

"We were of the view that this was very effective provision which met the needs of a very vulnerable group of learners extremely well"

Surrey LEA Alternative Provision Inspection 20/01/2017

Arun Court School

Bramley



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Arun Court Setting

Therapy & Education

**'Resilience and Perseverance
lead to Success'**

info@aruncourt.co.uk

Reg. School 936/6015

A specialist setting for children recovering from mental health needs and high anxiety

Arun Court Setting in Bramley offers a relaxed, nurturing education based on the UK national curriculum but with a Scandinavian ethos with a minimum of 15% curriculum time spent on wellbeing and therapy support.

We try to be as bespoke as possible and students start with as much as a 90% therapy need which then decreases as they become better and more able to focus on academic studies. The setting offer is to young people aged 11 to 17.

The registered school is owned and run by BS White as Sole Proprietor, and was previously run as a part time alternative provision known as the 'learning and well-being centre' run by her company Big Bear Bespoke Education Ltd. She is an experienced head teacher and educational consultant.

We are classed as an ESB school (emotional, social and behavioural disorders) however we specialise in **non-violent students with specific mental health needs**. We are usually used as a short stay school with students needing 18-36 months with us before moving back into a larger provision; either SEN specialist or mainstream, but some students choose to stay longer and we have a good GCSE offer, and alternatives to GCSE offer, as well as being a registered exam centre with JCQ.

Our core mission is to support students with mental health needs; anxiety and school phobias, chronic depression, self-harm, OCD, post trauma needs including diagnosed PTSD, eating disorders and body dysmorphia, psychosis, and anxiety-induced Tourette's syndrome. We also work with students who identify as trans-gender.

We aim to get students well, then help them to catch up academically and finally transition them back into larger suitable schools when they have shown the mental resilience needed to achieve their potential, based on where they were prior to their mental health breakdown.

We can support students who have been out of education for very long periods of time. We accept CAMHs, LEA and hospital referrals and all students are funded by EHCP.

We offer standard all-inclusive placements as well as a few high intensity placements. Our overall student number is 20, divided into an upper and lower school of 10. Each group of 10 is then divided further according to where they are in their mental health and journey and whether they are on an academic (GCSE) or vocational route.

Arun Court operates as a non-profit generating service and most of our funding goes on recruiting, retaining and continuously up-skilling our high-quality staff. We are a research-led facility and ensure representatives attend the leading mental health and educational conferences taking place in the UK and further afield, bringing back training and collaboration opportunities – ensuring that our students get the very best support.

A Private Independent School

We operate at an overall minimum school ratio of 1 adult to every 3 students, which enables us to really support students through the admissions process as initially they can find it very difficult to enter a tutor group if they have been out of education for some time. Once in a tutor group we operate class ratios according to ability and emotional health needs, and we will alter tutor groups in response to pupil numbers and the dynamics of the student relationships.

As a private independent setting we operate with slightly longer holiday periods than the state system. During some school holidays we also offer trips and activities that add an extra dynamic to the curriculum.

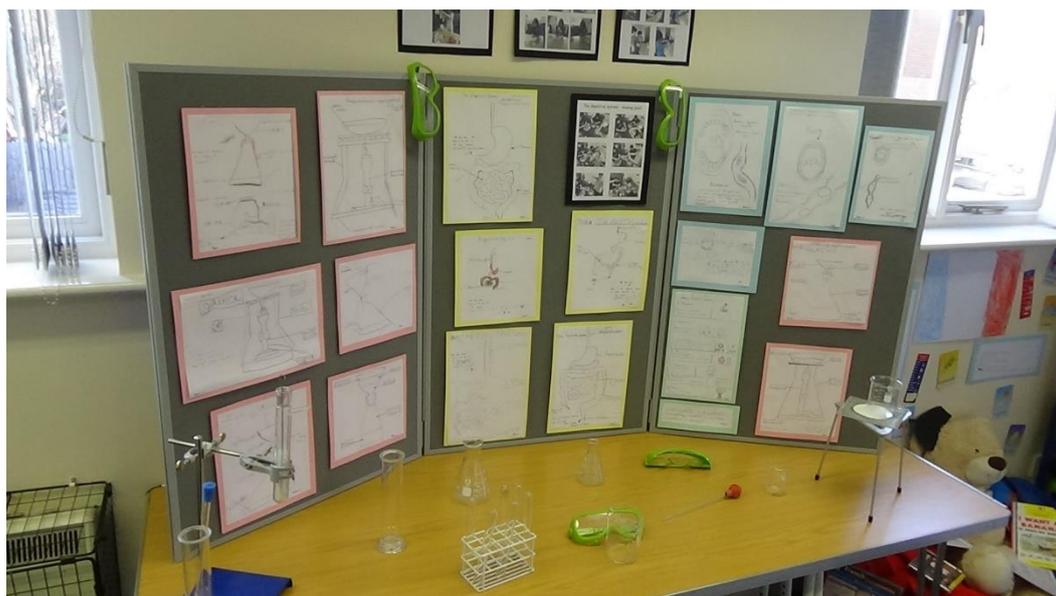
The school day for the lower school is 10am until 4pm; and the upper school operates between 10.30 am and 4.30pm. Clubs take the school day through to 5:20pm Starting later is a research-led decision as we want the sessions to take place in accordance with the teenage 'body clock'

There are also clubs, events and other forms of wrap around care outside of these hours.

Parents and brokering L.E.As need to be clear about what a private independent school is, particularly in relation to 'exclusion' as we will use expulsion (termination of services as we can no longer meet need) for any student that attacks a staff member, and we are likely to also use expulsion for peer on peer aggression. We will also terminate services if we feel we can no longer meet need, including if your young person consistently fails to attend. Our behaviour policy and other related policies must be read by all parents wishing to apply for a student place here please.

Academic Progress

Academic progress is very important to our students. Once they are on the path to recovery we provide many 1:1, 1:2 and small group academic interventions to build their confidence and help them to make rapid academic progress. We team academic aspirations with a continuation of therapy and aim to build resilience and perseverance in our young people. We have an excellent record of students, many of whom were very behind, going on to achieve well at GCSE and return to mainstream colleges for A Level. We hold at least two exhibition events each year where the achievements of students are celebrated.



Above: Science display at Exhibition Evening

'Many students have been out of school for a considerable period and have very high levels of anxiety. Much of the centres work is about getting them ready for formal learning.'

3 Year 6 students were observed in a more formal classroom setting undertaking a poetry exercise. There was an appropriate learning objective and all pupils were engaged and making progress which was monitored in an ongoing way.

2 year 10's were observed in a GCSE business studies lesson. They were engaged and were able to discuss the learning objective animatedly.'

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GCSE Route

We offer students the option of taking up to **6 GCSEs**, although many choose to take less based on the entry requirements for their future courses. When it comes to GCSE we will work with you to help the young person choose a realistic programme as for students with mental health need it is more confidence-boosting to take less subjects and do very well, than to take many and achieve lower grades. We will help with college applications and interviews. The rest of the timetable at this age is taken up with life skills, including diploma level studies, therapy, a heavy emphasis on social skills and preparation for the next step and work experience. The available options depend on timetabling, but our basic possible offer is:

- English Language
- Maths
- Religious Education
- Biology
- English Literature
- Art- fine arts syllabus
- Citizenship

We also have an ‘exceptional offer’ in the following GCSEs, but would need to interview the students to make sure that they have a real passion for the subject and are able to keep up with the large coursework components:

- Economics
- Art- photography syllabus
- Art- textiles syllabus
- Design & Tech- Textiles
- Spanish
- French
- Media studies
- Business Studies
- Geography



Non-GCSE Route

This can be combined with re-takes of GCSE maths and English for students transitioning from other settings. We can teach and examine all levels of functional skills English and maths. Students also follow AQA Action awards with over 200 subjects available. In addition, we use several third-party organisations to assist students with online vocational qualifications in various key industries such as beauty, animal care, child care and therapy and photography, usually up to level 4 Diploma.



Careers & Student Potential

All students access impartial careers advice both face to face, and via an online programme which analyses student’s skills and natural abilities. Using CAT testing enables us to really focus on a student’s potential, rather than their past attainment, as students are often able to show much higher progress once they are dealing with their mental health issues and attending regularly. We support students in reviewing college options and ensure they are well prepared for interviews.

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Locality- based Learning

We are based in Bramley which is a beautiful area full of nature spaces which we use fully for learning and nurture. We use the friendly local community to support our young people including trips to the café, work experience with local businesses and using the library.

We follow a Scandinavian ethos which places a heavy emphasis on learning biology, geography and ecology in a topic-based way. There is a strong focus on understanding the world around us and our place within it.

Opportunities for increasing physical as well as mental fitness are also very important to us, and we use The Spectrum Leisure Centre, Winkworth National Trust Arboretum, Alice Holt Adventure Park and several other local centres where we have built trusting relationships with key coaches. We also have our own sports equipment for team games at the park, as well as a thriving youth Nordic walking group, yoga group and running club. We have a small gym and occupational therapy area on site and all students have a sensory diet programme overseen by an occupational therapist.

Up to GCSE students follow the full UK National curriculum with extra elements such as regular craft sessions, and more P.E and outdoor learning than in a typical UK school. All students, including those taking GCSE, are expected to take part in walking and regular sporting opportunities as part of their general health and well-being.

Communication

- Each day the form tutor completes a daily diary for the student so that you can instantly see how their day has been. Your child's tutor will also call you regularly and our well-being team will visit you twice a year.
- Twice each half term we send out a parent newsletter with key information and celebrations.
- Parents are given written report each term and we are happy to meet and discuss your child regularly.
- The learning pathway meetings each term enable parents to discuss the short-term targets for their young person.
- An Annual Review is held each year
- We hold key events at times of significance such as Christmas, as well as two exhibitions of work each year

The centre has a much stronger, pastoral relationship with families than in a school due to the small centre and the nature of the work that in turn leads to positive, trusting relationships so that children can share their worries - This is a strength

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'The centre is in daily contact with parents. The centre goes the extra mile to ensure they are working with them to support their child'

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Posts of responsibility & student Voice

As students return to good health, they can take part in various posts of responsibility. This includes the chance to raise money for charities close to their own heart, the chance to be representatives for specific areas of school life such as 'Health & Safety' and 'Safeguarding' and the opportunity to take part in work experience locally. Some older students choose to become mentors to other pupils even gaining a counselling level 1 qualification. Risk assessments for activities are planned with student input and students have a great deal of say in social trips and academic trips. Students also get the opportunity to pursue their own interests in personal project time and special topic weeks. All students complete money matters courses.



Left: Our Health & Safety student representative, Joshua, reviews a recent fire drill and how to record the data

Right: Our Safeguarding student representative, Taylan, presents two college leavers with gifts in recognition of their coaching work with students

Well- Being and Therapy Offer



ALL STAFF (INCLUDING TEACHERS) Complete a 15 hour course with Reading University on how to recognise and support students with mental health needs, a course in coaching and negotiated learning and a Level 2 NCFE certificate in awareness of mental health. The Well-Being Team then have specific training to meet the needs of our clients.



The well-being team all receive clinical supervision from Dr Vikki Petch our fully qualified and experienced chartered clinical psychologist. The Senior Leader responsible is Beverley-Sarah who also receives supervision from an attached psychiatrist. This means that staff in the team are constantly challenging themselves and ensuring that they discuss therapy aims and ideals on a client-by-client basis. Dr Petch also works directly with students. The Nurture Room is led by Hannah, who is ably assisted by Emotional Support Workers and of course Bugs the rabbit and Adam the therapy dog! Hannah runs a separate horse mindfulness company which students can access.

Our well-being offer includes:

The Nurture Room – Led by Hannah – provides a safe space for talking and carrying out therapy approaches such as sensory work, craft based work, Indian Head massage, yoga and relaxation techniques, animal based therapy

We try to get out as much as possible using the local area for meditative and well-being walks, as well as more structured forest school sessions

Sensory diets, sensory programmes – overseen by external OT services

Speech and language therapy – as above

Language work and Lego Therapy – overseen by Linda

Counselling & Psychotherapy (various levels)

Solution-Focussed Coaching – overseen by Bev

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy – Dr Petch

Social skills training – various staff

Mindfulness and Meditation Classes – overseen by various qualified teachers of meditation

Growth Mindset Groups – overseen by Chris

Family and adult counselling (a small offer by invitation) – overseen by Dr Petch & Beverley-Sarah



Contacts

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Senior Leaders (Daily Management, Curriculum and Education)

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Arun Court School Office

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'The director is an experienced Head teacher and is not afraid to dismiss underperforming staff.

Big Bear keeps comprehensive reports which tell the story of the students' progress.

During our visit the centre was calm and well ordered. There were no incidents of inappropriate behaviour observed.

Very high staff: Student ratio

Surrey LEA Visit 20/01/2017

We hope you enjoyed your tour today!

Interested? Prospective parents who will potentially be funded by their local education authority should ensure that-

An approach is made by the LEA where we are sent a recent EHCP and if appropriate an annual review.

Once we have reviewed the paperwork we will offer you a tour and a home visit.

If we feel the student could access education with us we will offer a free 5 day trial. At this point you must complete and return all registration forms and read the parents handbook.

If the trail is successful, we will offer a placement subject to the LEA agreeing funding (placements are usually £16,000 per term)



Our rich curriculum follows the UK National Curriculum but with Scandinavian adjustments and extras!!

A heavy focus on real life skills and learning in context.

A focus on developing grit and personal determination (Sisu in Finnish).

A focus on negotiation and involving young people in the curriculum.

A heavy focus on the mental health and developing inter-personal skills.

Regular fredagsmys (Swedish for down-time, each half of the school has a down time Friday fortnightly)

“There is no such thing as ‘Bad Weather’ only bad clothes” – We like to get outdoors as much as possible.

A focus on the whole person, including physical health.

We enjoy Hygge and Fika. At our school you will find music, diffusers, soft lighting, blankets, hot drinks, cakes and all things comforting and calming.

We have a positive touch policy.

We encourage our students to take part in community work

We have links with schools in Scandinavian countries

An event that changed my perspective

It was about six years ago when I was 6 years old – I had just won my primary school's talent show 'XXX has got Talent' for the second time in a row by drumming. I was incredibly thrilled and delighted by the fact that I'd won again and once I'd been asked how I felt by the deputy head I replied "I'm not that surprised actually' which at the time I thought was funny, and honest (I have ASD) but it backfired. My reaction caused some shock among the teachers and I got badly told off by my teacher after the show had ended. It was so traumatic that for a while afterwards, I chose not to speak at all in school.

This haunted me for several years to the point where I would deliberately put myself down; for a long time, I belittled myself to try and appear humble. I was truly frightened that I'd end up with a huge ego and be punished. By the time I attended secondary school I was plagued by the idea of being a narcissist and had developed rituals to punish myself if I thought I'd acknowledged I was good at something. It didn't help that I was also incredibly defensive and flew into rages at people very quickly. My anger, anxiety and OCD got out of control and I could no longer attend school. I had to complete rituals just to move up a set of stairs.

Skip forward a few years and I began with Big Bear Bespoke Education at their Arun Court setting in 2016. I felt at home after just a week of being there. Before long, I was having therapy sessions where I could speak openly about the past, more specifically the route of my fears that I'd been haunted by for so long. We talked about how at eight you have no real understanding of humour and that my Asperger's Syndrome, which at the time was not diagnosed, would have contributed to my comment. This really helped me to look at my past in a totally new light, including my anger and the way that OCD bullied me and stopped me being who I wanted to be. I accessed therapy when I felt I needed it and started to be able to attend lessons too.

Today I'm a changed person. I'm able to look back at my past not with shame or guilt, but rather as a learning curve in the journey of life. I've even been planning to go back and visit my old secondary school to say 'Hi' and to show people how I've changed. I follow some of my old friends on Instagram and they also follow me, so it's a nice way to stay connected. I've learnt to stop dwelling on the past and instead, look to the future – a totally changed perspective.

Shared with the kind permission of Louis, a brave young man who still battles with OCD daily but has vastly improved and has a very bright future ahead of him. You can see why the staff cried when we read it. Louis has recently gained a college place at The Brit School, and achieved a level 8 in his GCSE music exam.