

Falconer School

Inspection report for residential special school

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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

Falconer School is a Secondary Special School for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school provides education for both day and boarding pupils. The residential unit, known as 'Chimneys', provides boarding accommodation for up to 12 boys from Monday to Friday. The school is situated in a residential area of Bushey, which has a nearby High Street with shops, and there is a library within walking distance.

Summary

This visit is a key announced inspection of the service looking at standards identified by Ofsted as key areas of care. Additional standards with regard to catering and premises were inspected. The overall judgment is based on the outcomes of the standards inspected.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The recommendation from the last inspection to provide indoor and outdoor sports facilities has been addressed. Since the last inspection, the school has organised access to a neighbouring youth centre so that indoor sports facilities are now available to the young people. In addition, the young people now have an enclosed, floodlit play area for after school sports activities.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The health plans for specific health issues for some young people are detailed and regularly reviewed. They contain good information to ensure that specific issues are addressed and the young people are well cared for and supported. Other relevant health information is gathered though the system in place does not ensure that all the required and relevant information is centrally recorded and easily accessible for staff. The school maintains good links with specialist health professionals. The school monitors arrangements to ensure that young people receive regular medical, dental and optical checks through links with parents and the nurse provided by the local authority. There is a strong emphasis and input on improving the physical health of the young people. They are supported and encouraged to participate in physical activities throughout the day. Information, training and support, with regard to the promotion of personal health and hygiene for the young people, is provided for staff and young people by the school nurse. There is a good system for auditing medication entering and leaving the school.

Medication is stored appropriately and securely in the staff office. The medication files are well organised and contain detailed medical and health information on the young people. Staff are able to access the advice and support of a local pharmacist, when necessary. Required consents from individuals with parental responsibility are held on file, supporting staff to make appropriate arrangements with regard to medication administration. The boarding staff have a good understanding of the health care needs and individual issues of the young people in their care. The health care needs of the young people are well met. There is a good commitment to ensuring that the nutrition needs of the young people are met. The school is already working within the National Guidance for Nutrition in Schools. The meals provided are well presented, healthy in content and generally enjoyed by the young people. The young people are provided with different snacks throughout the day. Fresh fruit is available for the young people as well as

snacks and drinks. The focus at mealtimes is very much on encouraging the young people to experience a sociable and relaxed time with their friends and the staff team. The staff provide the young people with nutritious meals that are eaten in a friendly, supportive and positive environment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The young people feel that their privacy is respected though bedrooms doors have small windows that do not have covering and so infringe the young people's privacy. Young people are able to make private telephone calls from the school. The staff are very aware of the need to respect the young people's confidentiality and only discuss issues and arrangements with the young people or in private office areas. Information held about young people is stored securely and staff demonstrate a good awareness of the need to keep information confidential. The staff handbook contains policy documents and information regarding practices and procedures to ensure young people's privacy and confidentiality. The young people feel able to talk to staff about any issues or concerns. Information about complaints is made available to the young people and their families in the school prospectus and young people's guide. There are clear policies and procedures with regard to complaints. The school has not received any complaints. The school's designated child protection officer ensures that all staff receive child protection training. The child protection policies and procedures link into the local authority process and are contained in the staff handbook. The staff have a good understanding of child protection issues. They are aware of the need to work together to provide a safe and caring place for the young people to live and develop. The young people feel safe and well looked after at their school. Staff recruitment procedures ensure that the young people are only cared for by staff who have had appropriate checks undertaken on their backgrounds. Checks on staff and visitors ensure that the young people are protected. There are good systems in place for recording any unauthorised absences and for contacting parents should any incidents arise. The young people are encouraged to stay on site, by both staff and other young people, when they are upset and discuss their feelings and difficulties. This supportive and reflective approach is an integral part of the school's way of working with the all the young people in the school. The school has good policies and procedures with regard to bullying that goes across the whole school. Consistent behaviour strategies are used by the whole staff team in dealing with bullying behaviours. These help the young people to feel safe and secure in the school and in the boarding house. The young people say that bullying does occur and that all incidents are dealt with by staff fairly. Young people's comments included, 'we are brought together to sort it out'. 'Bullies are spoken to. I feel safe.' The school approach to behaviour management is very much focussed on encouraging the positive behaviours of the young people. Achievement targets for developing individual skills and managing behaviours are set with the young people. The young people are aware of the school rules and consider them to be fair. The young people are very aware of their targets and strategies for achieving success. They like the opportunities that are given to them to reflect upon their actions and effects of their behaviours on others. They work well with staff to achieve their targets and look forward to the weekly 'award ceremonies' where their success is recognised and appreciated by the staff and their peers. The young people speak positively about the benefits of working towards targets and goals. They respect the achievements made by some their friends and comments include, 'some young people have done really well and are planning return to mainstream school - others have improved since boarding'. 'They are good at helping us control our anger'. Parents comments include, 'my child has achieved personal goals and overcome many hurdles'. All of the staff team are trained in

the use of Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) by qualified trainers. The training includes regular reviews of practice generally during the school 'inset training days'. Records of restraints follow the Hertfordshire policy and procedures. Records contain good information regarding any incident, including antecedents and interventions, with comments regarding the young person's emotional state and any issues that maybe effecting their behaviours in school and boarding. The restraint records are monitored by the Head and contain good insightful and reflective comments. There are clear policies, procedures and risk assessments with regard to health and safety procedures that ensure the safety of the young people and staff in the home. Appropriate processes are in place to ensure that young people are cared for in a safe environment though checks on the water temperatures are not recorded. Regular checks are undertaken of the fire alarms and regular fire evacuation drills are held with both staff and young people. The security systems in the school ensure the safety of the staff and young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The young people's files contain copies of their education plans and achievement records. Staff support the young people to achieve educationally. The link between the teaching and care staff is positive and focussed on achieving the best educational outcomes for the young people. The handover time between the boarding house and the school is used to share information on the young people's achievements and behaviours. The young people are encouraged to work toward targets that will allow them more independence and freedom during the school day. There are good communication systems in place between the school, the boarding house and parents. The young people are well supported once they are assessed for a boarding place. The home/school liaison officer is a very good advocate for the young people and works well with the staff team and other agencies. She encourages and actively supports young people and their parents to maintain a good education programme and has a good understanding of the effect of boarding on young people and their families. Parents are pleased with the education that their children receive at the school. Their comments include, 'my child actually enjoys going to school, which is a massive achievement'. The Ofsted education inspection commented upon the residential provision and its link with education as follows, 'The residential element of the school makes an outstanding contribution to students' education and personal development. It provides them with high quality week-night boarding provision'. From discussion and observation, it is clear that the staff have a good understanding of the needs and difficulties of the young people in their care. The care and support is consistent and reflects the young people's targets and information held within the care plans. The staff team work together to ensure the best outcomes for the young people at the school especially those that are more vulnerable and at risk at home and in the community. The young people have access to an independent counsellor through the school. Additional support is provided from other voluntary agencies, if required by individual young people. There is an excellent after school activity programme for the young people. The school operates an 'extended day' for two or more nights in the week depending on the time of year. This enables the young people to choose from an extensive list of after school activities and clubs ranging from motorbike workshops to sailing. The Herts Motor Project is attached to the school and provides an excellent facility and experience for the young people. There is a high level of input into activities from the teaching staff as well as the boarding house staff. Staff are supportive and encourage the young people to participate in different activities. For example, lots of fundraising by the young people, is supported and encouraged by the staff to enable some of the young people to go on a school

trip to France. The young people's comments about activities are very positive. They especially enjoy the sporting activities. Since the last inspection, the school has provided the young people with a floodlit enclosed play area suitable for games of football and basketball. There is a good balance between study and free time for the young people. The young people feel well supported, by the boarding staff, with their school work.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The staff encourage the young people to have their say and respond well to their requests. The young people feel that they are supported in 'having their say'. Young people are elected by their peers to represent them on the school council. The school council meets regularly and ideas and suggestions from the young people are discussed and acted upon, as appropriate. The school has developed a new 'house system' that has proved popular with the young people. The young people are encouraged to earn house points through positive behaviours and actions that demonstrate caring and personal responsibility. The school links well with different agencies involved in the care of some young people. The young people's care files contain all the required information. The young people are involved in their support and behaviour management plans. Behaviour management plans link into the school's approach and use of TCI. Individual record books, that reflect the activities and behaviours of the young people, are completed with input from the young people should they choose to participate. Individual education and social care information is appropriately and securely held in the school. The care files contain information about the times, restrictions and arrangements for some young people. The staff are aware of the contact arrangements for the young people. They understand the emotional effects on the young people when contact with families is made whilst young people are boarding.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The bedrooms in the boarding house have been redecorated since the last inspection and the young people are encouraged to personalise their rooms. There are some shared rooms that are currently being used as single rooms. The young people like the facilities provided in the house. The living areas are well furnished and equipped. The young people use the kitchen, with staff support, and enjoy making drinks and snacks. The school facilities are available for the young people to use after school and include the new enclosed floodlit play area. The school has recently organised access to a neighbouring youth centre so that indoor sports facilities are now available to the young people. The boarding house is well equipped with games, music and video centres, books and various other activities for the young people to use after school. The young people live in accommodation that provides good facilities for their use.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school has a written Statement of Purpose which sets out all required areas of information about this service. Young people are admitted to the school in accordance with the Statement of Purpose. The information about boarding at the school is produced in a booklet that clearly states what is provided for and expected from the young people. Comments from parents are supportive of the school's approach to working with, supporting and encouraging the young people to achieve and fulfil their potential. The boarding staff handbook contains all the required information and policies with regard to boarding practice. It is well presented and

comprehensive in content and links well to the whole school policy and procedures documents. The school is currently recruiting to the Head of Care post and a good support plan has been put into place to assist the boarding house staff during the transition. Additional recruitment is in place to recruit to boarding staff vacancies. The staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people. The staff team are positive in their approach to working with the young people and each other. They are keen to achieve the best for the young people in their care. Parents comments are positive and include, 'I am very impressed with the education, care and nurturing my child receives as a result of attending Falconer School'. The staff training programme covers many aspects of their work including TCI and child protection, first aid, food hygiene, health and safety and risk assessments. New staff are supported by a named mentor during their probationary period. Three members of staff are currently doing their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Child Care at Level 3. The staff feel well supported by the Head of Care and other members of the senior staff team. Regular staff meetings take place for the boarding staff and the whole school staff team. Boarding staff are supervised by the Head of Care. Supervision sessions are used to look at practice issues as well as personal development and link into the appraisal process. The Head has delegated areas of responsibility to members of the senior staff team. Regular senior staff team meetings ensure that all aspects of life in the school are discussed and monitored by the Head and school governors.

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 that water temperature checks are regularly done and recorded for the boarding house. National Minimum Standard 26.8
- ensure that each child has a clear written health plan or similar document. National Minimum Standard 14.6
- ensure that the privacy of the young people, whilst using their bedrooms, is respected. National Minimum Standard 3

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.