

# Bramfield House School

Walpole Road, Bramfield, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 9AB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Bramfield House school is registered to provide education for up to 74 children aged between seven and 16 years who have social, emotional, or mental health needs and/or behavioural difficulties. At the time of this inspection, 73 children are on the school role. For up to 38 weeks a year, 32 children board full time Monday to Thursday and two children board part time. This school is independent and is part of the National Fostering Association.

**Inspection dates:** 11 to 13 September 2018

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>outstanding</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children.

**Date of previous inspection:** 5 December 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children make exceptional behavioural and social progress from their starting points.
- A whole-school approach to safeguarding ensures that children are safe and at the centre of practice.
- A highly effective leadership team continually drives improvement.
- Robust external scrutiny raises standards.
- A culture of mutual respect permeates the school.
- Solutions to daily challenges are creative and child centred.
- Staff go over and above to offer additional help and support to children and their families.
- Children are fully included in their care and are continually learning new skills.
- The effective model of behavioural support is embedded across the school.
- Relationships between the children and the staff are meaningful and enduring.
- Messages from research help to improve children's experiences.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- To strengthen the offer of family support and early help.
- To continue to make improvements to the accommodation offer.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that the drive to improve the offer of accommodation for the older children continues.
- Ensure that the plans to strengthen the offer of family support and early help includes consultation with other agencies, in particular therapeutic services.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children make exceptional progress from their starting points. Teaching and pupil support staff work together in a highly effective way to identify and prioritise the individual educational, social, health and emotional needs of each child. Learning from the messages of research, teaching staff offer extra lessons after school and the headteacher has introduced animal therapy to help children to develop empathy

Boarding is an integral part of school life. Admissions are carefully planned. Attention to detail about each child's social circumstances ensures that, prior to the child's arrival, staff have a good sense of the individual, their preferences and likely support needs. This sets the scene for success for children who have previously refused or been excluded from education. One child said, 'Boarding at this school has changed my life. The staff have helped me to see that I can sit GCSEs and that I do have a future.'

When staff and managers identify a social or emotional need that has not been met by other agencies they do more to support the child. The staff provide children with their time. Staff routinely attend external appointments with children and they offer bespoke support to families during the academic term and in the school holidays. These creative interventions help some children to continue to live at their family home.

This school offers weekday boarding that is arranged across two sites. Since the last inspection, some internal redesign of the available physical space enables more children to have access to a single bedroom. This inspection recommends that the provider continues to support the senior leaders' drive to transform accommodation.

Waking-night staff provide help to the children throughout the night. The staff and managers go to great lengths to ensure that every child's personal space is as comfortable, personalised and homely as possible. This ensures that all children are rested and recharged for the next school day.

Extensive school grounds provide safe and generous outdoor space for children to play and express themselves. Bicycles, the swimming pool and improved outdoor gym equipment encourage the children to take additional exercise after school. Staff play childhood games and have fun and laugh with the children. One child said, 'I can become anxious, so after school I go for a run around the grounds with the staff.'

Children eat a good variety of nutritional foods. A horticultural garden enables children to make positive contributions to meal times, for example from growing fruit and vegetables. Staff actively encourage children to develop skills in independence by facilitating fun sessions in cooking and baking. The children enjoy these creative experiences that teach new life skills and help to raise self-esteem.

Pupil support staff encourage the children to exercise personal choice. All staff speak

regularly with all children about how to spend time in the evenings. One child said, 'The staff are always talking to us about what we want and how to make things better for all of us. When we make suggestions the staff act.'

Access to a range of vehicles and a well-planned and structured approach to evening activities ensures that children access the local community on a regular basis. Children regularly go bowling or to the cinema. Some children who live more locally continue with home-based after-school clubs in their community.

Reflecting individual preference or plans, children remain in regular phone contact with their families. Parents and carers are welcome to visit. All parents represented in this inspection said that communication with staff is excellent, and described support from all staff in outstanding terms. One parent said, 'My child loves to board. The changes in him are amazing. He is like a different child. I cannot speak highly enough of the staff, who have been with us every step of the way.'

School data sampled shows that attendance and attainment improve for children who board. For each child, from their starting points, this represents a significant achievement. All year 11 students transitioning from this school in July 2018 moved on to positive destinations such as college and mainstream 6th form.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

A whole-school approach to keeping children safe ensures a dynamic and robust response to safeguarding issues of any kind. Concerns about staff practice are given utmost priority. Information is shared immediately and transparently with the designated officer. Staff are aware of the recent updates to 'Keeping children safe in Education.' This ensures that safeguarding remains relevant and at the forefront of daily practice.

All children said that staff are supportive and know how to keep children safe. A significant strength of this school is the ethos and the relationships shared between long-serving staff and children. Staff go above and beyond to find creative ways to help and support children. The mutual respect and positive connection between the staff and the children is enduring and ensures that every child is comfortable to talk to at least one trusted adult.

The children who board do not go missing. Children do not identify bullying as an issue of concern. The staff encourage the children to cooperate with and be respectful of one another. Children said that staff intervene immediately when issues arise between children.

The pupil support staff communicate with one another very effectively. Colour coded and clearly written risk assessments help staff to anticipate when children are likely to struggle emotionally and behaviourally. Practical strategies help children to learn about the importance of listening and, in turn, how to take responsibility for their behaviour. Highly personalised records of achievement tell each child's story and

show, often using photographs, how staff help children.

Unconditional positive regard, high levels of praise, a well-established reward scheme and a nurturing approach help children to recognise when they are making good behavioural choices. A number of children represented in this inspection spoke to the inspector about the behavioural changes that they continue to make while boarding. One child said, 'The staff have helped me to manage my anger. I used to punch, hit and kick, but now I know other ways.'

A newly created post to support behaviour management across the school ensures that children who do require additional support are managed consistently and positively. Physical interventions continue to reduce significantly. Highly effective distraction and diversion strategies result in the defusion of potentially volatile situations. Children learn alternative ways to manage difficult feelings, which in turn builds their self-confidence and enables them to continue successfully with their day. Children's behaviour is exemplary.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Respected by children and colleagues, the head of care works hand in glove with the senior management team, pupil support and teaching staff. All demonstrate a high level of commitment to improving the children's experiences and to making the best use of resources to continually improve the residential experience.

A dynamic and innovative senior leadership team ensures that the individual social, emotional and behavioural needs of children remain embedded in practice. The leaders visit children at home and spend time with children in the boarding provision, for example facilitating the morning transition into school. This enables the leaders to model positive behaviour, anticipate needs and to build relationships of quality.

Several pupil support staff have worked in the boarding provision with the children for a number of years, thus offering continuity and stability. Pupil support staff receive a high level of formal and informal support. New staff receive a thorough induction and opportunity to reflect on their learning needs. Regular supervision and reflective annual appraisals help staff to identify professional learning goals. All pupil support staff have either achieved the required level 3 qualification or are enrolled on the qualification. Some pupil support staff are working to achieve a level 5 qualification. This ensures that staff are professionally competent.

Rigorous internal monitoring and impartial external quality assurance measures provide accurate feedback to leaders and ensure that shortfalls, for example in some written work, are identified quickly and result in action to improve practice.

Using the resources available, senior leaders consistently look for new ways to drive improvement. They go above and beyond to ensure that additional support is on offer to children and their families and that no stone is left unturned. This inspection recommends that the drive from the senior leaders to transform and expand additional support continues.

## **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:** SC024575

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Deirdre Jennings

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspector**

Rosie Davie: social care inspector (lead)



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