

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 and young people aged between 7 and 16 years who have social, emotional or mental health needs and/or behavioural difficulties. At the time of this inspection 70 children and young people are on the school role. For up to 38 weeks a year, 27 children board full time Monday to Thursday and two children and young people board part time. This school is independent and is part of the National Fostering Association. The school was last inspected in January 2017 and received a good overall judgment with an outstanding feature for personal development, behaviour and welfare.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 December 2017

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of previous inspection: 17 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- The residential provision is an integral part of the school. Pupil support staff work closely with the teaching staff to ensure that the children and young people have good experiences and are encouraged to reach their potential.
- A culture of respect and positive regard permeates across the school.
- The children and young people speak in positive terms about their experiences of boarding.
- Children and young people share warm and meaningful relationships with the staff, a number of whom have worked in the school for many years.
- Practices across the residential provision are child centred.
- Parents and carers speak positively about the residential provision and the difference that they see in their child.
- The effective senior leadership team drives improvement.
- Safeguarding practices are transparent, robust and ensure that the children's safety and welfare are at the heart of all decisions that are made.
- The system embedded across the school to manage behaviour and to promote positive interactions between pupils is highly effective.
- The children and young people benefit from accessing a range of stimulating and fun activities in the grounds of the school and in the local community.
- Staff receive good support and supervision. They are encouraged to reflect on their practice and interactions with the children and young people.
- Effective, robust and scrutinising quality assurance functions raise standards across the residential provision.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Staff to practise their use of the holds for physical intervention.
- To increase opportunities for pupil support staff to reflect on issues relating to equality and diversity.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that the staff have the opportunity to practise restrictive physical interventions in between refresher training.
- Ensure that pupil support staff have the opportunity to access equality and diversity training.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This school offers weekday boarding. Boarding is arranged across two sites. The younger children in Years 3, 4 and 5 live together during the week in a house called Ibstock that is located on the school campus. The older children and young people in Years 6 to 11 sleep in dormitories located in the main school building. These arrangements are new for this academic year and represent a significant and positive change. The leadership and pupil support team have carefully thought through this reorganisation to ensure that the physical resources available are utilised to the best possible effect for each age group. As a result, each of the younger children living in Ibstock has their own bedroom, and this helps these children to experience improved sleep routines and to feel even safer. The staff and the managers encourage the older children and young people to personalise their dormitory space, and this helps them to feel a sense of belonging. All of the children and young people represented in this inspection told the inspector that, for different reasons, they really like to board. One parent said, 'Since my son has begun to board, he is a lot more positive about life.'

Parents and carers benefit from and see the progress that their child makes. They receive routine and regular updates from the leadership team and the pupil support staff, and this helps them to feel included in their child's progress at school. One parent said: 'The staff really do help the children to develop themselves. I see progress in my son's social development and his ability to have relationships with other people.'

At the end of academic year July 2017, all the Year 11 pupils moved on from this school to start a college placement. The children and young people at this school succeed and progress because they receive good-quality and consistent care from a committed staff and leadership team, many of whom have been working in their roles for a number of years. The staff often 'go over and above' to ensure that the children and young people have what they need to ensure that their school week runs smoothly. For example, one child's parent forgot to send in weekly medication, so the staff made the four-hour round trip to collect this as an alternative to the child being sent home.

Named pupil support staff and the senior leaders spend individual time with each child and young person. Individual key-work sessions enable staff to pinpoint where additional support may make a difference, and these records help the staff to respond to any issues that may have an effect on learning or behaviour. An initial pupil assessment shows how new pupils progress across their first six weeks, and this evaluation enables the staff to track children's social and behavioural progress. This process helps the staff to identify and intervene where necessary. One parent said: 'We had an issue with some other boys teasing my son. The staff dealt with this and also came up with a plan to help to boost my son's morale. I felt very reassured by what they had done. They are on top of the little things.'

The vast majority of children and young people have been boarding at this school for more than a year, so they know the pupil support team and the waking night staff well. One young person said, 'The staff know when I am not myself, and I don't know how they do that.' Daily group meetings after school ensure that the children and young people can have their say and exercise choice. The children and young people feel the benefit of the support and dedication from the staff. One boarder said, 'Before I came to board I think I was heading for somewhere like prison. I really do not know where I would be now if it was not for boarding and the support of all of the staff.'

A team of pupil support staff work with the children and young people before and after school. The pupil support staff work closely and communicate effectively with the teaching team. This ensures that the children are ready to learn and that transitions, for example into the classroom, are managed successfully. Sometimes the teaching and learning support staff work alongside the pupil support team. For example, the teaching staff come to help the children and young people to get up, dressed and be organised, and have breakfast with them. This helps to build and strengthen relationships, because the children and young people come to experience and relate to their class teachers in an alternative setting.

The school nurse takes a lead role in the implementation of an effective system to ensure the safe management and administration of medication. The staff have good, effective relationships with other professionals, who say that communication is good and consistent. One social worker said, 'The staff are very understanding of our child's need. When there are any concerns they are quick to make contact with us.'

Routine mealtimes shared with staff provide every child and young person with an excellent range and choice of nutritious meals. The younger children have their meals in Istock and this helps the staff to monitor what, and how, the children are eating. Some of the young people in the Year 11 group are actively encouraged to plan, prepare and cook evening meals for themselves. The young people actively participate in this process. For example, one of the young people cooked a meal which the inspector, other young people and staff enjoyed. This helps these young people to put what they know into practice, particularly money management, budgeting and life skills. One social worker said, 'The school is doing a really good job of supporting our child with moving on to the next stage.'

In the evenings the children and young people benefit from access to a plethora of activities. For example, within the school grounds children and young people can swim, attend a weekly music class, be involved in arts and crafts, and play football, table tennis and pool. The school has access to a number of vehicles and so evening trips out into the community form part of the after-school routine. For example, children and young people go out with staff to leisure centres, bowling and cinema, and visit local attractions. This provides a structure for the children and young people and keeps them busy and active through the evening. When necessary, the children and young people have access to help with homework, with extra assistance from the teaching staff. When the children and young people want and need to, they can

relax by talking to staff, watching television or playing with a games console.

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

The staff and senior leaders work vigorously to ensure that any safeguarding matters and any concerns that have the potential to become safeguarding issues receive urgent attention and priority. For example, where concerns are raised about young people's behaviour from their activity at the weekends the school nurse, who has a dual role, provides early help offering advice and support to the young person and their family in order to reduce and minimise the risks. Where the experience and support of other more specialised agencies are required, these are sourced without hesitation. Alongside this, the leadership team has worked relentlessly to ensure that staff understand their responsibilities for keeping children safe. For example, the leaders test the staff on their safeguarding knowledge. This creative practice results in a staff team that is alert and responsive to the children's and young people's needs. In the school there is a culture of children having a strong sense of safety, being well cared for and confident that staff know the action to take in the event of any concerns emerging in any aspect of their life. All of the children and young people represented in this inspection could identify a member of the staff team whom they would approach if they had a concern, including members of the senior leadership team.

Staff understand and use the whistleblowing policy competently. The designated leads take immediate action where necessary. Prompt referrals are made to the designated officer, and senior leaders act decisively to follow any advice given. The senior leads for safeguarding maintain very clear and concise chronological records in relation to any safeguarding issues, and this helps to demonstrate the rationale and thinking behind the next steps. Internal investigations leave no stone unturned, and the senior leaders terminate the employment of any member of staff who does not demonstrate that they uphold the values and ethos of the school.

Children do not go missing from the campus. One child said, 'What would the point be of even trying to go missing? The staff would be following after me down the driveway.' Since the last inspection, on one occasion during an off-site activity two children went away without permission. They were found by the staff and returned within 15 minutes. This demonstrates that the staff are extremely responsive and that the children and young people are very aware that this is the case.

Highly individualised, colour-coded risk assessments help staff to see at a glance where areas of concern may be. The assessments inform the individualised and well-constructed care plans. The detail of information held about each child has been recently and significantly improved, and includes an overview of each child's social and family circumstances. Written information provides a holistic overview of each individual's achievements, progress, personality and the goals that they are working towards. The format of much of this written and pictorial information is worthy of wider dissemination. New details are added when there is a change, and the children

and young people contribute to and review some of the information held. The detailed plans ensure that the staff have up-to-date and dynamic information about how each child and young person is being helped and is responding to the help offered as the school term unfolds.

The information from physical interventions is scrutinised and analysed to help the senior leaders understand any patterns and trends. For example, collated data for each term shows which children or young people and staff are involved in each intervention. The number of physical interventions has decreased, and the intensity and duration of holds have decreased significantly. The senior leaders have worked hard with the staff to ensure that they are confident with de-escalation techniques. The staff do not use holds which involve going to the floor. One member of staff said, 'If we do need to use physical intervention and we think that the standing hold has not been effective and we might need to go to the floor, we let go, reassess and start again.' The staff receive training and refresher training in restrictive physical intervention. However, the staff use restrictive physical intervention less often across a wide age range. To ensure consistently high standards, the staff should take time to practise the use of interventions on other adults in between the bi-annual refresher training.

Sometimes the staff have to work through challenging behaviour such as shouting, swearing or hitting out. Sanctions are used very rarely. Of the number of children and young people spoken to during this inspection, none could remember a time when they had received a sanction. Staff tend to implement a sanction when a child or young person has significantly misbehaved when out in the community. In the few examples of sanctions since the last inspection, on every occasion each child or young person had the opportunity to talk through their version of events, to reflect with staff and to have the initial sanction reduced. This practice values the children and encourages them to take active responsibility for their behaviour and its impact on others.

There is a whole-school approach to behaviour management, based on points. The children and young people represented in this inspection could describe it and spoke enthusiastically about the system, which demonstrates that they share the staff's investment in finding positive solutions to manage difficult situations. The pupil support team goes out of its way to recognise when children and young people are behaving well and making an effort. Staff actively offer praise and encouragement. Every residential pupil has the opportunity throughout every evening to increase their points and add to their potential rewards, which may be either monetary or a treat. The recent introduction of rewards for the most improved behaviour provides hope and encouragement for those children and young people who find behaving well to be more difficult. This highly effective, structured and well thought through arrangement helps the children and young people to feel positive about their contributions in social settings and raises their self-esteem.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The managers and senior leadership team share a vision of high expectations for every child, young person and staff member. They are dedicated to ensuring that the children and young people are safe and have the opportunity to reach their potential, both academically and as social beings. The leaders see it as their responsibility to holistically prepare and shape the children and young people for adulthood.

The principal team leader, who oversees the residential provision, has completed a relevant level 5 qualification. He works closely with the deputy headteacher and headteacher to ensure effective management oversight. This includes scrutiny and analysis of written information. The principal team leader spends time with the children and young people in the evening. The team leaders and deputy team leaders support the principal team leader in ensuring that, throughout any evening, staff, children and young people have the resources, direction and support that they need. As a result, shifts are well organised, the staff have confidence in their managers and the lines of accountability are clear.

Since the last inspection some new staff have joined the pupil support team. Staff vetting and recruitment are robust. All of the new staff receive a structured induction which helps them to understand their responsibilities and builds their confidence in their work with the children and young people. The staff receive an annual appraisal and all the staff, including the waking night staff, receive at minimum termly supervision. Staff receive encouragement to reflect on their interactions and relationships with the children, and this helps to ensure that the focus remains firmly on outcomes.

Routine whole-school and pupil support staff team meetings help to ensure that all of the staff remain up to date with new initiatives and the senior leader's expectations. Pupil support staff access a range of training which both is face to face and online. Joint pupil support and teaching staff training helps to ensure a shared outlook and improves communication. The training available includes safeguarding, first aid, anti-bullying and recognising signs that children or young people may be vulnerable to extremism. The appropriate referrals are made to other agencies in response to internet safety concerns, such as children and young people accessing potentially unsafe websites at home. The staff do not access equality and diversity training, and this would help to raise awareness and generate practice-based discussion among staff to encourage them to think widely about forms of discrimination.

The administrative support is excellent. The internal systems for collecting and keeping up-to-date, relevant data are highly organised. External monitoring is consistent and robustly challenges the senior leaders, who act on advice and recommendations made. The quality assurance arrangements ensure an objective yet dynamic critical appraisal of the residential service and also help to drive improvement.

All staff, including catering, cleaning, administrative and estate management staff, who were spoken to across this inspection say that they feel supported in their work.

They say that the leadership team is highly visible and approachable. The staff are clear about what needs to be brought to their managers' attention and have confidence that nothing is too much trouble for them. All of this contributes to a warm, welcoming, nurturing and safe environment for children and young people. One member of the team said, 'In a lot of ways we are like one big family here.'

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 difference 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

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Inspector

Rosie Davie, social care inspector



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