

# Brantridge School

Brantridge School, Staplefield Place, Staplefield, Haywards Heath, West Sussex  
RH17 6EQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

The school is a non-maintained residential special school. It is situated close to Haywards Heath in Sussex. The school provides education and care for boys who have special educational needs. Some boys have complex needs, including learning disabilities and social, mental and emotional health needs. The school supports boys from the age of six to 13 years. Residential pupils are weekly boarders. Residential accommodation is located on one site in the main school building. Currently, there are 13 residential pupils.

**Inspection dates:** 5 to 7 June 2017

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>requires improvement to be good</b>
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of previous inspection:** 27 September 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- The governance of the school is not as effective as it should be. The trust leadership is not fulfilling its duties to oversee the school purposefully.
- Senior leadership across the school and residential provision lacks cohesion and messages to staff are not always clear and consistent.
- Leaders do not monitor all required documentation effectively.
- Policies in relation to safeguarding have not been updated in line with current guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- Safeguarding documentation and residential records are not robust or detailed, and in one instance not accurate. They do not detail the decision-making processes needed to ensure the safety of the children.
- A bedroom-sharing risk assessment contained contradictory information in the details pertaining to each child.
- Missing plans do not detail the required actions of staff to safely manage such situations.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- Children are provided with good-quality healthcare support; detailed plans describe how to meet needs and staff refer to external professionals as required.
- Staff are knowledgeable, caring and nurturing in their approach.
- Children access an exciting and stimulating programme of varied activities during residential time.
- Staff have developed very good-quality relationships of trust with children; children actively seek their support and guidance.
- Children are fully involved in and contribute to all aspects of decision-making that affect them.
- Children are developing and learning positive ways to self-regulate and calm themselves in times of crisis.

## **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(s) for residential special schools:

- NMS 3.7 Suitable accommodation, including toilet and washing facilities, are provided in order to cater for the needs of children who are sick or injured.
- NMS 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- NMS 12.8 Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy, and where relevant the local authority's policy, in relation to children going missing and their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for children who are missing, including working with the police where appropriate.
- NMS 13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.
- NMS13.2 There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff.
- NMS13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- NMS13.7 The school follows and maintains the policies and documents described in Appendix 1.
- NMS13.9 The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.

### **Recommendations**

- Glass panels in bedroom doors should be removed to promote privacy.
- Access to drinking water should be improved.
- Evidence should be provided to show that required actions identified by the fire officer have been completed.
- The policy for behaviour management should include details and information regarding sanctions and consequences. Staff should not use 'to maintain good order' as a justification for restraint.
- Written agreements are required regarding their incidental responsibilities, for all

staff residing on site.

- Managers should develop and improve the quality of supervision given to staff to enable learning, development and professional challenge and review.
- Records should be accurate and provide a clear record of events.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

Significant weaknesses have been identified in how 'how well children and young people are helped and protected' and 'the effectiveness of leaders and managers'. If these areas are not fully addressed and risk is not mitigated in the medium and long term, they will have a direct negative impact on children's experiences and progress.

Children build secure, trusting relationships with staff, and care staff spend time building and developing positive, caring and nurturing relationships with the children. All children are actively encouraged to be involved in a wide variety of daily activities on and off site.

The views of children are regularly sought and staff act on requests that they make. Staff regularly review how they could enable a child to feel safer at school. Staff seek children's views about their future and fully involve them in decision-making processes. Children have access to an independent visitor who regularly attends the school. Children have a good understanding about how to make a complaint. They have been given clear responses to their complaints and are satisfied that they have been listened to and their concerns have been acted on.

Children are supported to have appropriate contact with friends and family while residing at the school. Staff have regular contact with families, and share details about how each child's week is going. They offer support and guidance to parents and carers, which promotes consistency in approach across home and school.

Healthcare support is of a high standard, and clear, detailed plans provide clarity about need. Staff refer and support children to attend specialist health services when required. Children have developed positive relationships of trust with the school nurse, which has a positive impact on their ability to share their concerns and worries.

Education attendance is good and care staff support children to transition between residential and education. Care staff work across both settings and support children at meal times during education time, which provides stability and consistency of approach.

Children access a wide variety of recreational activities which provide them with exciting opportunities and new experiences. Staff listen to children and plan activities they favour and really enjoy. Staff offer a wide variety of physical activities for children to direct their energy into. Favoured activities are scootering and swimming. Staff support and encourage children to develop their skills in managing their friendships with peers. When conflict has arisen, staff support children to resolve matters in a child-friendly manner, and to think about those that they reside with as extended family members.

Staff are supporting children to develop their self-care, personal, social and independence skills. Children are educated about risks and given suggestions and

strategies to keep themselves safe. They have also attended sessions arranged by the NSPCC to talk about how to keep themselves safe.

Children speak very positively of the care they receive in the residential provision, and love coming to stay at school. They state that they have achieved a great deal while living at school.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

Each child has a trusted adult they can confide in and share their worries and concerns with. Staff are caring and nurturing, and act as positive role models to children in their care.

Staff support children to keep safe through identification of risks and talking about the impact of their risk-taking behaviours. Staff are aware of each child's risk factors and needs, and support them to manage and alleviate these risks through education, conversation and role-modelling.

Staff identify risks and raise concerns with the designated safeguarding lead and others. Some records do not securely underpin safeguarding practice. Staff have maintained links with the designated officer, seeking advice and exploring required actions when concerns arise.

Children who reside at school are well protected and cared for. Staff are generally vigilant and proactive but records do not evidence this sufficiently. The school's policy and procedure do not include all of the required detail. For example, there is no 'PREVENT' process and procedure to follow should a concern arise that a child is at risk of radicalisation.

Incidents of missing are infrequent and short in duration. Lessons have been learned from reviews of incidents. Missing plans have been created for each child, but these do not detail the specific actions required by staff if an event occurs. Staff actively seek children through a coordinated approach, with referral to police and other professional if required.

Plans and risk assessments provide detail informing staff, but information is inaccurate and risk assessments do not reflect all the risks identified in children's records. There is inconsistency between known information, recorded information and risk assessments and plans.

There is a wide variety of accessible information on display to children in residential areas. An example of this is information on what to do if you think you are being bullied. Children raise concerns with staff about bullying behaviour, and they report that staff have acted on their concerns and they feel they are taken seriously.

Children have good insight and understanding of their triggers and reasons for their behaviour. They are involved in writing their own positive behaviour support plans. Risk assessments detail strategies to be used to support a child to calm. However, they do not fully explore, consider and recognise all positive strategies

that are used to de-escalate their behaviour – for example, the benefits of a reassuring (not restraining) touch in heightened anxiety.

Staff are trained in the home's chosen behaviour management approach. All incidents are recorded, detailing the behaviour, staff response and any form of restraint used. However, reports lack detail about antecedents and staff debrief. Some records state that due to a breach of good order staff have used physical intervention, which is not sufficient justification, or an accurate reflection of the reason for such a major measure.

Staff use a positive reward scheme, and each child is engaged and motivated by this system. They have good understanding about how rewards are earned and what can impact on the possibility of earning rewards. The school behaviour policy does not detail information about sanctions and consequences.

Residential staff are clear and consistent with children about boundaries, house rules and expectations of acceptable behaviour. Staff support young people to work through peer-on-peer relationship difficulties and conflicts.

Records evidence that complaints made by children have been explored, investigated and responded to, and provide a clear outcome to the complaint. There have been no complaints from others outside the school.

Staff maintain open working relationships with professionals. This has a positive impact to the quality of care plans and joint working approaches. Staff attend reviews and professionals' meetings. This effective joint working has had a significant positive impact on children – for example, by supporting a child to raise his views and choices in decisions about where he will reside in the future.

A detailed review and audit of staff recruitment files has been completed. This has ensured that all staff employed have been subject to the necessary checks, which comply with safer recruitment practices.

The school and residential areas are colourful and well presented. Areas of damage are quickly repaired and made safe.

Fire exits and escape routes do not have alarms, and during the inspection staff requested that this be rectified. Risk assessments for the grounds are comprehensive. However, the risk assessments for the internal building were not easily located and information is difficult to access. There is no risk assessment for the use of the fire escape. A draft fire risk assessment completed in March 2017 has not been followed up with a clear action plan. Fire drills and maintenance of premises occur as required.

Designated drinking water is not readily accessible in all areas of residential provision. Children must fill water bottles at meal times or return to the adjacent school area for water.

A cultural change is required by the staff team to collectively accept responsibility for health and safety throughout the site. Currently, staff may notice an area of risk but they do not routinely raise this to see it is addressed.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

There have been several recent changes in the personnel, leadership and governance of the school. The school is in the process of takeover by another trust and organisation. The current trust is disengaging, but the new trust is not able to engage until the process has been completed. This is having an impact on a wide variety of areas within the school. The trust currently has no chief executive officer or executive principal to support and guide the headteacher.

The governance of the school is not as effective as it should be. It does not provide the required scrutiny, oversight and support. Governors do not have the required understanding and knowledge to complete the tasks assigned to them.

Working relationships in the senior leadership team are underdeveloped and lack cohesion between education and residential leaders. Currently, this is not affecting children but if not addressed it is likely to do so.

Residential staff work well together as a team, ensuring children are given a consistent approach. Care staff contribute to monitoring and evaluation of residential provision, with each member of staff having an area of responsibility.

Senior leaders have confidence in residential staff on the basis of observation, but do not monitor records to determine that requirements are being met and practice is securely underpinned. Their evaluation and monitoring are not effective, and so weaknesses have not been identified and highlighted.

Staff are provided with supervision and their practice appraised at least annually. However, the quality of supervision is inconsistent, and staff are not encouraged to reflect, review and develop their practice. Staff are offered, and engage in, a wide variety of training that meets the needs of their role. All staff either have the required qualification or are enrolled to complete it.

The school is staffed appropriately to meet the needs of children. New recruits to the staff team add diversity through youth and experience. Longer-standing staff provide stability, consistency and experience. All staff make child-centred decisions regarding children's welfare. Staff have very good relationships with and understanding of each child in their care.

A new independent visitor has been appointed, and their visits provide an additional layer of scrutiny and oversight of the residential provision.

The ethos of the school is evident through staff practice and the encouragement offered to all children to achieve their best and be ready to learn. Staff listen to children while motivating and supporting them to recognise and celebrate their achievements; they also talk about children's weaknesses and help them address these.

Staff maintain effective open relationships with parents and carers. They invite

parents to school to celebrate key events and children's achievements.

## **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 differences 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:** SC042663

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr Heath Mason

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

**Telephone number:** 01444 400228

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## **Inspector(s)**

Amanda Maxwell, social care inspector (lead)  
Maire Atherton, social care inspector



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