

Brantridge School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Gaynor Moorey
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Head of care	
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Date of last inspection	11 March 2008

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Brantridge is a non-maintained residential special school, providing education and care for primary aged boys, all of whom have statements of special educational needs. Some children have complex needs including learning disabilities and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school is part of the Grafham Grange Special Educational Trust Ltd. The school can provide for up to 36 boys from the ages of six to 13 years.

Summary

This announced key inspection took place over two week days. The purpose of the inspection was to undertake a full review encompassing all the key National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools.

The school continues to provide a good standard of care which is provided by the Head and acting head of care and the experienced care staff team. The children are safe at the school and this is maintained by comprehensive and clear guidance, policies and procedures. The home provides the children with emotional support and encourages the children with their education and interests. The school ensures that information is in place to enable reviews to take place. The children have contact with family and friends whilst at school and are given opportunities to express their opinions and make choices about their lives. The school is maintained to a good level providing a homely environment for the children to stay in. The staff are supported by an experienced acting head of care and comprehensive systems that include supervision and training and the overall monitoring of the school.

During the inspection the home received two recommendations.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school as a whole have moved on since the last inspection and a lot of work has gone into developing systems and reviewing how relevant areas of the school can change to develop practice even further.

Since the last inspection the school has met the recommended action from the last report which was to reduce the high level of restraint used at the school. There has been a significant reduction in the last year and the school has brought in new systems, training and monitoring to reduce this situation even further.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Each child has a health plan in place which details information about medical history and current health needs. The school have clear guidance and training for staff in place to ensure they have experience and knowledge when assisting the children to take their medication. A registered nurse is in overall charge for the medication, first aid and treatment within the school. The systems in place at the medical room have continued to be developed to ensure excellent consistent practice when dealing with the children's health and medical needs. The head of the

school undertakes the overall monitoring of the medical systems. All of the children have consent for all forms of medical treatment. The school has written guidance on promoting the health and welfare of the children, such as the new policy for substance misuse. The children are enabled to discuss these issues with staff both in and out of school.

Children's dietary needs are provided for and have continued to improve with the experienced staff being aware of and training in the new guidance on healthy eating in schools. All of the ancillary staff and kitchen staff have had access to training this year with staff being able to undertake NVQ qualifications in their appropriate areas of work. The children identified they could ask for changes in the menu through the food meetings and the school council. The children also said the food had continued to improved and that more choices were available. The menu have also changed to include a third option at lunchtime when the main meal is served and the pupils can access the main choice including a vegetarian option, a jacket potato and topping, a pasta dish or salad. Due to the size of the school all of the children eat together. Care and teaching staff eat with them and provide sensitive and unobtrusive supervision of their behaviour during the meal. The children reflected through conversations and questionnaires that they enjoyed the food and felt they had a say in what they ate.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Confidentiality is respected in the school. The children have privacy and space given to them whilst on the landings. Telephone calls can be made in private on the boys' telephone. Calls in the office are made with staff present. All pupil records are kept safely and securely. Staff are trained in confidentiality of information.

Children identified they would know how to complain and who they would speak to if they needed to. A complaints process is in place for both the children and parents/carers. The school has two different systems in place, one of which is less formal and consists of the pupils being able to fill in a form confidentially and post it in a post box which is seen by the head of care and the children are then spoken to. If an issue can be sorted out before it becomes an official complaint this happens and the outcome is recorded.

Complaints seen had been dealt with appropriately and within the correct timescales. Some of the reports seen were written in inappropriate language which could be seen as emotive. The school also has a new independent visitor who checks the complaints made by the pupils and follows these issues up to ensure they are satisfied with the outcome.

The school has developed its new child protection policy in line with safeguarding proposals. The school has also provided the staff with updated child protection training. The school has clear systems of dealing with issues and this could be seen within the records. Incidents dealt with since the last inspection were seen to have been dealt with correctly. During the child protection training staff are given guidance on confidentiality of information. The children said they felt staff did keep information private.

The school is pro-actively dealing with bullying in the school and over the last year have continued with such initiatives such as 'random act of kindness' where the boys are praised for good things they do for other children. The school has also been involved with running workshops within the national anti bullying week. The school has again reviewed its bullying policy to continue to deal with any bullying issues at the school, this includes the on-going

emphasis of racism and discrimination. The school has a recording system for both bullying and more specifically racism and discriminatory remarks. Bullying is also discussed at the school council meetings and the landing meetings. The children confirmed that bullying happens but it is dealt with by the staff. Parents spoken to at the inspection said their son was now much safer being at Brantridge than where he had been before.

The school has a clear policy and procedure in place for when children go missing. The records of absconding are low and only indicated those missing stayed within the school grounds and returned to school quickly.

The school operates a consistent approach to behaviour management both within the school and boarding areas. The staff are trained in team teach techniques and this has continued since the last inspection with a greater emphasis on behaviour management. The school has worked very hard in the last year with excellent results as the number of restraints has gone down by over 50%. Each residential landing organises an earned reward system appropriate to its age group which is operated to encourage positive outcomes when dealing with behaviour issues. The school has clear guidance in place as to which sanctions are permissible. Recorded sanctions show that sanctions being used have also decreased. Some children who spent time with the Inspector and who completed questionnaires said that they did not like some of the sanctions used, but when asked, all said that they felt that they were always treated fairly and understood why sanctions were necessary.

There are numerous risk assessments in place with regards to ensuring the safety of the children. The assessments cover activities and the outdoor areas of the school. The school does not have a full generic risk assessment of the house and grounds. Accidents are recorded regularly and include details on how each situation is dealt with and what treatment is given. Fire safety is ensured via regular checks on equipment and alarms. Fire drills are regularly carried out and children have fire quizzes to help with their knowledge of fire escape routes.

The organisation which operates the school has a thorough system in place for recruiting staff; 25 staff across the Grafham Grange Trust have undertaken safer recruitment training this year. The appropriate checks are carried out on staff before they start work at the school. A new system is being introduced to highlight when staff need a personal development plan updating or a new CRB check. The school has a clear system in place for checking visitors in and out.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The children are supported by the staff in the boarding houses to attend and manage the school day. The children are supported with homework and homework club is run twice a week. This could be seen in the joint projects held such as sports week, the art week, anti bullying week, celebrating cultural events and most recently the Christmas activities. The inspector was told by care staff of the good relationships that exist between them and all emphasised that they work as a team to implement the whole school approach to address the needs of the pupils.

The school has an excellent activities programme and on each evening and throughout the weekend the children are able to choose between activities at the school on site and going out into the community. During the course of the year the school have put on several events throughout the year which the boys have enjoyed immensely. These have included an arts week where the pupils had access to several mediums of creating art, the sports week where various

activities and sports were arranged that the children would not always have access to such as horse riding, golf, archery, street dance and squash. The week ended with the pupils' families and carers being invited to the school for sports day.

The school also changed its approach to school camp and arranged three different trips which were all different such as a boating holiday, holiday camp and activities based holiday, the boys could choose the one they most wanted to go on. The holidays were a great success and the school are planning similar weeks this year. The school also arrange different cultural events and this year have celebrated Mardi Gras, American independence day, St Georges day, VE day, and had various days celebrating different cultures.

The children have their needs for specific support outlined in their placement plans and the school offers specific help and counselling. Care and behaviour programmes are built around the specific needs of each pupil, and can take into account the differing behaviour patterns of each young person. All pupils have a designated care worker who is available for them to seek individual guidance, support and advice on personal matters. The school nurse also liaises with the school and care staff to ensure that any health needs are included in meeting specific needs.

The school employs an independent visitor who the pupils can contact on a confidential basis, contact details are posted around the landings. The school also has a new family worker who works with the children's parents and carers. The children are supported by the staff at the school and relationships were seen to be warm and caring in a professional manner. The children said they would feel able to talk to the staff and feel listened to.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school has continued with the school council who are voted in by the other children. The council meets every half term. The children also have food meetings where they meet with the chef and discuss changes to the daily food menu. The children said some food had changed when they made a suggestion. Those who spent time with the inspector and completed questionnaires were confident in stating their views about why they are at Brantridge, what targets they have achieved and what they hope for in the future. In answer to the question 'What are the best things at Brantridge' they answered 'we learn lots of things and have good activities and get to play with our friends everyday'.

Parents attend reviews and have weekly contact with the school. This year the school also held a family event at Christmas and a sports day. Records seen in pupils' care files showed that they are fully involved in all meetings where care and education plans are reviewed. The care staff group is stable and therefore able to offer consistency in their relationships with the young people. The children enjoy their relationships and time spent with staff and feel they trust them to look after them whilst they are away from home.

The admissions procedure includes a detailed assessment and young people can visit the school before admission. All new pupils are given a copy of the Children Guide, which is accessible and useful for the children, many of whom said that it told them the things that they needed to know when they arrived about what happens at school. Care plans address longer-term goals that are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by all those who will help the pupils when

they leave Brantridge. Transition planning begins in the children's last year before they move on to their senior school. Parents/carers are fully involved and consulted at every stage.

The children confirmed they have regular contact with home and are able to use the boys' telephone and office telephone. Contacts are recorded into the boys' placement files. Parents who were seen during the inspection said they thought another pay phone in the school would be good due to the delay sometimes they experience when phoning their child. They also talked about the commitment shown by the school to keep their child in contact with his mum during a period of time spent in hospital, allowing their son to e-mail his mum everyday.

Each child has a placement file which was seen to be comprehensive and holistic in its approach. Each file seen covered all aspects of current care and historical information in order to inform the reviewing process and set new objectives and change aspects of the care where needed.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Arrangements made for each pupil leaving the care of the school and moving on to their next school. Some independence training is given to the young people in their last year including 'licence to cook' which is a cookery and health and safety course and accredited first aid course. The school have also appointed a new family support and inclusion manager who will work with the families and those who are leaving school.

The school is set in a large manor house with a variety of out buildings, secure play areas and large grounds. The environment is conducive to providing the children with a good all round experience of school life. The school has security systems in place and risk assessments to ensure the safety of the children. Over the next year the school are re-furbishing the landing and changing the layout with some minor building work which is to take place during the holidays.

The boarding facilities are within the main house and divided into three landings which are governed by age group. Each landing is appropriately decorated and themed according to the age of the group living there. The décor is comfortable and child focused. Each landing has different arrangements for bedrooms and the older the children get the less children they share with although no dorm room is overcrowded and each child has storage space. Each child has their own place to decorate with their individual choice. The boarding accommodation has continued to be upgraded with equipment and the facilities in place for the children.

The landings have adequate bathrooms and toilets for the amount of children staying there. The children said that they can have privacy and this is respected by staff and those around them.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school promotes equality and diversity to an outstanding level, meeting the children's needs through knowledge for both children and staff, health and welfare issues, and protection from racism and discrimination.

The school has a variety of information linked to the statement of purpose including the children's guide and the parents'/carers' handbook. The guidance offers a clear picture of the school, its ethos and its daily routines. Alongside the statement of purpose the school has up to date policies and procedures which have been updated and new policies have been produced to recognise new practice. Monitoring of the records and files was seen to be happening on a regular basis with senior staff undertaking this role. All records are stored safely and securely.

The overall management of the school is very good and the senior management team have implemented positive changes and improved existing systems. The care staff felt that they could suggest and be given the scope to try new ideas which have developed rapidly over the last year in such areas as the arts, sports and activities.

The school has a long term core of staff in the care staff team with two new members of staff joining this year. New staff are supported by the long term staff when starting their employment. The team offers the children a wealth of knowledge and experience. The team are supported by the acting head of care and clear systems of supervision and training that are in place. The school has now introduced professional development portfolios and renewed induction checklists. The staff said they feel supported and happy with the extensive training they are now offered and the space they are given to complete course work. The school have clear lines of induction, mandatory and NVQ training courses in place which have been inclusive of all staff across the school.

The school has an overall comprehensive system in place for the monitoring of practice and safety issues. There is a Regulation 33 visitor in place who visits once every half term. The school has continued with its comprehensive monitoring of those records connected to 'Staying Safe'. The records are used to look at how systems are working and if any specific problems are arising. The head of the school has continued to work hard and with the support of the senior management team and the staff at the school to implement the constant change and development. The whole school continues to be involved in the Grafham Grange Trust development plan forum where they discussed the on going development of the school and the trust as a whole and the new initiatives they wish to bring in.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure a full generic risk assessment is undertaken on the whole school and grounds (NMS 26)
- ensure all staff are given training in report writing (NMS16)