

Furrowfield School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Steve Pearson / Stephen Smith

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

The school is a day and residential special school for boys and girls who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and are aged between 11 and 16 years. The residential facility is directly attached to the school and provides care for up to 14 residential children for up to four nights a week on Mondays to Thursdays.

The school is set within its own enclosed grounds in the residential area of a large city. To the rear of the school are playing fields, which the residential children use for sporting activities.

The school has a maximum of 71 pupils on roll of which 12 currently use the residential accommodation. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and they are placed at the school by the local education authority.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for residential pupils	good
Quality of residential provision and care	good
Residential pupils' safety	good
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The residential provision is having a significantly positive impact on outcomes for young people and they speak highly of the quality of care.
- Young people make good social and emotional development. They learn how to become more independent and are prepared for their transition for leaving school and attendance at college or employment.
- The staff team are effective in promoting the safety of residential children. Risks to welfare are assessed and staff receive training to enable them to supervise residential children on a range of activities such as hill-walking and mountain-biking.
- The headteacher, head of care and independent visitor monitor children's welfare to identify any trends or patterns of concern and take corrective action when necessary.
- Young people and parents are consistently positive about the quality of care.
- The team of staff provide high levels of consistent care and this makes young people feel secure and well cared for.

Outcomes for residential pupils

The judgement for Outcomes for residential pupils is good.

Residential children are prepared well for the residential experience by the time they start staying at the school. One young person said 'before I came to stay in the

residential unit I came for a look round and met the staff and the other boys who use it'. This helps the children to settle in more quickly.

Residential children are also fit and healthy. They take part in a wide range of activities based on physical exercise, they are provided with healthy food and a nurse visits the school regularly. Several residential children commented on how they have developed positively since coming to stay in the residential unit. For example, one young person said 'I've improved a lot since I started to come here. I get on better with my family, I'm more calm and don't get so angry.'

Residential children also develop useful skills that will help them to be independent when older. For example, a young person said 'I can cook meals, use public transport and spend money properly because the staff showed me what to do'.

They enjoy their time spent in residence. Occasionally some of them miss home but the staff provide emotional support and they can contact their families at any time. Parents and carers can also visit their child at any reasonable time. Residential children gain a range of abilities and take up a variety of interests because the staff provide a varied and stimulating range of activities.

The staff set appropriate boundaries for behaviour and conduct to others and as a result, residential children get on well with each other. They generally display settled behaviour and are respectful of others and accept differences between them. They gain self-esteem and confidence through being given a full say in how the residential unit operates. Several children spoke positively about the effectiveness of the monthly house meetings and how, through these, they were able to obtain computer facilities for the residential unit.

Quality of residential provision and care

The judgement for quality of residential care and provision is good.

The assessment of information prior to making a decision about whether to provide residential services to any young person is robust. Once the decision is made, the young person is introduced to the residential experience on a gradual basis and this helps them settle in more quickly. The residential staff also work in the school setting so there is an effective exchange of information about residential children and their educational and social needs into the residential setting. This provides for good continuity and consistency.

Residential children are fully supported to be healthy. Primary responsibility for health lies with parents and carers as the school only provides accommodation for up to four nights a week in term time. However the school secures ongoing health advice as necessary as a nurse visits the school on a regular basis.

They are also fully supported to maintain contact with their family and friends. For

example, there is a payphone on which they can make and receive calls in private without needing to seek permission. Additionally parents and carers can visit the residential unit at any reasonable time.

The residential accommodation is modern, comfortable and homely. Residential children said that if anything needs repairing this happens quickly. Facilities are well-designed and there is suitable sleep-in accommodation for the staff. Residential children can keep their possessions safe. One young person said 'we have a lockable bedroom door and we have a lockable cupboard in each bedroom as well. The staff will also keep things safe for us as well.'

The residential unit also has catering facilities and residential children are able to prepare snacks and develop cooking skills which will be useful when they are older and living independently. Main meals are provided by the main school kitchen and are eaten in school (lunch) or in the unit (tea). Residential children like the food and they are provided with a healthy and nutritious diet. In the young people's surveys, 90% of residential children agreed that the food is good. One young person summed this up by saying 'I like the food, and there is always plenty. If didn't like it could have a sandwich or staff would do something different for me.'

Residential children take part in a wide range of activities every night. Some of these are off-site such as cycling, walking and trips to the beach and leisure centres. Others include on-site facilities such as using the school gym and playing football. These activities help the children to keep fit and healthy and the group activities help them to develop their social skills and confidence. The new computers are also being used well and all residential children are enabled to have a fair allocation of time on them.

All the national minimum standards associated with the quality of care are all met.

Residential pupils' safety

The arrangements for residential pupils' safety is good.

The school is proactive in tackling the risk of bullying. Residential children said 'there is not much bullying, it's mostly name-calling but the staff deal with it and it soon stops.' The staff assess and record the risk of hazards that may affect each young person and take appropriate measures to reduce risks further. Effective arrangements are also in place to deal with any occasion when a young person goes missing. The local policy developed with the police matches recent guidance provided by the government.

The team of staff are effective in promoting children's welfare and residential children say that they feel safe. The home has appropriate security arrangements in place to prevent unauthorised access and the premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances

and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. The staff conduct regular fire drills and fire call points are tested weekly. These arrangements protect young people from harm.

The staff understand how to promote and protect the welfare of residential children and they receive training in child protection. The headteacher and head of care are the designated people with responsibility for coordination of any child safety concerns.

Occasionally the staff need to restrain young people. This is only done as a last resort and for appropriate reasons. Restraints are recorded across various documents and includes information about what the staff did to de-escalate the situation before use of restraint became necessary. The recording in the bound book of restraints is not always fully informative about how the restraint was conducted because it relies on the use of technical jargon to describe the holds used. If such information is assessed in years to come, it will therefore be harder for the reader to understand what happened as they may not understand the terms used.

Occasionally the staff also sanction residential children as a consequence of unacceptable behaviour. Residential children accept this and say 'the use of sanctions is fair'. The recording of restraints and sanctions ensures that the views of each young person are obtained and each record is monitored and signed by the headteacher. This helps to assure accountability and identification of any trends or patterns of concern.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with residential children are assessed as being suitable and safe. Each member of staff must also undertake a fresh criminal record check every three years and this helps to ensure that staff remain suitable to work with residential children.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The judgement for leadership and management of the residential provision is good.

The aims of the school's residential facility is explained in its statement of principles and in the children's guide and this helps parents, children and other relevant people understand the school's function and how it operates.

The residential unit is managed effectively and it provides good continuity of care from a consistent and experienced team of staff. For example, in surveys, 88% of parents said they 'strongly agreed' that the residential unit is managed well and 13% 'agreed' this was the case. All residential staff including the head of care and deputy are suitably qualified and have the knowledge and understanding necessary for caring for residential children.

The team of residential staff receive regular, recorded supervision and appraisals.

They also receive training in appropriate subjects. They are therefore well-supported in their roles.

The headteacher and head of care regularly protect and promote the welfare of residential children by monitoring the information held in the school's records, such as those of complaints, restraints, sanctions and of when young people go missing. Consequently any concerns arising from such monitoring are addressed quickly.

Self-assessment against the new national minimum standards has started and the headteacher writes an annual review of the residential provision. This identifies how current care practice complies with the standards and shows the actions to be taken to address any shortfalls identified.

An independent person also visits the school every half term and this person is one of the governors. These visits are unannounced. The visitor usually assesses practice against the national minimum standards and makes recommendations as necessary. One recent visit led to a report which had poor detail although the headteacher and head of care had monitored the relevant issues so that any shortfalls were still identified.

The school also takes into account residential children's views when seeking to improve the quality of care provided. For example, residential children said 'we got computers because the staff listened to our suggestions'. The head of care and staff take their views seriously and they generally assess complaints appropriately. However the outcome of each complaint is not always reported clearly as there is no final indication as to whether it was upheld or not.

Children's needs are recorded in their residential placement plans and this helps the staff to be clear about their role in helping to meet these needs. Residential children said that they contribute to regular reviews of these plans to ensure they are up to date and accurate. The team of staff have strong links with the parents and carers of children and the deputy has the role of Family Liaison Officer. All parents who completed a survey for the inspection confirmed that they can easily contact the school if they want to. This helps to ensure that their views are listened to and parents feel supported.

Records about residential children are also stored in a secure manner and these records cover the range of issues recommended by the national minimum standards. Consequently, confidentiality is maintained and there is good accountability for how needs are being met.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What should the school do to improve further?

- Make clear, when recording the outcome of any complaint investigation, whether it was upheld, partly upheld or not upheld.
- Avoid relying solely on jargon when recording how the staff restrained a young person.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22/05/2012

Dear Residential Children

Inspection of Furrowfield School

Thank you for helping me and my colleague to inspect the residential part of your school recently. It was good to talk to you all and hear your views.

We were pleased about how well the staff team care for you. You said that you had made a lot of progress since you had come to stay in the residential unit.

We were pleased about how many different activities you go on. It is good that quite a lot of these help you to keep fit because they involve lots of exercise like riding bikes and using the gym.

You all know the staff very well and they provide a good sense of structure for you because the same staff are with you on the same nights of the week. It is also nice that you have the same bedroom every time you stay and that you can make it your own.

We noticed that you got on well with each other and with the staff. Sometimes the staff have to restrain young people if their safety is at risk. However the staff are trained to do this properly and it does not happen much. They also record it properly afterwards and they ask you what you felt about it. You or the staff record your comments as well. It was also good to hear that you say there is very little bullying.

The residential unit itself is comfortable and you look after it well. We felt it was relaxed and homely.

Once again, thank you for your help at the inspection. If you would like to see the full inspection report, please ask one of the staff or the head of care.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Pearson / Stephen Smith