning to interact with one another. For example, the worker for one child noted about a trip to a restaurant, 'He has improved massively and handled conversations around the table. He even left his headphones in the vehicle so that he would not be tempted to put them on at the dinner table.' This is striking progress, given the starting points of many children. Case notes are detailed and up to date. However, they could be improved with a clear summary of what goals a child has achieved and what still needs to be worked on, and through the identification of new targets for the following term.

The residential accommodation is well maintained in the style of a comfortable home. The children personalise their bedrooms and enjoy showing them off to visitors. The staff encourage them to care for their environment and participate in routine domestic tasks, such as clearing the table or tidying their rooms. In time, the children learn to take pride in their environment. The staff also support the children to maintain their personal routines, take pride in their appearance and eat healthily. Arrangements for administering medication are robust and the children are encouraged to participate responsibly.

The children have access to a wealth of activities, including swimming and other sports, visiting the cinema, shopping and accessing local resources for arts and drama. The head of care, assistant house leads and staff plan activities carefully, but at the same time are not risk averse. The children negotiate with staff. For instance, one child wanted to see a friend, asked the staff to take him and clearly appreciated their efforts. All visits in the community are planned with clear directions. If some of the older children are away from the school on their own, there are clear protocols for keeping in touch with the staff. This is striking progress for many who had not accessed the community regularly prior to their stays in residential.

Parents speak highly of the supportive partnership and the willingness of staff and managers to make extra effort if it will help their child. The mother of one child said, 'If you had seen him before, you wouldn't believe the change now. He was giving us all the run-around and nothing worked, but they have been so persistent.'

How well children and young people are protected

Good

The children are safe and confirm that they feel secure. The head of care and keyworkers develop detailed risk assessments for each child as part of the admission process, where they match concerns with robust management strategies. These are reviewed on a monthly basis and over time can clearly demonstrate improvement. For instance, the children who have been prone to challenging behaviour or going missing show an increasing ability to control their behaviour. They are aware of the progress that they are making and it greatly enhances their confidence.

The staff and managers place the safety of the children at the centre of their practice. If the children want to raise a complaint, there are formal procedures and a suggestions box which they can use. Most children simply talk to the staff in the clear expectation that they will receive a prompt answer. The mother of one child said, 'He was challenging and disengaged, and hadn't been in education. Now he can be cheeky and relaxed and is able to communicate if something isn't right.' The children also use regular visits from an independent visitor to raise concerns. These adults communicate effectively with the senior staff and pass on the responses, so that, while they may not always get the response they want, the children are confident that they are being listened to.

The staff across the school receive regular safeguarding training and work as a team. Daily meetings between educational and residential staff ensure that information is shared consistently. The residential staff ensure that updates are shared meticulously through handover meetings and regular scrutiny of risk assessments. Nothing is left to chance. The children are aware of this and it helps them feel safe.

The staff are proactive in ensuring that incidents of negative behaviour in residence are extremely rare. For instance, as the children learn to communicate better, they will talk to the staff rather than leaving school without permission. There have not been any incidents of physical restraint in residential since the last inspection. In addition, the staff are very alert to how unkind behaviour can develop into bullying, and are quick to intervene. The children quickly learn what is expected and respond appropriately.

The staff say they are confident that they would know how to respond immediately to any child protection concern or allegation, and are particularly sensitive to the possibility of internet abuse. For example they use key-worker sessions to talk to the child about using the internet positively and being alert to dangers. As a result, the children develop habits that will support them and keep them protected as they grow up.

All staff across the school take their responsibility for promoting positive behaviour seriously. They apply routines and boundaries and positive role modelling. For instance, one child who had damaged some property on the school site, later worked with the caretaker to carry out the repairs. In another instance, the independent reviewing officer for one child said, 'Staff come to meetings with him and make sure that his wishes are represented. He was very isolated and enjoys being in residential and would like to be there more. He has really come out of his shell.'

Staff recruitment procedures are robust and effective. The manager liaises with the local safeguarding service routinely and deals with any allegations about safeguarding referrals safely and firmly. As a result, the children are safeguarded.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers Good

The leadership team has fully addressed five out of the six points for improvement from the last inspection. There are now satisfactory staffing levels in the residential service. Newly recruited staff have appropriate experience and qualifications. The school grounds have been made safe and hazardous areas have been secured. Risk assessments and care plans have been improved, and are detailed and accurate. New monitoring systems are being introduced which inform the management team about trends extracted from any safeguarding incidents. The current workload of the head of care is under urgent review. It is not yet resolved, although recruitment for a deputy head of care and other key positions is underway. This point for improvement is therefore repeated.

The head of care is suitably qualified with a national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 5, with a degree in children and families and working with multiple complex needs, plus 16 years' experience in social care. Other members of the team are in the process of completing their training to NVQ level 3 and new staff, who are due to join the service shortly, are already trained to NVQ level 3. Some unexpected gaps in the staff team have been filled promptly and new staff will be joining the team shortly. The head of care is meticulous in making sure that the staff are ready and prepared, through their induction training, so that they can provide an assured level of care from the start.

The head of care, assistant house leads and staff are ambitious for the children and the service. The staff speak highly of the senior management team and feel that they are well supported. They have confidence in one another. One member of staff said, 'We only have to look at each other. The children know this and can't play us against each other.' This highly motivated approach is critical, as the school is due to expand the service shortly by opening up a new house. The staff see this as an exciting opportunity to develop their practice.

The staff also receive ongoing professional training. Currently, this is recorded on a single data base along with other staff in the school. A point for improvement is to record the training for residential staff as a single group. This would make it easier for the managers to track professional development for their team.

All the staff receive individual supervision which allows time for consideration of workload issues and reflective practice. All staff have individual supervision records, although a point for improvement is for the head of care to develop a supervision matrix which would show when sessions had taken place and the next planned date. This would enable the head of care, assistant house leads and staff to ensure that supervision is taking place as required.

The head of care, assistant house leads and staff review the quality of the residential service using a balance of specific data about individual children and feedback from parents and professionals. Individual residential targets are reviewed on a termly basis.

Staff also attend meetings about children with their families and other professionals. Feedback about partnership is exceptional. The mother of one child said, 'He has done so well. Originally I was so sceptical and used to phone every day, but I have relaxed. I have total confidence in them. They keep in touch and we speak regularly.'

The service benefits from robust external scrutiny by an independent visitor, governors with specialist responsibility for the residential service and for safeguarding, and a dedicated external visitor provided by the local authority. Their reports are detailed and focused and provide an outline of strengths and areas for development. In addition, the leadership team commissioned a review of safeguarding in the school; this is currently being considered by the senior leadership. A persistent theme throughout this feedback has been the need to clarify the role and responsibilities of the designated safeguarding lead officer. Currently this role is held by the head of care, who has to balance these responsibilities along with her duties as manager of the residential service. In addition, she still provides shift-leading support and is leading on plans to open another residential house. There is no evidence to suggest that this has impacted negatively on the safety of children. This issue is the subject of urgent review by the SLT, but still needs to be resolved in such a manner that the head of care has the time and resources to devote to the development of the residential service.

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 exceed the standard of good and result 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's 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 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	886/7002

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	16
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 19
Executive headteacher	Emma Leith
Head of school	Rebecca Cottage
Date of previous boarding inspection	22/03/2016
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