

Broomhill Bank School (North site)

Broomhill Bank School- North, Rowhill Road, Swanley, Kent BR8 7RP
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special 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. There are 205 pupils on roll at the school and 15 residential pupils on roll out of a possible 16 places.

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 January 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 15 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Young people enjoy the residential experience. They speak positively about their relationships with staff and each other.
- Young people make good progress in all areas. Their attitude to education is positive and, for some residential pupils, their engagement, attendance and achievements have improved significantly.
- Parents consistently praise the school for the standards of care and support their children receive. They frequently mentioned how staff go 'above and beyond' to help young people make progress.
- Social workers speak highly of the professionalism, commitment of the staff. They feel that the young people's quality of life and their life chances have significantly improved as a result of their residential stays.
- Young people are well behaved. Staff form secure relationships with them and use positive strategies to encourage young people to learn from mistakes.
- The staff team members are passionate about their work. They work creatively, with a focus on what matters to young people.
- The head of care has a clear vision and holds young people at the heart of service development. She is accessible and has good oversight of care practice in the residential service.
- There are strong links and effective communication between the school and the residential service.
- The governing body displays a keen interest in the welfare of pupils in the residential service. They monitor the quality of care and challenge the leadership team effectively to improve where necessary.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- To improve the workforce development plan and update training records to ensure that staff have all the training they need to meet the needs and promote the welfare of young people.
- To ensure that residential care plans contain sufficient detail to describe how each young person is being supported to make progress, stay healthy and keep safe. In particular, the health needs of young people should always be included in the healthcare plan. Care plans could also be improved by identifying how young people have made progress.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that all health information is clearly recorded in residential healthcare plans.
- Devise a workforce development plan to ensure that residential staff undertake training that is designed to meet the specific needs of the young people using the service. The staff training record should be regularly updated to enable the head of care to monitor and evidence that staff training is up to date.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people using the residential service are consistently positive about their experiences. They get on well with staff and each other. They enjoy a wide range of activities and are supported to pursue their interests and hobbies. One young person said, 'I really like it here. I enjoy the space, the activities and I have friends here.' Another young person described how the staff are really supportive.

The residential provision is spacious, clean and well maintained. The young people's rooms are comfortable and young people like having their personal space. There is a lot of outdoor space and play equipment for them to enjoy.

Young people are encouraged to contribute to the daily tasks and chores in the setting. They cook meals, help with clearing up and take responsibility for keeping their rooms tidy and doing washing. This teaches them valuable skills for independence and helps create a sense of belonging. Preparing young people for life beyond school is a particular strength of the service. As a result of staff support, one young person has learned to use public transport and now has the confidence to go shopping independently.

A social worker for one young person commented that staff take a keen interest in the young person's personal development. He said that 'staff are doing an exceptional job'. He went on to describe how this young person previously refused to attend education and now not only attends but enjoys learning. He reported that the young person had learned to socialise better, feels more secure and is better able to express his feelings. All social workers who spoke to the inspector had high praise for the service and felt the residential service made a positive difference to young people. Social workers commented that staff are highly professional and communicate effectively with them.

Staff engage well with young people and create meaningful, trusting relationships. They support young people to make the most of opportunities to learn from living as a group. One parent described the residential service as 'a home from home'. She felt her child had learned to manage much better when out in the community and was now better able to enjoy activities such as shopping and going out for meals. She feels he trusts adults more and that his behaviour has improved to the extent that she feels he is 'a totally different boy'.

Young people are encouraged to voice their opinions and say how they feel. Staff listen to them and use young people's views to shape the way they provide support and care. This helps young people feel that their views are important. This has a positive influence on their day-to-day quality of life, and also on their personal development because they learn to value themselves and trust the adults around them. One parent said of the staff, 'I can't praise them highly enough. They go above and beyond to support my child.' She described how her child is now more

trusting of adults and can now talk to people she does not know. She felt that the staff had helped her child be 'more equipped for the wider world'.

Young people have structured routines and have excellent attendance at school. They make good progress in education and have a positive experience of learning. The school and residential environments are mutually supportive and have effective links and lines of communication. This means that young people have a consistent experience of care and learning throughout the whole school.

Each child has a detailed care plan that describes how the residential service is meeting their needs. The healthcare section of this plan does not always include up-to-date health information, and this runs the risk that health concerns could be overlooked. In practice, the staff know the young people very well and ensure that young people get the support they need to stay healthy.

Residential students have access to a well-resourced pastoral support team based in the school. This means that they can receive additional support and have a safe space to talk outside of the residential support staff. In practice, young people feel safe to talk to residential staff and as a result use the school's pastoral support services less than other pupils.

Staff communicate effectively with parents and parents appreciate this. Staff provide parents with regular updates and contact them promptly in the event of any concerns. This means that staff and parents learn from each other about each child's needs and work together to decide how best to support them. Parents feel welcomed by staff and are encouraged to spend time with their children in the residential setting. Young people have access to phones and they are able to contact their parents when they wish to.

There is a positive culture within the school in relation to promoting equality of opportunity and being inclusive. One young person talked openly about being gay and felt that the school was a safe space for her. She said teachers and residential staff are very supportive to her in her efforts to set up an LGBT interest group in the school.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Young people are safe. Several young people who spoke to the inspector felt that the residential service was a safe space, that their privacy is respected and that they are not subject to bullying.

There is always sufficient staff on duty to safely monitor and support the young people staying in residential. Each young person has a detailed risk assessment. This identifies areas of vulnerability, and a clear safety plan is in place, which describes how any risks are managed. The staff monitor young people closely and achieve the right balance to ensure that monitoring is not so restrictive as to reduce their opportunities to learn to become independent.

Young people do not abscond or go missing from the home. Staff know their whereabouts at all times and frequently check to make sure that they are where they are meant to be.

The admission process for the residential service ensures that young people are only permitted to stay if staff are able to safely meet their needs and manage their presenting behaviours. The residential service is available to boys and girls, and staff pay particular attention to ensure that young people do not present a risk to each other. They do this in a gender neutral way to ensure that all eventualities receive proper consideration and that support and supervision is, as necessary, the same for all young people using the service.

Young people in residential services are all actively engaged in education in the school. This means that they benefit from PSHE classes and learning sessions on areas such as sex and relationships, how to use the internet safely, and how to be aware of risks such as grooming and radicalisation. Residential staff provide additional support in these areas as necessary through key-work sessions or by referring to pastoral support services for additional support.

Staff undertake training in internet safety. The internet provision in the school is filtered to prevent young people accessing unsuitable material. The residential service understands the risks associated with mobile devices and takes a proportionate approach to managing these risks safely. This includes monitoring social media activity and, where there is identified risk-taking behaviour, confiscating mobile phones.

As mentioned earlier in this report, young people are generally very well behaved. Staff use reflective and restorative techniques to manage conflict and help young people understand the impact of their behaviours on others. This means that young people learn to improve their behaviour and improve their ability to socialise with others. There have been no incidents that have required staff to use physical interventions.

Young people know how to raise concerns and they are confident in expressing their views. They can access independent support to share concerns, and an independent visitor regularly meets with young people to check how they are experiencing care.

Staff undertake training in key areas of safeguarding. They are alert to signs that young people may be at risk of exploitation and radicalisation. They know what to look out for with risks in relation to female genital mutilation and trafficking. All staff are trained to look out for signs of abuse and know how to respond in the event of concerns. The staff training record is not kept up to date. This means that the provider cannot evidence that all staff have up-to-date training in all core areas of safeguarding. The manager has good oversight of staff training, but poor training records undermine her ability to monitor this effectively. Many of the young people using the service are diagnosed as having autistic spectrum disorders. For some of

them, this adds an extra level of vulnerability to harm. Some staff have undertaken specialist training, but practice would be improved if all staff undertook specialist training to give them more insight and knowledge as to how to promote the welfare and safety of the young people.

The designated safeguarding lead for the school is also the head of care for the residential service. She is very experienced and knowledgeable in all relevant areas of safeguarding. She undertakes specialist training for the role and keeps this regularly updated. Safeguarding professionals in the local authority, including the education safeguarding officer and the designated officer, commented that the school works in partnership effectively when safeguarding concerns arise. They report that information is shared promptly and that the school works in an open and transparent way when investigating incidents or concerns.

The governor with responsibility for residential services is new to this role but has made an excellent start. She visits the residential setting, speaking with staff and young people. She has also undertaken a monitoring exercise in relation to safeguarding practices across the school. She provides a robust and effective challenge to the leadership team in response to any identified shortfalls. This means that the governing body is effective in its role in respect of promoting the welfare and safety of young people.

When necessary, the provider seeks expert guidance from child and adolescent mental health specialists to inform its interventions.

Senior staff have undertaken safe recruitment training, and all staff are subject to vigorous checks and vetting to ensure that they are of suitable character to work with young people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The Head of Care and Head of School work effectively as a team. They have daily meetings to discuss in detail how best to support pupils, to ensure that pupils are safe, happy and making progress in education.

The head of care is also the designated safeguarding lead for the school. This places some additional demands on her workload but has the advantage that of her having a good insight into any matters that may affect the safety and well-being of young people across the whole school. It also means that the residential service is led by a professional with specialist knowledge and experience of safeguarding. The head of care closely monitors the progress for each young person in terms of their education, and provides appropriate support within the residential setting to ensure that they achieve to their potential.

The head of care sets high standards and has a clear, child-focused vision for the service. Despite some recent challenges with key staff moving on, she has managed to make significant improvements to the service and has implemented most of the

recommendations from the previous inspection. She has recruited new staff and has senior staff in place in both residential units. This enables her to manage her workload more effectively and ensures that there are experienced, skilled leaders on shift to give direction to staff at all times. She has devised a training matrix for staff, but this is not yet fully up to date. Care and support plans for young people are variable in quality, and most, but not all, evidence areas where young people have made progress. This is a recording issue not a practice issue, as all young people are making excellent progress.

The head of care has been careful in her approach to service development to ensure that increasing capacity in the residential setting does not adversely affect the quality of the care for young people. This demonstrates an ethical value base with a strong focus on the quality of care for young people. She advocates strongly for young people and ensures that they access the resources they need to thrive, stay safe and make progress.

The head of care is well respected within the professional network. Social workers and child protection specialists speak highly of her professionalism, knowledge and passion. She builds effective working relationships within the professional network and with parents. She provides constructive challenge and leadership within the school. This ensures that the support provided for young people takes account of the need to promote their emotional well-being as well as educational achievement.

The staff team speaks highly of the head of care. Staff feel that she provides direction and leadership. She listens to their views and incorporates their ideas to shape service delivery. All staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisal to ensure that they are performing to the required standards. New staff receive a comprehensive induction, which includes high levels of support and direction. It was noticeable that some staff who had been in post a relatively short time were highly motivated, confident in their role and working to high standards. Staff feel that they work well as a team, and they value the support of the senior staff.

The head of care is visible within the residential setting. She is close to practice and knows the young people well. She speaks to them daily and has a good insight into the needs of young people and how they are experiencing care. Similarly, she knows the staff well and is able to manage staffing effectively to ensure that there is sufficient staff on duty at all times who have the experience and skills to provide support and care to the young people in residence.

The head of care makes good use of feedback to improve the service. She takes action to address any shortfalls identified by independent quality assurance processes. This includes governors monitoring reports, feedback from the independent visitor and, more recently, a safeguarding audit undertaken by the education safeguarding team.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC041787

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Emma Leith

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01322 662 937

Inspector

Lee Kirwin, social care inspector



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