

# Falconer School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC056408     |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 09/12/2010   |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | David Morgan |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Key          |

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| <b>Registered person</b>       | Governing Body, Falconer School |
| <b>Head/ Principal</b>         | Mark Gary Williamson            |
| <b>Nominated person</b>        | Mark Gary Williamson            |
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 02/12/2009                      |

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

## 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**

This is a maintained, residential special school for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It provides education for both day and boarding pupils. The residential unit is known as School House and provides flexible boarding for up to 10 boys between Monday and Friday; evening-only support has begun recently for a small number.

The school is situated in a residential area, which has high street shops and a library within walking distance. The school has its own transport to access amenities further away. Most of the boys were able to contribute directly to this inspection.

### **Summary**

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This full inspection was announced at short notice and covers all areas of care. The overall quality rating is judged as outstanding. The school is making substantial ongoing progress, for example, in its attention to equality and diversity, providing after-school care, and the implementation of an award scheme for children. Quality assurance is of a high standard, as is the protection of children. A significant feature is the impressive liaison between care, education and families, which provides a most effective basis for improving children's lives.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The last report raised six recommendations, which have all been addressed satisfactorily. A clear system is now in place to ensure that the personal needs of children arising from their culture or religion are met. A programme is also in place to expose children to positive images of social diversity. This occurs, for example, through a variety of activities in the community as well as in-house events. The admission of new children has been improved by the use of a checklist. This helps to ensure that children understand important matters such as the rules and fire safety. Files clearly indicate now which adults have legal parental responsibility for each child; this ensures that school staff communicate only with appropriate people.

Staff training is ongoing and is given a high priority by the headteacher. The head of care has almost completed a professional qualification, and gaps in the training of other staff have been filled, for example, regarding medicine administration. Formal supervision of staff by the head of care occurs at appropriate intervals. Overall, these improvements serve to ensure the competence of the team is at an appropriate standard.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive excellent attention to their health needs. There is particularly strong liaison with other agencies where necessary and parents consider that communication with them is very good. There are direct and tangible improvements in the welfare of children who attend the unit. One parent observed that her son is in better health since attending the unit and has more energy. Staff are suitably trained in health-related matters and records show how personal issues are addressed.

Mealtimes are an important part of the children's day and are particularly well managed. There is close attention to individual diets so that religious needs are met and to ensure a balanced diet is taken; fizzy drinks and chocolate are controlled. Staff also liaise with parents to educate them about healthy eating. This important measure is undertaken with great sensitivity and has positive effects on the boys' behaviour, health and also their ability to study.

Themed meals both on and off site are also used to engage staff and children in conversations about other cultures and are thoroughly enjoyed by the children; the most recent focused on the Caribbean. This increases children's understanding and tolerance of social differences as well as meeting individual children's dietary preferences. Children say that mealtimes are fun occasions; it is clear that mealtimes also provide important opportunities to learn skills that children can immediately use at home and elsewhere.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The behaviour of children is a key focus of the school. Overall, the welfare of children is promoted particularly well by thorough recruitment processes and comprehensive understanding by all staff of safeguarding issues. Personal privacy is taken seriously whether it is in bedrooms, telephone calls or bathing areas, and action is taken to address any shortfalls. Senior staff are well trained and proactive, for example in raising concerns with social workers about processes that do not adequately protect children. There are excellent opportunities for parents and children to raise their concerns, that are being improved continually; recent examples include a parents' evening and access to an improved website.

Children feel that they can approach any member of staff with a concern and have confidence that it will be suitably addressed. It is also significant that children actually feel safe in the unit. This is reflected in their relaxed and positive manner with staff and each other. Physical safety measures too are most successful but procedures also provide boys with ample opportunities to take appropriate risks, for example, in the wide range of recreational activities. Success is shown by the fact that since the last inspection, incidents of bullying are almost nil and incidents of being absent without authority are zero. Physical interventions by staff are also

minimal, which is a reflection of the outstanding practice in the unit.

Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through excellent attention to routines and boundaries at all times. This is balanced by a high level of activity and relaxed discussions. Courteous behaviour is expected. Staff provide clear instructions, which are suitably repeated and emphasised as necessary. Children receive individual attention that is planned with teaching colleagues to ensure consistency throughout the school. They are taught, for example, to solve problems constructively, which helps to minimize the number of negative incidents. A system of rewards is in place too, which is also represented visually in the unit. All incidents are appropriately recorded and monitored. Parents feel that the structures that staff apply to the children are extremely beneficial and have a positive impact at home, which is an important and positive effect. Children's understanding of humour, their problem-solving skills and tolerance all improve by being in the unit.

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

The provision is outstanding.

There is excellent integration of the residential and teaching functions. Records show that the residential provision makes a significant contribution to educational improvement and success. This is achieved through careful organisation and communication and by ensuring the residential service has sufficient priority and status within the school. One example of this is that residential staff have the opportunity to be mentors to children in school.

Children have immediate access to all the school's facilities. In addition, they have access to community resources both nearby and further afield. There has recently been substantial investment in the building of an all-weather training area too. There is also a motorbike club and cycle maintenance club on site; boys also enjoy sailing, army cadets and arts and crafts. A well-received outing during the inspection was a reward for good behaviour and involved a trip to an attraction in London. It is normal for such events to be followed by a full and varied programme of evening activities as well. This represents the outstanding opportunities provided to children to experience new activities and to learn positive ways of behaving.

One parent reported that her son had become happy and sociable since attending the unit. This represents the close attention that is paid to each child's needs. A recent and extremely positive development is the application of an award system. This allows children in the unit to study a practical programme of skills that benefit them personally and socially. Examples range from changing their clothes to staying safe in unlit areas. Individual issues arising from personal identity, including religion and culture, are identified by staff and considered with children and their families; strategies are then applied as necessary with appropriate risk assessments.

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

The provision is outstanding.

There are excellent arrangements for consulting children and their families. Families have an integral role in any decision-making and are helped to contribute to their children's successes. A member of staff is designated to liaise with parents and is actively supported by staff, especially the head of care. A recent improvement is the provision of care in the evenings. This allows the school to create a greater range of support packages to parents and children, for example, for children who only require a limited service or who are becoming more independent.

Admissions and discharges are carefully managed. Key workers coordinate programmes of care which help ensure the thorough introduction of new children. Key workers also effectively coordinate plans to prepare families and children who are leaving the service. All new children are already known through attendance at school; new admissions are not undertaken in an emergency, and children are only admitted if they are suitably matched with the current group. These features are good practice and are an important source of stability for the boarders.

Children's excellent individual files clearly show the progress they are making over time to achieve their targets. Care targets are precise and are designed for each child. Recent improvements, as mentioned above, mean that care plans are now supplemented by awards that residential children can obtain for successful completion of work programmes. This process also supports children's academic work. No child is away from home for longer than four nights a week. Nevertheless, there remains substantial home contact by children and staff; in some cases staff speak to parents several times a week. Care packages can include family meetings and specific types of support such as role play. This is an impressive contribution to the overall progress of children.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Children benefit from light and pleasant accommodation that provides a good amount of space, privacy and facilities, albeit in a somewhat institutional style. The unit is centrally located and is well maintained and warm. Each child is able to personalise their own bedroom with their belongings, which includes the display of their targets. Outside, maximum benefit is being obtained from limited space. Outdoor recreational space is somewhat compromised by car parking but this is appropriately managed.

## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. It is to the credit of all concerned that the residential service continues to improve the way it meets individual children's needs and provides the group with positive images of social diversity. This indicates effective leadership, which is also reflected in the other improvements and achievements highlighted in this report.

Children are looked after by a stable and informed team of staff during the day and night. There are excellent staffing levels and staff display a high level of competence and commitment. Children benefit from a staff group that has received an excellent level of training, which is kept up to date. Most staff have a professional qualification and the school go to unusual lengths to provide further training and professional development opportunities, including sponsoring one member of staff on a university course and providing staff with opportunities in other departments. Training is coordinated through suitable staff supervision meetings and staff have access to relevant written procedures. However, suitable arrangements for the professional supervision of the headteacher are not in place as required. Although in practice this has minimal effect on outcomes for children it means that all opportunities to raise standards as much as possible are not being taken.

The residential service receives excellent management overall. This provides children with a stable and proactive service that delivers substantial benefits. Routine monitoring exceeds that required, provides close attention to detail, and has an independent element too. This has contributed to ongoing improvements that have a direct benefit to children and their families; one parent said her son had been 'transformed'. Opportunities are also taken to refresh the perspective of the leadership by taking on new governors when appropriate. Consultation occurs widely with stakeholders such as professionals and parents to ensure that practices are as productive as possible.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that suitable arrangements exist for the professional supervision of the head of school. (Breach of national minimum standard 30.5)