



Bramfield House School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

DfES Registration Number 935/6036
Unique Reference Number 124879
Inspection number 296786
Inspection dates 16-17 January 2007
Reporting inspector Mr Stephen Grounds HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Age group 10-16	Published 02 February 2007	Reference no. 296786
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Bramfield House is an independent special school for 40 boys, aged 10-16 years, the majority of whom are resident during the week. All the pupils have statements of special educational need reflecting their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some have high levels of challenging behaviour and some have a history of violence to others. On entry many pupils experience difficulties in forming relationships with their peers or with adults. No pupils have English as an additional language but small proportions are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school is located in a 10-acre rural setting just outside the Suffolk village of Bramfield. The provision is subject to annual inspections by the Commission for Social Care (CSCI), the most recent of which took place in September 2006.

The school aims to be successful with each pupil through support which is founded on its core values of respect, dignity, trust and well-being. It has a commitment to realising the potential of each pupil through a broad and enriching curriculum, the offering of growing independence and the widening of opportunities for continued learning and work.

Evaluation of the school

Bramfield House School is a good school. It is effective as a result of the quality and commitment of its staff and their consistency in their management and good care of its pupils. There is a clear identification of the boundaries of acceptable behaviour within a system where the school's core values are put into practice. The school provides an effective and wide-ranging curriculum which helps pupils engage or re-engage in learning. The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory overall, as although the quality of teaching is good, there are some weaknesses in assessment identified in the previous inspection which have not been fully addressed. However, the school is clearly benefiting in its planning and strategic direction from the strong support of its new parent company.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced, meets the needs of pupils, and reflects the school's aspirations as set out in the prospectus. The curriculum encompasses the academic and social needs of boarders because it involves 24-hour learning with a range of structured evening activities, which are popular with pupils. There are effective links between its academic and social elements which help support learners' personal development. The curriculum is enhanced through a good range of visits and residential experiences, such as trips to museums and places of historic interest, activity centres and outward bound residential and camping adventurous activities. These visits enhance pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem and make a positive contribution to their personal and academic development.

Pupils broadly follow the National Curriculum and in each subject teachers have access to suitable medium- and long-term planning documents. The school also benefits from the subject expertise of its teachers. The planning of the curriculum is satisfactory and is to be strengthened once appropriate schemes of work for each subject or area of learning are adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. The timetabling arrangements allow for an element of setting in order to better meet the needs of individual pupils.

Individual education plans focusing mainly on targets for literacy and numeracy and on behaviour are provided for each pupil. These plans have a strong emphasis on developing pupils' social communication skills and improving their behaviour.

The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is good. There is a good life-skills programme for older pupils to promote independence skills. As a result, pupils leave the school capable of taking up further education opportunities. There is a positive emphasis on the dangers of smoking, drugs awareness, the promotion of sexual health and development of positive relationships. Work-related learning is well developed with strong links through the Connexions service and carefully planned work experiences.

The quality of teaching and assessment taken together is satisfactory, a judgement which agrees with the school's self-assessment. The quality of teaching seen in the lessons observed was good and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. There are strengths in teachers' subject knowledge and in the individual support pupils receive from classroom assistants. All staff know their pupils very well as individuals and understand their learning difficulties. There is a positive, sensitive approach to managing pupils' behaviour, and as a result, all pupils can concentrate, do what is expected of them and become increasingly independent. The variety of the teaching styles used meets the explicit needs of many pupils to learn through a variety of engaging and practical activities. Practical work is well organised, as for example, with experiments observed on

comparing the combustion of different fuels in science, which enabled pupils to make good progress in this aspect of their work.

The availability of resources is at least satisfactory and the teaching benefits from the high quality improvements in classroom accommodation which have recently been made. However, none of the lessons seen included the incorporation of information and communication technology.

The school has a good range of procedures planned or operational for assessing pupils' achievement against external yardsticks. At Key Stage 4 the school plans for all pupils to have access to examinations in six subjects of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). As examples of other systems, entry level certification of the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance and the bronze award of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) are used. Lower down the school at Key Stages 2 and 3 the Standards Assessment Tests (SATs) are used and there is planning for the use of the optional SATs in Years 7 and 8.

However, day-to-day assessment to inform planning has not moved on sufficiently since the last inspection, when it was identified as a shortcoming. Individual teachers have their own systems and there is six-monthly testing of literacy and numeracy by senior staff. However, there is no overall and on-going system which incorporates pupils' care and educational needs and sets targets for both. Records of completion of National Curriculum topics are not kept up-to-date and the extent of the marking of pupils' work varies considerably. In consequence the targets set for pupils' work are not always specific enough, making it difficult for pupils to identify the direction of their work or for staff to measure progress..

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Their spiritual development is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality to lessons is good.

Parents are pleased with the way the school helps their children to mature and accept responsibility. All pupils have significant social and emotional needs and they find reassurance in the school's strong pastoral systems and routines. Most pupils enjoy coming to school with a few long-term absentees contributing to the higher than expected pupil absence rate. Pupils respond well to their skilled teachers and support staff and co-operate well with each other during lessons and at other times. Relationships between day and boarding pupils and with adults are good. Dining arrangements make a significant contribution to the school's social structure with day and boarding pupils sitting and eating

together in social harmony. This stability and consistency helps everyone to get to know each other very well and actively promotes positive family values. The close relationships are reflected in the gentle conversation and good social conduct to be seen in and around the school. There is a good range of personal development opportunities taken up by pupils, such as being responsible for getting and clearing away their food at each meal, managing the water drinks trolley, getting provisions for the cook and cleaning up the gymnasium. As they get older, pupils become increasingly independent and, by the time they leave school, all pupils have developed the ability to listen to others and make friends. Behaviour is consistently good across the school and pupils manage to cope with small changes to their usual routine. Many are able to converse in a mature and responsible manner with relative strangers, making visitors feel welcome, and this represents considerable achievement given the pupils' backgrounds.

Pupils' spiritual development is promoted mainly through the PSHE and citizenship curriculum. Grace is said at breakfast; however there are many missed opportunities to enhance the spiritual development of pupils during their time in the dining hall and at the pre- and post-school day pupil briefings.

The many sporting and extra-curricular activities help pupils to develop their confidence and self-esteem. For example, the outdoor pursuit programme includes dry-slope ski-ing and snow boarding, golf, sea fishing and judo. Day pupils take part in these valuable personal development opportunities. Pupils' cultural awareness is boosted through the food technology programme, with the preparation of meals from around the world and by pupils getting to know staff and pupils from other ethnic cultures. Pupils acknowledge the example of good role models provided by staff of how to behave and their consistency and skill help pupils to develop an awareness of moral issues, such as fairness and tolerance. Pupils learn about adult relationships and understand the importance of taking responsibility for their actions and behaviour. Pupils' ability to interact with other people puts them in a good position to cope with life outside school, a feature which was corroborated by positive feedback from local employers.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. The behaviour management policy has a very positive impact. Pupils are supervised well. Pupils feel safe and know to whom they can turn if they have any problems. Some are concerned about the security of their property and this is an issue the school was addressing at the time of the inspection. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and are marked by a caring concern. The school is successful in promoting its aims of nurturing respect, dignity, trust and well-being.

Pupils are encouraged to follow healthy lifestyles. The school provides healthy meals which are appreciated by the pupils. There is a high level of participation in physical activities. There is no drug-taking. The child protection arrangements are good and up-to-date. There have been a number of improvements in the level of pupil supervision since the CSCI inspection. Improvements in the use of circle time group discussions have been made to counter incidents of bullying successfully.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All but two newly appointed care staff have been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau. These staff await completion of these checks and hence confirmation of their employment. The arrangements for the appointment for staff are good in most respects. They currently omit a check on medical fitness and a written record of interviews.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are of a good standard. The school has recently commissioned a new classroom block, the quality of which is outstanding. The new facilities include specialist teaching rooms for science and design and technology. The school benefits from an indoor swimming pool and a gymnasium. There is plenty of space around the school for games and recreation.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The quality of information made available to parents is good. The school supplements its written information by visiting parents and carers in their homes. Annual reports on pupils are informative and wide-ranging. In return parents, carers, and placing authorities are very appreciative of the support provided by the school. The school sends local authorities an account of the termly fees which are charged but does not at present provide them with a statement of incurred expenditure.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints procedure is complete and meets all the statutory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- put in place a framework to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff ensure that checks have been made of their medical fitness and that there is a written record of their interviews (paragraph 4(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- in cases where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, submit an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6(7)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- ensure all schemes of work are adapted to meet the needs of all pupils.

School details

Name of school	Bramfield House School		
DfES number	935/6036		
Unique reference number	124879		
Type of school	Special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1970		
Age range of pupils	10-16		
Gender of pupils	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 40	Girls: 0	Total:40
Number of boarders	Boys: 31	Girls: 0	Total: 31
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 40	Girls: 0	Total: 40
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 4	Girls: 0	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,882		
Annual fees (boarders)	£41,178		
Address of school	Bramfield House School Walpole Road Bramfield Halesworth Suffolk IP19 9AB		
Telephone number	01986 784235		
Fax number	01986 784645		
Email address	info@bramfieldhouse.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Dee Jennings		
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Mr Stephen Grounds HMI		
Dates of inspection	16-17 January 2007		