

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

This school is a split-site residential special school maintained by a local authority. The school offers day and residential provision for children aged between 11 and 19 who have communication and interaction difficulties associated with autism and speech, language and communication needs.

There are currently 358 children on the school roll, of whom 148 attend the North education site and seven access the weekly residential provision.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 October 2023

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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 and young people.

Date of last inspection: 21 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff work tirelessly to create a safe space where children are nurtured and can develop and thrive. Staff demonstrate huge passion for their work. Their care and love for the children is clearly apparent in every interaction. Staff place the children at the heart of everything they do and have a highly developed understanding of their individual needs. They tailor their support, expertly ensuring that children make excellent progress in all areas of their lives. Children speak highly of the staff team and the school. They share warm, affectionate relationships, full of humour.

Staff speak passionately and eloquently about the impact of the boarding provision, and the school, on children's emotional, social, personal and academic development. They use well-developed systems to identify how best to support children and to capture their progress. One child spoke powerfully about the school being the first place where they had ever been able to openly express their feelings. They explained that this is due to the trust they have in their friends and the staff.

Children's views are valued, and they take an active role in their own care planning, engaging positively in strong key-working relationships with staff. Children say that they feel heard. They have many opportunities to contribute ideas and their voices are front and centre of day-to-day decision-making.

Staff have created an environment that is homely, clean, very well furnished and provides the children with a home where they feel comfortable and settled.

Staff have good medication systems in place and ensure that children receive medication as prescribed and medication errors are rare and quickly rectified. However, in one instance, there was no consent obtained from a parent for non-prescribed medication. In another example, the label on a medication was not legible, this runs the risk that a medication error could arise, however in practice staff administered this medication as prescribed.

The staff ensure that children's health needs are well met. They promptly access specialist health support when this is needed. Staff work closely with families to ensure that the children's physical and emotional health needs are fully understood and addressed. This has helped children build confidence and play a full role in the group. One child who struggled to engage with others is now happy, outgoing and making friends. Another child who did not have the confidence to use verbal communication is now using her voice confidently to build relationships and influence the world around her.

Children attending the residential provision engage well in education. Staff also promote additional activities that enrich children's experiences, broadening their opportunities, building confidence and developing new skills. The children go on trips and enjoy activities that are tailored to their interests and needs. One parent praised the variety of activities on offer and also the opportunity for children to have much-needed time to relax. Children and parents say that the experience of boarding has been 'life changing'. One parent described how her child had been disengaged from education but is now enjoying school and achieving success.

The children help to plan and cook their own meals and participate in the daily upkeep of the residential accommodation. They receive accredited certificates to show that they are making progress. This supports them with their independence and transition towards adulthood. Children are also supported to gain work experience in the local community, and this gives them the confidence and skills that they need to make informed choices about their future careers.

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

The residential staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities with regard to the safeguarding of children in their care. Staff always report and follow up appropriately on any concerns that they might have.

The staff have a detailed knowledge of the risks and vulnerabilities of each individual child. They form excellent relationships with children's families. In doing so, staff are able to develop a comprehensive picture of the risks that children face at school and in their home communities. Staff work consistently in accordance with clear safety plans and rapidly address areas where children need additional support to help them become safer.

Staff have supported children to understand risks and learn strategies to keep safer in relation to, for example, online risks, exploitation and substance misuse.

The staff communicate with children in a way that supports them to feel safe. Staff are aware of children's emotions, are able to recognise their feelings and moods and support them accordingly.

Staff develop close, trusting, and supportive relationships with children. This allows them to respond proactively when children are facing challenges or difficulties in their lives. Staff use natural consequences for children's behaviours as a learning tool rather than a punitive measure. However, the need for this approach is rare. Staff do not use physical restraint.

Children know who to talk to if they have any issues or concerns. Access to independent advice outside of the core staff team is readily available. Children know how to seek advice and support for issues that they might not want to share with staff.

Staff support children to explore sensitive issues in respect of race, gender, identity and discrimination. This learning helps to embed a culture of inclusivity and protection for all children who stay in the residential setting.

Recruitment practice is very strong and well managed. All necessary checks are in place to ensure that children are protected from unsuitable people working in the residential setting.

Managers ensure that the residential accommodation and grounds are maintained to a high standard. This is evident in the high quality of decor and the general appearance of the site.

Staff support children to take positive risks and to develop vital independence skills for adulthood. For example, children learn to travel independently, enjoy free time in the community and are accessing local amenities. Staff identify small steps to help children make progress and provide consistent, thoughtful support to help them achieve success. However, the written plans for some children do not consistently match up to the excellent practice, as children's success in meeting their targets is not always well documented. This is a recording issue and does not impact on the experiences or progress of children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders at the school have high aspirations for the quality of their provision and what can be achieved for children. They inspire staff to provide excellent standards of care. In turn, staff take huge pride in the work that they do. Leaders ensure that staff practice is always child-centred. Leaders support staff to implement creative and innovative practice that maximises children's engagement.

Staff speak positively about the support that they receive. Staff give clear examples of times when this support was extended to help them with issues in and outside the work environment.

Leaders' oversight and self-assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision are strong. Governors deliver an extra layer of scrutiny to ensure that standards are maintained. They have broad and comprehensive experience and knowledge of the residential school environment. The leadership team has continued to develop and improve the service.

Leaders are outward looking and are keen to develop a wide network of support around the children in their care. Leaders have shared good practice with external partners. The head of care was invited to present to a conference to share the school's experience of managing grief and providing support to children following a bereavement.

Leaders can clearly identify the impact that the residential provision has on the outcomes for children. Children often remain in contact with staff, sometimes for years after they have left. This enables leaders to identify a lasting positive impact on children.

No breaches of national minimum standards were identified at this inspection.

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

Points for improvement

- Leaders should undertake a review of medication storage, recording and administration to reduce the risk of errors and to ensure parental consent for non-prescribed medications.
- Leaders should review children's written plans to ensure they accurately reflect the children's progress in relation to their independence skills.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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: **Steve Ackerley**

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

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