

Furrowfield School

1 Furrowfield School, Whitehill Drive, GATESHEAD, Tyne and Wear, NE10 9RZ

Inspection dates	14/11/2013 to 14/11/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- The residential provision is helping residential pupils to make significant progress in their personal and social development. As a result of the care provided their behaviour and emotional health improves over time. Residential pupils enjoy staying at the residential unit and the team of staff are effective in promoting their welfare and safety.
- Some progress has been made in enabling residential pupils to take part in activities that a reasonable parent would permit but there is scope for further development here. Residential pupils' care plans are not fully clear about the outcomes of care reviews and the school's countering bullying policy does not yet cover all important aspects.
- The head of care and residential staff are skilled and knowledgeable and provide a high degree of consistency of care which helps residential pupils to feel safe and secure. The head of care manages the residential provision effectively. They monitor the quality of care effectively to identify shortfalls or concerns and they make the necessary improvements where required.
- The headteacher has invested significantly in the residential provision and residential pupils have had a significant say in these improvements. He also does an annual report of the quality of care in the residential provision and sets targets for improvements based on his findings. This helps to ensure the quality of care is continually improving.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

Ofsted gave the school three hours notice of the inspection of its residential provision. Inspection evidence came from one-to-one and group discussions with residential pupils; analysis of written surveys received from 12 residential pupils, two parents and seven residential staff; discussions with residential staff, the headteacher and the head of care; assessment of the school's policies, records and residential pupils' case files; a tour of the residential unit and observations of the residential routines.

Inspection team

Steve Pearson	Lead social care inspector
Shaun Common	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this 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 13 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 80 pupils on roll of which 11 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. The school's residential provision was last inspected on 22 May 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop the proportionate approach to risk assessment of outdoor activities thereby enabling residential pupils to take part in activities that a reasonable parent would permit.
- Reflect the outcomes of care reviews in care plans and ensure that the date of each care plan update is clear.
- Clarify the school's policy regarding racist bullying, homophobic bullying and cyber bullying in the overall counter-bullying policy.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. They are gaining significantly from the care provided in the residential unit.

They learn useful skills which will help them when they are older and living independently. For example, residential pupils said, 'we learn how to cook meals and how to spend our pocket money properly.'

They also make improvements in their emotional and physical health. These benefits were summed up by young person who said, 'the residential unit has made a difference for me because I'm now more calm when I go home and the staff teach us how to get on with people.' From observations at the inspection it was clear that young people respect each other and the staff. They are courteous and sociable and they behave well.

Residential pupils think very highly of the quality of care provided. They feel safe and secure and this shows in their behaviour. They are generally settled and considerate of the needs of others. One residential pupil said, 'I like the rewards we get here. My behaviour is now a lot better than it used to be and I behave better at home as well.'

Residential pupils gain a sense of being valued and respected by the team of staff. For example, the head of care and staff have regular one-to-one and group discussions with them. They seek and listen to the young people's views and act on their suggestions wherever practicable. This enables them to feel they have a real say in how the residential unit is run and to feel valued and respected. The residential pupils also have suitable opportunities after class to consolidate what they have learned in school. The care staff spend time with them helping them with schoolwork and they have access to computers and reading materials.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of residential provision and care is good.

Residential pupils are supported well when they first start to stay in the residential unit. They are provided with useful information about the unit is run; they have several opportunities to look round and they have an older peer as a mentor to help them settle in. There are effective links between the residential and educational sides of the school. The residential staff also work in the school as teaching assistants and so see the residential pupils in both settings. The staff support them in their homework and they have access to a range of computers, books and games to help them in their education development.

Effective arrangements are in place to help residential pupils to make progress in their physical and emotional health. The staff provide them with a healthy diet and they take part in plenty of activities which involve physical exercise such as football, walking and the use of the school gym. Support is available from external agencies who specialise in helping young people gain emotional health.

The school has made progress in enabling young people to take part in a wider range of activities such as country walks. However the local authority is still preventing staff from taking residential pupils on some activities that a reasonable parent would usually allow. For example, residential pupils are not allowed to go to mountain-biking trails designed and supervised by a local forestry organisation. They are not allowed to paddle in the water at the beach or go fishing. As a result young people are not enabled to experience the same activities and enjoyment that young people in the community experience.

The staff fully support residential pupils to keep in touch with their family and friends. They have free access to a payphone in a private booth on which they can make and receive calls at any time. One young person summed this up saying, 'I can ring my Mam and Dad at any time on the

payphone. It's good because it's private.' Young people find the facility useful when they feel they miss their family and so can talk with them.

The residential facilities are excellent. The head of care has implemented a programme of refurbishment with resources made available by the headteacher. The unit has been redecorated and some extra rooms have been created to make better use of space. Young people receive a strong sense of continuity because they always have the same bedroom when they stay overnight. They can personalise their rooms and this helps them to develop their own sense of identity. They can store their belongings safely as well. The quality of the residential provision was summed up by one young person who said, 'I love the residential unit because I have my own bedroom and can put up my posters. All my things are safe because I can lock the door and have my own key.'

The residential provision has a well-equipped kitchen and a cook helps to create nutritious meals. Young people said they have a say in what is on the menu and they discuss the food at regular house meetings.

The staff are sufficiently clear about the needs of residential pupils and are meeting their needs well on a daily basis. Each young person has a key worker who spends regular one-to-one time with them. The key workers review the care plans at the end of each half term. They also write a weekly summary of their progress. However this information does not inform the school's care plan, which means that the care plan can soon become out-of-date.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

The arrangements in place to promote residential pupils' safety are good.

Residential pupils are safe and feel safe. At the inspection they said, 'we feel safe here and there's not any bullying.' The staff are clear about what to do if there are any allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. All staff, including the ancillary staff, receive training in child protection. This enables them to be clear about how to identify evidence of harm and how they should respond appropriately.

The premises are safe. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. Young people said, 'we have fire drills every half term and know where the fire exits are'. One young person added, 'We had a drill when I was in the shower so that shows we don't know when we're going to have one.'

The young people and staff said that bullying is not an issue of concern. One young person said, 'there is some bickering and arguing between us, but it's not bullying. The staff would sort it out if there was any.' The school has a countering bullying policy. It is not fully robust as it does not clarify the school's stance on homophobia, racism or cyber-bullying.

Residential pupils very rarely go missing and none of them have gone absent since the previous inspection. If they do go missing, the staff follow appropriate guidance as recommended by the government. This includes responding appropriately when they return and ascertaining the reasons why they left school without permission, so any concerns can be addressed.

The staff are effective in enabling young people to behave well. Therefore, the staff rarely need to restrain pupils or issue them with a sanction for unacceptable behaviour. Any restraints are recorded clearly in line with national minimum standards. This provides for full accountability as to why and how the restraint was conducted. Young people said, 'the staff hardly ever restrain us and if they do it's done properly.'

Appropriate recruitment arrangements are in place which help to ensure that staff employed to work with children are suitable.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The leadership and management of the residential provision is good.

Ofsted made two suggestions for improvement at the previous inspection and the school has followed through with them. As a result, there is now greater clarity and accountability regarding the recording of restraints. The school complaints procedure has also been improved. This now requires that the person investigating a complaint records and investigates the issues much more thoroughly and provides a clear outcome to the complainant. This helps anyone making a complaint to feel their concerns have been addressed fully and fairly.

The school fully supports residential pupils to have a full say in how the unit is run. They also have a full say in their own care plans. For example, one residential pupil said, 'we have meetings in which we can say what we want to happen and the staff and head of care try to sort it for us.' A member of staff records what was said at each meeting and any decisions made. Each meeting always starts with a look back to previous decisions to ensure progress has been made. The school also has a school council meeting where similar opportunities arise for suggestions to be made. As a result of the meetings, the school made changes to the school uniform and logo and changes were made to the food menu. An independent children's rights officer also visits from time to time and they write a report based on their findings.

All residential pupils are given equality of opportunity to be heard and to be able to develop in order to fulfil their potential. The staff ensure that all young people are given the chance to say what they think and feel about issues whether these are school-related or personal. This enables young people to feel respected and valued and as a result they gain improved confidence and emotional well-being.

The head of care has a clear understanding of the aims of the residential provision and they are effective in ensuring these aims are met. One member of staff summed this up succinctly saying, 'there has to be a clear reason why any young person would stay in the residential unit. We are not just a baby-sitting service.'

The staffing arrangements mean that young people gain a sense of security and continuity from one day to the next. For example, a young person said, 'we don't need to ask which staff are on duty because every week's shifts are the same.' Staffing levels in the residential unit are appropriate to meet the needs of the residential pupils. The head of care has amended rotas to ensure the best use of staff time. Effective overnight arrangements are also in place.

The staff have a high standard of knowledge and skills relevant to the care of young people. They receive regular formal supervision and annual appraisals and receive regular training to support them in their role. They are all undertaking training to become qualified in their daytime teaching assistant roles. This is helping them to consolidate their relationships with the residential pupils. It is also helping them to understand their educational needs with greater expertise so they can help them develop their education in their time in the residential provision. Permanent staff are very experienced and appropriately qualified. Their expertise is enhanced because they take part in training about specialist subjects such as behaviour therapy and attachment disorders.

Two governors comprehensively assess the quality of care every half term. They write a report and make recommendations as necessary. The headteacher also completes a clear annual assessment of how well the residential provision meets the expectations of the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The head of care also monitors all important records

about residential pupils to identify any causes for concern. As a result of these monitoring arrangements, the school carries out actions based on recommendations and so the quality of care improves. The school therefore has a strong capacity for continuing improvement.

Residential pupils' records are comprehensive and stored securely. This provides clarity about how their needs are being met. It provides accountability should they or others need to look back on their records in the future. And it enables young people, their parents and the staff to understand how they are progressing and how plans can be improved to achieve better outcomes.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
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

Unique reference number	108426
Social care unique reference number	SC054500
DfE registration number	390/7006

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.

Type of school	Maintained residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	11
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Mr Steven Thursby
Date of previous boarding inspection	22/05/2012
Telephone number	0191 4334071
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