

# 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 is a privately owned residential special school for 77 pupils aged between seven and 16. There are currently 29 children who board at the school. The residential accommodation is provided in the main school building and Ibstock House, which is situated on the school site. The school, which is based in Suffolk, caters for children who have social, emotional, or mental health needs and/or behavioural difficulties.

The residential provision was last inspected in September 2018.

**Inspection dates:** 28 to 30 January 2020

**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:** 11 September 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

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

The children's overall experiences are positive and they make good progress. The children benefit from a staff team that promotes their needs and cares about their well-being. The staff establish positive relationships with the children by communicating in an open and honest way. The staff talk with the children about cultural topics and current affairs. This ensures that children remain informed about matters that they may be exposed to outside of school but may not understand. These discussions increase the children's understanding and can reduce concerns that children may have about current world events.

The children's attendance at school is good and they are eager to learn. Their behaviour and attitudes towards learning are good. Time spent out of lessons is reducing and thus opportunities to learn are increasing. The residential staff encourage the children to read in residential time and they actively support the children with their education.

The opportunities and activities provided to children are excellent. The staff have taken children skiing in France, to football matches at Wembley and to see theatrical productions such as 'The Lion King'. Community engagement is positive and the children participate in voluntary work. Taking part in community and charitable events gives the children confidence, a sense of pride and a desire to help others.

Meal times are social occasions during which the staff sit with the children and talk to them. There are many healthy food options on offer including fresh fruit and a daily salad bar. The food is presented well and looks fresh and appealing.

The staff celebrate the children's achievements. Photographs of the children decorate the walls and serve as a reminder of their accomplishments. The children respond positively to the reward system and the staff actively encourage them to earn rewards.

The school nurse is a distinct benefit to the children and the school. She provides individualised support and promotes positive mental health. The school nurse works with the children and their families. She has been influential in some of the children's positive progress at school.

The staff regularly review the children's academic progress and social and independence skills. Older children are encouraged to undertake independence tasks such as budgeting and managing their own personal care. This helps to prepare them for adulthood and their transition from the school.

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

The children said that they feel safe at the school and particularly in the residential provision. The staff provide high levels of supervision and support that minimise any potential bullying. There are inevitable disagreements, but the children said that the staff are responsive and prevent these from escalating. The staff's intervention reduces the level and number of incidents and helps to maintain a stable environment.

The children very rarely leave the school without agreement. The occasional incidents have been for a short duration and the staff were quick to ensure that the children returned safely.

The staff have reviewed the use of consequences and tried a different approach that has been successful. The staff focus wholeheartedly on positive reinforcement. They share the children's behavioural improvements with the whole staff team. There is a joined-up approach between the school staff and the residential staff to emphasise to the children the benefits of positive behaviour. The children's efforts are recognised consistently by the staff team.

The senior managers have made a concerted effort to help the staff to work closely together. This work includes information sharing that is routinely built in to the start and end of the day. The designated safeguarding team has expanded. The staff in this team are all trained for their roles and fully understand their responsibilities. The staff ensure that there are strong, coordinated responses to any concerns about the children. Safeguarding referrals are made quickly. Designated staff record clear chronologies of all actions taken and the outcomes for the child. The staff work very well together to proactively monitor the children's safety and well-being. The safeguarding team works well with other agencies and external professionals to safeguard each child's welfare.

A serious allegation is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. There have been some other allegations about members of staff. Some of these have been substantiated following investigation. The actions that managers have taken and the chronology of reporting and recording show that there are good safeguarding systems in place and that the senior staff explore concerns with professional curiosity and tenacity. Learning outcomes and actions include training and performance management. Although the management of the allegations is good, there are several conduct and safeguarding concerns.

Several new staff have been appointed. The personnel files evidence that recruitment checks are thorough and meticulously carried out. The pre-employment checks include a good level of exploration of the applicant's background.

Essential fire safety measures were lacking, with two fire doors not closing securely. The electrical wiring report highlights recommendations that remain outstanding. There is a lack of oversight of health and safety and the internal monitoring of the

environment as these issues went unidentified, although they were both addressed during the inspection.

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

The head of residential care has relevant experience and qualifications. He leads an established staff team with energy and high aspiration. The head of care is committed to enhancing the children's experiences and has made a positive difference to the quality of the care provided.

In September 2019 a new headteacher joined the school, and she has made a positive impact. She has driven positive change in a relatively short space of time, with the senior leadership team on board. A staffing restructure and fresh thinking have resulted in a team that is more accountable. There is an ambitious development plan for the school to provide more bespoke and comfortable accommodation.

The quality of external monitoring drives improvements in the residential provision. Rigorous monitoring visits provide challenge. The senior leadership team swiftly responds to the recommendations that are made in the external monitoring audits. The external monitoring reports are shared with the governing body, which enables tighter governance and oversight of the residential provision.

The head of care undertakes a range of monitoring activities to ensure that the staff are meeting the children's needs. These activities include checks on the standard of accommodation, sanctions, case records and restraint records. The checks provide an overview of the strengths and weaknesses in the staff's practice.

An electronic recording system has been devised to capture behavioural incidents. The staff record behavioural incidents; however, recording is inconsistent and fails to routinely capture the follow-up actions or the extra support that is provided to the child concerned.

The residential provision has been redecorated since the last inspection, and children now have more say in personalising their bedrooms.

There have been several complaints since the start of the last academic year. These have been managed exceptionally well. However, there are no recorded complaints for the previous year despite a parent raising concerns about their child during a meeting and during a telephone call. The points raised by the parent during the meeting have been recorded but there has been no record of a complaint being made or the actions taken in response to this. The child continues to be affected by the issues.

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

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard for residential special schools:

- 18.1 The school has, and follows, an appropriate policy on recording and responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory requirements.

### **Recommendations**

- Increase the staff's knowledge and understanding of the electronic recording system.
- Undertake thorough health and safety checks to identify faults and rectify them without delay.

### **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:** SC024575

**Headteacher:** Davina Bell

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspectors**

Lianne Bradford, social care inspector (lead)

Deirdra Keating, social care inspector

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