

# Falconer School

Falconer Road, Bushey, WD23 3AT

**Inspection dates** 26–27 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Adequate	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Too many pupils do not make the progress that is expected from their starting points. Year 11 pupils do not do as well as they should in GCSE examinations in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is inadequate and so pupils do not make enough progress. Too often lessons are not planned well enough for the range of pupils' needs. Literacy is not taught consistently well in all lessons and teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills.
- Too many pupils in Years 10 and 11 have poor attendance.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders do not do enough to make sure that pupils do as well as they can. Senior leaders and governors do not use information about pupils' progress well enough to check that teaching is as effective as it should be.
- The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

### The school has the following strengths.

- Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They have confidence that staff will help if they have any concerns.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance improve well at Key Stage 3.
- The choice of courses for pupils at Key Stage 4 has been improved and now provides a wide range of pathways to meet individual pupils' interests and aspirations.
- There is a good range of sporting, cultural and creative enrichment activities.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons; three were observed jointly with senior staff.
- Discussions were held with a group of pupils, senior leaders and teachers, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. In addition, there were discussions with managers of two alternative providers used by the school to extend Key Stage 4 provision.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents including: pupils' progress data, results of GCSE examinations, safeguarding information, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's monitoring of teaching, attendance and behaviour data, reports from external advisers, the most recent parent survey and the school's self-evaluation.
- The residential inspection included visits to the School House before and after school time; discussions with pupils and care staff; scrutiny of care plans and pupils' records; staff training and supervision records; reports of governors' visits to the School House; and safeguarding information and other policies.
- The inspector took into account the views expressed in staff questionnaires. There were four responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

## Inspection team

Charlie Henry, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynda Walker

Additional Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls

Social Care Inspector

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

### Information about this school

- Falconer is a small special school for boys who have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties; an increasing proportion has autistic spectrum disorders. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those of service personnel families and pupils in local authority care) is well above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The school uses four alternative providers to extend the curriculum opportunities for pupils at Key Stage 4. These providers are Watford Community Gardens, Seeds of Change, Building 1 Zone and the Sanctuary Art of Music and Sound.
- There is residential provision in the School House for 10 pupils. The pupils spend varying amounts of the week in the provision.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring that lesson planning matches the learning needs of individual pupils
  - preparing pupils better for when they leave school by teaching them to work effectively with each other
  - making sure that the monitoring of teaching focuses on whether pupils are making good progress over time.
- Improve pupils' achievement so that they make at least the progress expected for their age and starting points by:
  - working with other schools to check the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment
  - setting ambitious yet realistic targets for pupils' progress based on their starting points and with reference to available national comparative data
  - rigorously monitoring the progress towards these targets and amending teaching strategies or providing additional support if pupils are not on track
  - making sure that progress towards targets are discussed with pupils and their parents.
- Improve pupils' attendance at Key Stage 4 by:
  - making sure that each pupil follows a curriculum matched to their interests and aspirations
  - working closely with the local authority and other agencies to eliminate persistent absence.
- Improve leadership and management by:

- evaluating pupils’ progress and attainment in each subject at a whole-school level and for the different groups of pupils within the school
  - making sure that leaders’ assessments of the school’s effectiveness and school improvement plans are focused on improving pupils’ progress and attainment.
- Improve governance by:
- ensuring governors rigorously challenge the school regarding pupils’ attainment, based on the progress they should make
  - ensuring that the performance management of staff takes into account the impact of teaching over time on pupils’ progress.
- The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:
- The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the residential and teaching staff, who children may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. The school ensures that children know who this person is and how to contact them. Children are also provided with one or more appropriate helpline(s) or outside contact numbers, including the Children's Rights Director, to ring in case of problems or distress. (NMS 2.2)
  - The records specified in Appendix 2 (Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards) are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.3)
  - All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these Standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within 3 months of confirmation of employment. (NMS 19.2)
  - Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS 20.2)

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Pupils do not make the progress they should from their starting points. Most do not achieve the GCSE examination results in English and mathematics of which they are capable.
- Pupils who have not met their targets at the end of Key Stage 3 are set targets for the progress they are expected to make from their starting points at the beginning of Key Stage 4 without any change in provision to indicate how an upturn in progress can be reasonably expected. Some pupils are set inappropriately low targets because their attendance is poor.
- Many pupils who come to the school with weak reading and spelling skills make significant progress as a result of the intensive support they receive. However, the inconsistent teaching of literacy in other lessons does not ensure that these gains are built upon as effectively as possible.
- Some pupils make good gains in vocational and work-related skills, including motor vehicle maintenance and construction. Some also make good progress in art, and information and communication technology (ICT) and achieve examination awards at the end of Key Stage 4.
- Pupils make the most progress in lessons when they have individualised targets that are well matched to their needs.
- There are no identified differences in the progress made by pupils with different special educational needs, or by those who are eligible for support through the pupil premium.
- The school has not satisfactorily addressed the weakness in evaluating pupils' progress that was identified at the last inspection. Information about pupils' progress and attainment in most subjects is weak. This information is not rigorously checked to ensure that it is accurate, or analysed at group or whole-school level to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Teachers are knowledgeable about their specialist subjects and provide a range of activities that hold pupils' interest. However, too often teachers do not plan well enough for the range of pupils' needs and different levels of attainment within the same group. As a result, some pupils are not challenged sufficiently and other pupils do not learn well because they are given support that they do not need.
- Teachers and teaching assistants manage behaviour in the classroom effectively. Sometimes, however, the management is overly controlling and relies too much on pupils working individually. This does not give pupils the chance to work successfully with one another. This is an important aspect of learning if pupils are to be as successful as possible when they leave school.
- The success of the school's strategy to improve the teaching of literacy in all lessons is variable. In the best examples, teachers help the pupils consistently to achieve their individual literacy targets. However, in other lessons, teachers miss too many opportunities to promote literacy skills, especially by requiring pupils to produce longer pieces of writing.

- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to supporting the work of the teacher. In the most successful lessons, they help pupils work towards their individual goals. However, sometimes they provide too much support and, in so doing, reduce pupils' independence. In some of these lessons, this is the result of weaknesses in teachers' planning; in others, there is insufficient monitoring and guidance by the teacher.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils usually listen carefully to what they are asked to do and carry out their work accordingly.
- The school has responded to parents' request to increase the amount of homework. Pupils have to complete unfinished work within curriculum enrichment time.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Attendance significantly improves for most pupils at Key Stage 3 who have a history of poor school attendance before starting at Falconers. However, there is a small yet significant proportion of pupils at Key Stage 4 who have high levels of absence. The school has worked with the local authority and other agencies, yet some of these pupils continue to have very low levels of attendance. It is too soon to see whether recent changes to the curriculum and the way pupils are grouped in different classes have a significant impact on encouraging these pupils to attend school.
- Pupils told inspectors that, while there was occasional bullying, it was not a worry and that staff dealt effectively with it when they were told. Parents did not express concerns about bullying. E-safety is covered within ICT lessons; however, not all pupils' work in their files is completed and this, therefore, leaves questions about the thoroughness of coverage of this important topic.
- The school is an orderly place. Pupils are polite and courteous; they take good care of their school. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and that they know who to speak to if they have any worries. They and their parents have confidence in the school's support.
- Most pupils' behaviour improves while they are at the school. The use of short-term exclusion and of restraint decreases the longer the pupils attend; permanent exclusion is very rare.
- Staff are skilled at avoiding conflicts and usually are successful in de-escalating any difficult situations. The pupils understand and respond well to the school's use of incentives and rewards to improve behaviour. When necessary, pupils leave the classroom for short periods while they calm down, and then quickly return to their lessons. Importantly, pupils continue to do their work when they are out of lessons.

### **The leadership and management**

### **are inadequate**

- There is insufficient emphasis from leaders and managers on ensuring that pupils make as much progress as they can and reach the highest possible standards of attainment.
- Self-assessment and improvement planning are weak and do not adequately take into account pupils' progress and attainment. Some of the key issues for improvement identified at the last inspection have not been thoroughly addressed. As a consequence, the school still has an inadequate picture of how well pupils are doing. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in the different subjects are inaccurate. The available information is not drawn together and analysed to provide a picture of areas of strength that can be built upon and of weaknesses in provision that require improvement. While individual pupils' targets are set, there is a failure to

act when monitoring shows that pupils are not on track to achieve them.

- The headteacher and staff team have been effective in improving the behaviour and attendance of most pupils.
- Performance management is not effective. Information about pupils’ progress over time is not considered alongside the outcomes of the observation of lessons. The accuracy of teachers’ assessments is also not considered. Joint observations of lessons by senior leaders with inspectors indicated an overgenerous evaluation of the quality of some of the teaching. These examples, and also the records of routinely monitored lessons, show insufficient emphasis is placed on rigorously assessing the impact of teaching on pupils’ learning.
- The school may not recruit newly qualified teachers.
- The curriculum has improved and is good. The Key Stage 3 curriculum provides a broad and balanced range of subjects, with an appropriate weighting towards English and mathematics. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are able to select from a wide choice of courses to create an individualised programme that provides a good match to their interests and aspirations, including vocational and work-related studies. A very good range of enrichment activities contributes well to pupils’ sporting, creative and cultural development.
- The additional funding provided through the pupil premium for pupils who are at risk of underachievement is used to enhance the provision for all pupils. This is a reasonable strategy given that the large majority of the pupils are entitled to this additional resource. These pupils make similar progress to others in the school.
- The local authority is aware that the school has areas that require improvement, however, did not identify it as an inadequate school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - provides effective challenge and support to the school regarding pupils’ behaviour
  - does not adequately hold the school to account for the progress pupils make or the standards that they attain
  - does not have a good understanding of the quality of teaching or use performance management effectively when determining teachers’ pay because it does not adequately consider or set targets for teachers regarding pupils’ progress
  - has ensured that statutory responsibilities are met, including recruitment checks and staff training regarding safeguarding.

<b>Outcomes for residential pupils</b>	<b>are outstanding</b>
<b>Quality of residential provision and care</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Residential pupils’ safety</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Leadership and management of the residential provision</b>	<b>are adequate</b>

- The residential experience is important to the pupils and they have a strong and highly positive affiliation to School House. They make exceptional progress socially and are able to develop and maintain relationships, many for the first time, with other pupils and staff. They enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities to which they would otherwise not have access.

- Pupils have a strong sense of self-worth and have developed a respectful approach towards others. Behaviour is generally very good and pupils do not show extreme and challenging behaviour.
- Staff provide care that meets pupils' individual needs. They pay particular attention to equality and diversity; for example, by ensuring that any needs relating to religious or cultural obligations are met. Care plans are comprehensive, relevant and accurately address identified needs. Appropriate goals are set for pupils and are reviewed regularly.
- Pupils speak highly of staff and feel genuinely cared for and understood. They have good opportunities to share their feelings and views, and contribute to the development of the provision.
- Accommodation is safe, secure and maintained to a good standard. Pupils feel comfortable and are appreciative of their surroundings. They live healthy lifestyles. There are clear policies and safe practices to ensure that health care needs are well met. Pupils enjoy a well-balanced, nutritious and varied diet and have excellent access to physical exercise, through creative, sporting and outdoor activities.
- Safeguarding is a priority and pupils feel safe. Staff receive comprehensive child protection training. Residential pupils are aware and attentive to their own safety and that of others. They are clear about the adults whom they can approach with any concerns. Pupils say that bullying does not occur at School House and that such behaviour is not tolerated.
- Leadership and management of the residential provision are adequate. There is clear information that outlines well the aims and objectives of School House. There is a sufficient number of care staff to meet the needs of residential pupils. Staff have good training opportunities. However, not all of the current staff group have achieved the required NVQ training at level 3.
- Residential staff are well supported and receive regular formal supervision. However, not all supervision records are evidenced on file.
- All required policies are in place and implemented effectively. Managers and staff share a good relationship with external agencies.
- The residential provision has yet to establish and engage an independent visitor to ensure that pupils have an independent person who is known to them and who visits regularly to listen to any concerns they may have. This was highlighted as a weakness at the last inspection.
- The governor who takes the lead for monitoring the residential provision visits regularly as required. These visits routinely include discussions with pupils, staff and the review of School House premises. However, subsequent reports do not show that key documents such as records of complaints, sanctions and risk assessments are reviewed.

## What inspection judgements mean

<b>School</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

<b>Boarding/Residential provision</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117686
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC056408
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	401680

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	75
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	10
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Yvonne Fitton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mark Williamson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 89502505
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