

# Falconer School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Julian Mason
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	27 November 2007

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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 School House, 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 and library within walking distance.

### Summary

This was a full announced inspection that concentrated on key National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. The residency was accommodating seven pupils at the time of the inspection. Many were present during the visit and four pupils participated in some of the inspection process. The inspection focused on areas related to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic wellbeing and how staffing and management arrangements supported the operation of the residential unit.

The Falconer School residential unit is judged as good with one outcome area judged as outstanding. Pupils' care and health needs are very well met and they are provided with focused, individualised support and guidance. There are good systems and procedures in place to keep pupils safe and protect them from harm. Pupils' views and opinions are taken into account in relation to day-to-day living arrangements, wider school and family life. The school works well with families and carers to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils. The residential unit is well staffed and managed.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the school was asked to ensure that: water temperature checks are regularly completed, each child has a clear written health plan and the privacy of pupils whilst using their bedrooms is respected. Overall, these recommendations have been completed with water temperature checks being recorded and health information being included in each pupil's placement plan. The privacy for some pupils has improved as a result of fitting curtains to door window panels.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Overall, pupils' good health and wellbeing is actively promoted. Staff are aware of each pupil's needs and are good at communicating with parents, carers and relevant professionals to support pupils' good health. Staff have received health related training such as first aid and food hygiene to support appropriate practices. Pupils are provided with practical support and guidance to help them with their self-care skills and social development. There are systems in place to monitor all prescribed medication coming in and out of the school. Appropriate records are kept when medication is administered to pupils. There are some minor shortfalls in the arrangements for the administration of a controlled drug. Records do not fully demonstrate that required administration practices are followed or that medication is stored appropriately.

Pupils are provided with a good range of foods which achieves a well-balanced diet. Staff are keen to promote healthy eating and encourage pupils to eat fruit, vegetables and generally try foods that they would not necessarily eat at home. Staff have a constructive and practical attitude towards mealtimes and this helps pupils to adopt a positive attitude towards food. Mealtimes are well-managed social occasions and most pupils said they liked the food.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Pupils' welfare is promoted by staff who are well aware of their role and responsibilities to provide a safe and secure environment that protects pupils from harm. All staff receive child protection training which helps to strengthen the school-wide approaches to safeguarding and protection. The role of child protection coordinator within the school is well known and staff with these responsibilities have received additional safeguarding training. The school has effective links with outside agencies that take a lead role in child protection matters. These arrangements add up to a conscientious and responsible approach to ensuring pupils are safe.

Pupils' privacy is respected and staff demonstrate a clear understanding of how to manage confidential information in a way that does not compromise anyone at the school. Pupils have their own separate phone on which they make and receive calls in private.

Staff enable pupils to be aware of how to raise concerns and how to make a formal complaint if necessary. They can approach staff directly and request to make a complaint or they can use a complaint box which is located in a main school hallway. The school has a clear ethos of listening to pupils and staff promptly address issues as they arise in an informal and sensible way. Parents are clear that the school listens to them and most concerns are quickly dealt with.

Pupils are protected from bullying because any form of unwanted or inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated. Staff are effective at protecting pupils from the risks of being bullied and incidents of this nature are dealt with quickly. Staff are diligent and promote an awareness amongst pupils that everyone is equal, and that no one has the right to treat others unfairly or abusively.

Staff view the pupils positively and there is a good community atmosphere in the school and living accommodation. All staff are trained in the use of physical intervention and positive behaviour management methods. Physical interventions are only used as a last resort and records demonstrate that there has been a minimal amount of physical restraints carried out since the school's last inspection. Boundaries between staff and pupils are clear and relationships in the main are good. The school operates a behavioural reward scheme that is clearly understood by the pupils. They know what they need to do to earn rewards and treats. Pupils state that staff are fair when using sanctions and awarding points towards their individual behaviour programmes. Managers monitor and scrutinise written reports of incidents and events to ensure the school's behaviour management policy is followed.

There are systems in place to protect pupils, visitors and staff from environmental risks and hazards. These include checks and servicing of utilities, electrical appliances and fire equipment. Risk assessments are completed for a range of areas and activities but no fire risk assessment is currently in place. Fire drills are carried out but not at regular intervals. Also, checks of fire prevention measures such as alarms, emergency lighting and fire call points are not completed

regularly. Although staff are able to describe what they would do in case of a fire this practice is not underpinned by any recent fire training for the residential team.

Staff recruitment files contain appropriate evidence of suitability checks that have taken place prior to staff being employed to work at the school. This includes an appropriate enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. Consequently, pupils are provided with staff whose backgrounds have been appropriately verified which reduces the risks of inappropriate adults being employed at the school.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are receiving individual support when they require it from staff who are knowledgeable about their needs and backgrounds. Pupils stay in accommodation that provides consistent care and where their daily routines are familiar and supportive. The integration between school and residential life is seamless, providing pupils with a consistent experience throughout their day. This is encouraged by excellent communication systems between teaching and residential staff.

There is a good range of activities, defined structure, and sound relationships between staff, parents and pupils which are key factors in supporting each individual's social development and learning. In particular, the school values and places a high importance on working in partnership with parents to promote the needs of its pupils. The school's policies outline and demonstrate a clear commitment to deliver and promote services that are relevant and appropriate to the diverse needs of its pupils. Pupils live and learn in an environment where they are treated fairly and equally.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Pupils make a positive contribution to their placement and future plans whilst living at the school. Overall, they are happy in the setting's caring environment and have positive relationships with staff. The school has good placement plans that provide a comprehensive range of information about each pupil's needs. These records respect the need to value diversity, for example, cultural and religious needs are identified and recorded so staff are informed about these areas. Written plans demonstrate that pupils receive appropriate external support as the school has a proactive approach to working with other professionals and agencies. They explore their potential and develop their personal interests because staff work in a very encouraging and supportive manner.

Pupils are supported to have appropriate contact with friends and family. The school understands the value and importance of communication and contact with parents. None of the pupils appear to be, or report being, isolated. Significant time is taken to build relationships and share information with families. The school is sensitive and responsive to the needs of parents regarding information about their child's care and progress.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Pupils are provided with a suitable and comfortable residential environment that meets their needs. The living accommodation is kept clean and tidy with pupils being involved in these

routines. School House is furnished to create a homely environment; the interiors are decorated and maintained to a good standard. The school ensures that fixtures, fittings and furnishings are also maintained to a good standard with planned renewals and replacements where needed. The accommodation has sufficient bathrooms, showers and toilets to meet the needs of pupils accommodated.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

School House is well managed and the pupils are cared for by a staff team that is child-centred and motivated. The head of care has recently been appointed after a long period of the post being vacant. Temporary arrangements had been in place which included additional management support from the main school. The head of care has already made a number of changes to improve the running of the residency. Pupils highlight that there have been positive changes in the way School House is run.

There is a Statement of Purpose that provides basic but required information about the functions of the residential accommodation. There is a child-friendly handbook that is currently in draft form to assist pupils' understanding of what they can expect from the school. Staff have access to a residential handbook but this needs reviewing and updating.

Staff rotas indicate that there are good levels of staffing to meet the needs of pupils and provide a range of activities beyond the school day. This good level of staffing enables the school to provide cover at times of absence which also promotes consistency of care. Staff meet regularly to reflect on their practice and ensure that they are working consistently. Residential staff have completed a range of core training and there is a commitment to train and qualify staff to an appropriate level that matches their role and responsibilities. Currently, the head of care is not qualified to the appropriate level but the school is in the process of identifying the necessary occupational training and qualification to remedy this.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school has a range of policies on these issues such as equal opportunities, understanding diversity and anti-bullying. The school's documentation clearly states their ethos as one where all pupils are treated as individuals with equal attention and concern. The school welcomes pupil referrals from any cultural, ethnic, racial or religious background and offers all pupils a tolerant and respectful environment.

The governing body have a designated member of the group who is responsible for visiting the residential part of the school. The role is carried out in a supportive way, encouraging a direct link of information between the lives and experiences of pupils and the board of governors. Some systems for monitoring the operation of the residential unit are in place with further developments planned to improve the management information about how well pupils' needs are being met.

## **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 the storage and administration of controlled drugs follows appropriate guidance that supports young people’s safety and protection (National Minimum Standards 14)
- ensure fire drills and the regular testing of emergency lighting, fire alarms and fire fighting equipment are performed in accordance with Fire Regulations (National Minimum Standard 26)
- ensure all staff receive suitable training in fire prevention methods (National Minimum Standard 26)
- ensure a fire risk assessment is completed that includes how the school intends to reduce any risks identified (National Minimum Standard 26)
- review and update the residential handbook to ensure all relevant policies and procedures are reflected accurately (National Minimum Standard 1)
- ensure the head of care attains an appropriate Level 4 qualification (such as the registered manager’s award) which is consistent with the role and responsibilities of this post (National Minimum Standard 31).