

Falconer School

Falconer School, Falconer Road, BUSHEY, WD23 3AT

Inspection dates	03/03/2015 to 05/03/2015	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Residential pupils make good progress in all aspects their lives. They have positive relationships with staff and each other. This supports the development of their social interaction skills and pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem. The residential provision provides a nurturing and homely environment.
- Residential pupils are safe and feel safe. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues. This is reinforced by effective partnership working with external agencies. Regular health and safety and fire safety audits ensure the continued safety of residential pupils.
- Parents, social workers and residential pupils praise the continued commitment of staff. They say the boarding experience is positive and ensures pupils make significant progress in their education.
- The management arrangements for the residential provision are good. Regular monitoring of School House ensures that the service meets pupil's needs. Effective links between the school and the residential provision means that residential pupils receive integrated and comprehensive care.
- The school meets the vast majority of the national minimum standards. There are two shortfalls; the lack of specific support plans for some pupils to leave the residential provision and limited training for staff that reflects pupil's individual needs.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of the residential provision took place following a notice period of three hours. The inspection activities included; observation of practice, discussion with pupils in the residential accommodation and meetings with residential staff, senior managers, the business manager and site managers. A range of records were examined relating to the care provided. A breakfast and evening meal were observed as were after school activities over the three day period. Feedback gathered from parents and social workers also informed the inspection judgements.

Inspection team

Jo Stephenson

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

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 School House and provides flexible boarding for up to 10 boys between Monday and Friday; evening-only support is available for a small number. The last inspection was conducted in November 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all policies on the school's website include the date they were reviewed.
- Ensure that window panels in residential pupil's bedroom doors have suitable coverings to promote their privacy.
- Ensure minutes of boarding review meetings detail proposed actions for the coming period.
- **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**
 - Where children are to leave the school on a planned date they are given appropriate information and guidance well in advance to assist in the process of transition. (NMS 2.6)
 - Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school. (NMS 19.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. They make positive progress in developing their social and emotional skills. This promotes their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils forge appropriate relationships with their peers and with staff. One pupil said, 'We all get along really well; we're like a big family,' Relationships are based on understanding, respect and trust. Residential pupils experience a caring environment in which they learn independence skills and are encouraged to continue their education. Pupils speak with passion and enthusiasm regarding their future prospects. Comments from pupils include, 'I won't just have a job I'm going to have a proper career.' However, for some pupils, arrangements in place to support their transition from the residential provision lack structure and focus. This potentially hinders the success of pupils leaving the school and moving onto further education or employment.

Residential pupil's wishes and opinions are central to the day-to day running of the provision. They participate in regular meetings with staff to decide upon menu choices, weekly activities and evening events. One pupil said, 'I like pupil choice night because we take it in turns to plan the activity; it's really fun.' School council meetings include representatives from the residential provision. This ensures that the views of residential pupils are incorporated into the running of the school. Subsequently, pupils say they 'feel involved' in decisions about the school and the development of the residential provision.

Residential pupils are happy and settled in residence. They say they enjoy living in the provision and appreciate the care and support they receive. Pupils are provided with a wide and varied range of extra curriculum activities, such as football sessions and craft sessions. These ensure that pupils remain stimulated and occupied in residence and have the opportunity to experience new leisure activities. This supports residential pupils to develop their social interaction skills. Pupils take responsibility for their own behaviours and actions, recognising the impact these may have on others. Parents and families commend the value of the residential experience. One parent commented, 'It's not just about schooling; they learn about respecting others, being responsible and growing up.'

Staff consistently promote pupil's physical and emotional health. The school counsellor works in partnership with residential staff to support pupil's emotional and psychological development and well-being. Staff regularly liaise with pupil's families to ensure that their physical health needs are known and monitored when necessary. Residential pupils participate in regular physical activities when in residence. They discuss with staff how to maintain a healthy life-style. One pupil said, 'It's not just about playing sports. You have to eat well and not have too much junk food.' Pupils are involved in menu planning and these reflect individual and cultural preferences. This encourages residential pupils to make healthy food choices that support their development and welfare.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of care residential pupils receive is outstanding. Pupils experience an integrated and structured induction to residency that is co-ordinated by the home liaison manager. Pupils and their families are introduced to the provision prior to admission and receive relevant and appropriate information. The transition to residency reflects pupils' individual needs and often complex behaviours. This reduces pupils' feelings of anxiety and trepidation. Excellent links and effective communication between school staff and residential staff means that residential pupils experience a cohesive approach to identifying and supporting their educational and welfare needs.

Staff devise detailed and personalised residential care plans for pupils. These identify residential pupil's welfare, behavioural and educational needs and how these will be supported and monitored. Pupils regularly participate in one-to-one sessions with staff to discuss their anxieties and behaviour and also celebrate their achievements. In addition, the views and opinions of pupils and their families are assimilated into these plans. Comments from pupils include, 'I go through my plan to make sure I agree with what's been written' and 'my plan shows how good I'm doing and how far I've come.' Residential plans emphasise the consistent application of clear boundaries. This means that pupils understand the behaviours expected on them and learn to be responsible for their actions.

Residential pupils enjoy a wide and varied range of in-house and community activities that enhance their social and emotional development. Pupils speak with enthusiasm and delight regarding the 'theme nights' that have been introduced into the residential provision. One pupil said, 'The Australian night was amazing; we all had such a good time and even learnt a few new things.' Residential pupils are urged to participate in activities in the community, such as 'power league' football and swimming. This encourages residential pupils to widen their social circles, learn new skills and develop their hobbies and interests. This further promotes their self-esteem and confidence.

Mealtimes in the residential provision are sociable events. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their achievements and choose their evening activity. The effective management of catering budgets mean that residential pupils are provided with freshly cooked meals that are nutritious and healthy. Where pupils have specific dislikes, food intolerances or cultural preferences, alternative meal options are available. One pupil said, 'I like the food because I get to try things I don't have at home.'

The residential accommodation is warm, welcoming and 'homely'. The provision is exceptionally well decorated and maintained. Pupils are encouraged to personalise their own space and make decisions about the fixtures and fittings in communal areas. The grounds are well-equipped and pupils say they enjoy spending time outside.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

The safety of residential pupils is good. Safer recruitment procedures in place are effective and the school manager ensures that all necessary vetting checks are completed and regularly updated. Adults who live on site but are not employed by the school are subject to checks and have accommodation agreements in place. These set out the school's expectations of them. Visitors to the school and the residential provision are required to sign in and their identification is verified. These systems continually promote the safety of residential pupils and protect them from harm.

Residential staff have a sound understanding of their responsibilities with regards to ensuring that residential pupils are safe. The safeguarding policy and associated referral procedure is regularly reviewed. Designated officers ensure safeguarding referrals are made in a timely manner and records of these referrals are detailed and comprehensive. Safeguarding training is regularly refreshed and staff's knowledge of this is monitored during formal supervision sessions and team meetings.

Pupils are safe and say they feel safe in the residential provision. They do not identify bullying to be an issue and there have been no incidents of bullying since the last inspection. Residential staff remain alert to signs of bullying or intimidation. One pupil said, 'We banter with each other but staff don't let this turn into bullying. That's just not acceptable here.' Residential pupils rarely go missing from the provision and there has been only one incident since the last inspection. This was extremely short in duration and residential staff worked in partnership with local police.

Effective interagency protocols are in place and understood by all residential staff. This ensures the continued safety of pupils.

Staff receive regular training in restraint and de-escalation techniques. There have been very few incidents of physical restraint in the residential provision since the last inspection. Records of restraint are completed in detail and include pupil's comments and views. Residential pupils have behaviour plans and risk assessments in place. These are supported by personalised targets and incentives that motivate pupils to manage their own behaviour. One pupil said, 'I love the reward system because I can really see how well I'm doing. That makes me very proud and I just want to keep doing well.'

Residential pupils have an 'independent listener' who regularly visits the provision. Pupils confirm that they are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with this individual, or any member of staff, should they wish to. There have been no complaints regarding the residential provision since the last inspection. Furthermore, parents say they feel that their children are 'safe and secure' when residing in the school.

The residential provision is safely maintained and appropriately monitored. Regular environmental checks are completed to ensure that any defects or hazards are quickly addressed. Fire regulations are adhered to and residential pupils participate in practice evacuations. This ensures that all pupils know how to safely evacuate the building in the event of fire. All doors in the residential provision have fire viewing panels fitted. However, to ensure pupil's privacy these should be fitted with suitable window coverings.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. The head teacher and head of care say the shared ethos of the school and the residential provision is, 'to encourage pupils to take on responsibility through recognising and celebrating achievements'. This philosophy is conveyed in practice throughout the residential provision.

Staffing ratios are sufficient to support pupils in residence. The residential provision has clear routines in place that are supported by positive links with the school and detailed residential policies. Residential pupils work with a stable and committed staff team. Staff receive regular and effective formal supervision and annual performance reviews. Trainings programmes ensure that staff complete all mandatory training, such as safeguarding, and that this is regularly refreshed. Nevertheless, opportunities for staff to participate in training that reflects the complex behaviours of pupils or professional practice developments are limited. This shortfall potential hinders the on-going development of the service.

The head of care ensures that the residential service is a positive experience for pupils and their families. Regular checks are made against the minimum standards for residential special schools. The head of care is able to review where the service meets minimum standards and identify any areas for development. This ensure that any shortfalls are addressed and actioned, showing the provisions capacity for continued improvement. Furthermore, regular independent visitor audits are used to drive forward improvements and evaluate the value of the residential provision. This means that the service continues to reflect pupil's needs.

Communication with parents is consistent and relevant. Parents say they receive regular updates on the school and the progress their children make. They praise the dedication of staff and recognise the positive impact the residential provision has on pupil's development. One parent said, 'School House has made such a difference; in a good way.'

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	117686
Social care unique reference number	SC056408
DfE registration number	919/7033

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	9
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Kemp
Date of previous boarding inspection	06/11/2013
Telephone number	020 89502505
Email address	head@falconer.herts.sch.uk

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