

Farney Close School

Bolney Court, Bolney, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 5RD

Inspection dates

3–5 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Sixth form provision	Outstanding
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision	Outstanding
Quality of care and support in the residential provision	Outstanding
How well children and young people are protected in the residential provision	Outstanding
Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Pupils make exceptional progress and are extremely well prepared for their next steps in employment, training or further education.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They leave the school as confident and optimistic young people who are rightly proud of their accomplishments.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. Staff genuinely care for pupils and are totally committed to their safety and welfare. Pupils' behaviour and emotional health improve hugely over time.
- Complacency is unheard of because school leaders constantly reflect on how they can improve. Leaders make sure that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have created an ambitious, happy and determined school community where staff and pupils work together as a cohesive team.
- Pupils thrive in the residential homes. They are exceptionally well cared for. Communication between the residential homes and school motivates pupils and ensures their outstanding progress.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Pupils' individual study programmes ensure that they have a well-planned and positive future. One pupil said, 'This place has changed me for the better.'
- Governors are highly effective guardians of the school's vision and values. They have ensured that the school sustains its outstanding reputation as a centre of excellence for pupils with severe behavioural and emotional difficulties.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools (if RSS)

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership even more by ensuring that the new senior and middle leaders fully develop their skills in monitoring and improving teaching, learning and pupils' progress.
- Further improve the residential provision by ensuring that all pupils sign the records of sanctions, and if they do not, make a record of why they have not signed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **is outstanding**

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision **is outstanding**

How well children and young people are protected in the residential provision **is outstanding**

- School leaders are unquestionably tenacious and determined. Their drive to improve outcomes for pupils never stands still. Leaders are steadfast in their unshakeable belief in the school as a safe community where no pupil is left behind. All staff are rightly proud to work in the school and morale is high.
- Learning is at the heart of the school. The school's vision that pupils will become 'the best version of themselves' is deep-rooted and inspiring. Leaders are equally resolute that pupils will gain the means to look outside of themselves and make a positive mark on the outside world. Staff's knowledge of pupils as individuals is thorough. They know and understand pupils' personal circumstances: staff identify barriers to learning at a deep level, ascertain the way they learn best and are not side-tracked by setbacks. As a result, pupils' progress leaps forward and they develop genuine self-assurance.
- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met and that there is no slippage with any procedures designed to keep pupils safe.
- Parents and carers regard the school extremely highly and see it as life-changing for their children. Parents told inspectors that they could not praise the school highly enough and that their children had been helped in every area to improve their behaviour and succeed in life. They believe that their children are pushed and challenged 'in the right way' and have been 'given trust' and opportunities they thought their children would never have had. The inspection team agreed.
- Pupils follow ambitious programmes of study. They study a wide range of examination subjects in order to ensure that pupils can stand shoulder to shoulder with pupils from any mainstream school. Pupils also benefit from an innovative range of vocational and work-related courses delivered in a stunning new facility. Pupils are exceptionally well equipped for the world of work or further training.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a golden thread running through all aspects of school life and lessons. Pupils have excellent opportunities to go on school visits, learn about other faiths and be directly involved in charity work. For example, during the inspection, all pupils made and sold cakes for a charity appeal. Pupils have already raised enough money to begin building a school in Ghana. This is an incredible achievement for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and demonstrates the school's direct commitment to equality of opportunity and British values.
- Regular monitoring of teaching and learning is highly effective. Staff are set challenging targets in order to progress through the pay scales. Recent appointments to senior positions in the teaching team are shrewd and forward-looking, although it is too early to evaluate the impact the new leaders are having on improving outcomes even further.
- A highly experienced and stable leadership and management team provide strong guidance in all the residential accommodation. Leaders in the residential provision are insightful and use thorough internal scrutiny and feedback from other agencies and professionals to improve practice. They have the highest expectations for pupils and staff and they ensure that everyone works effectively together to improve progress and outcomes.
- All members of staff working in the residential provision are suitably qualified and receive regular and high-quality training, appraisal and supervision to ensure that they are competent in their roles.
- A culture of safety is embedded in the school and the residential homes. All members of staff, whatever their role, are highly trained in safeguarding and child protection. All adults working in the school know what to do and who to inform if they have concerns about any pupil's safety or well-being.
- Pupils feel safe and cared for while they live and work at the school. Some see school as a haven and do not wish to return home. Leaders tenaciously pursue any safeguarding concerns about pupils with the relevant local authorities. Clear records contain the necessary information to show how any concerns have been followed up and tackled.
- All pupils have a range of adults with whom they can discuss concerns, including the independent visitor. Other professionals, such as social workers and managers of children's homes, provide excellent feedback about the school's communication and systems to keep pupils safe.

- There are clear and well-followed procedures for staff to follow in the event of any pupil going missing or being absent without permission, including thorough risk assessments. Such procedures ensure that pupils are safe.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are knowledgeable and committed guardians of the vision and values of the school. They ensure that the financial management of the school is secure. Governors set the headteacher and deputy headteacher challenging performance management targets and have excellent first-hand knowledge about the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher ensures that governors are fully informed about the progress and welfare of individual pupils, the impact of the school's work on disadvantaged pupils and how much teaching and the residential provision are improving.
 - Governors have welcomed some astute changes to the way in which they monitor the performance of the school so that they can challenge school leaders still further, which is typical of the strong working relationship between governors and school leaders and the continuous drive for improvement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Outstanding teaching, learning and assessment extend across the whole school day for pupils, including work undertaken in the residential homes. Staff possess detailed knowledge of all pupils' abilities and demonstrate extremely high expectations of what they can achieve.
- Pupils try hard to be diligent and to do their best, notwithstanding their previous difficulties in school. They are focused on their ultimate goals, including examinations, demonstrating considerable strength of character and resilience because tests make many pupils very anxious. Over time, it is heartening to see how pupils begin to take a genuine and brave interest in their own ability to learn and progress.
- Pupils know that teachers are there to teach them and that lessons are for learning. They appreciate that their teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and inspiring. Pupils are attentive learners; they enjoy discussing and debating and relating activities to their own experiences. For many pupils their time in this school is the first time they have really concentrated on learning. Increasingly, pupils start to consider the world around them more objectively and listen to different points of view in a less self-centred way. As a result, pupils are better able to manage their own emotions, regulate their behaviour and make progress.
- Lessons are well planned and carefully tailored to meet pupils' different needs. The pupil 'passport' is a key planning document, which vividly explains pupils' difficulties, their long-term goals and their own views about their learning. Since the last inspection, when pupils' self-assessment was an area for improvement, teachers have taken on board the need to involve pupils much more in assessing their own learning and what works best for them. As a result, pupils are less likely to be dismissive when talking about their academic ability, but give a considered and mature account of what they know, can do and understand.
- Teachers make excellent use of stimulating materials, such as film clips, challenging texts, high-quality textbooks and well-designed worksheets to interest and motivate pupils. Practical resources in mathematics are used very effectively to secure learning and help pupils to practise real-life application of their knowledge. Patient teaching and skilled questioning help to support pupils' recall of key knowledge and consider topics more deeply. The highly skilled speech and language and literacy specialist staff ensure that all pupils have the programmes they need in order to catch up with basic skills.
- Pupils are productive and purposeful when working on tasks in lessons and for homework. Even for those pupils who have recently joined the school, or who are struggling to participate, there is a healthy volume of work completed, attesting to the school's high expectations and relentless focus on finding out what will spark pupils' interest.
- Pupils' work, photographs and inspiring pictures and statements are displayed around the site, emphasising the importance of school and achievement for pupils.
- Teaching assistants are an essential asset to the school, providing excellent support for all pupils, including those who may be working more quickly on tasks and in need of additional challenge. Staff working in the residential homes are also used extremely well to support pupils' learning during the school day.
- All relevant independent school standards are met.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' participation in a wide range of activities enhances their development into rounded young adults. For some pupils, they have opportunities to be part of school life in a way that they may never have had before. They sing in the school choir, act on stage in the annual school production, go on school trips, compete in sports day and help to organise charity events. School leaders rightly pride themselves on the social opportunities they promote for pupils, such as the regular use of the school café, where pupils can talk together in a grown-up and civilised environment.
- Art, music, physical education and vocational courses, such as bricklaying, painting and decorating and motor vehicle maintenance, are valued highly by all pupils, including boys and girls, and contribute well to their personal growth and self-esteem. For example, during the inspection, the lead inspector was able to observe a singing lesson and was treated to a pupil's beautiful and courageous live performance of two songs.
- Staff are highly alert to any safeguarding concerns that may arise and take prompt action to assure pupils' protection. Staff have fully absorbed school leaders' message that it 'could happen here' and are very knowledgeable about serious concerns, such as child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and risks of extremism or radicalisation. Safety when using the internet or social media sites is a top priority and pupils have a strong understanding of how to minimise risks when online.
- Thorough and systematic risk assessment of the premises and activities ensures that hazards are known and managed. This enables pupils to live in a secure school and to take part in challenging and exciting activities in a safe manner.
- Fire drills of both the school and residential areas take place on a regular basis and this means that pupils are aware of what to do in the event of a fire.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Most pupils join the school with severe behavioural and emotional difficulties. Some have been excluded from previous schools or have had considerable time away from education. By the time they leave the school, pupils have learned to manage their emotions, control their behaviour and look forward to the future. The school can point to several dramatic improvements in pupils' behaviour over time, including impressive reductions in the use of physical intervention.
- Where needed, there are individual behaviour management plans which outline what approach and strategies are to be used to support young people to manage their behaviour. These enable young people to develop their own internal controls and to improve their coping skills.
- Sanctions imposed for poor behaviour in the living areas are appropriate and records show whether they have been effective. All incidents of physical restraint are monitored and assessed to ensure that the intervention was appropriate and whether strategies need to be reviewed for individual pupils. A full debrief is held within 24 hours in order to listen to pupils and ensure that they can voice their opinion about the incident. However, there have been a few occasions when pupils' views have not been recorded, or it has not been noted if they have refused to sign the debrief document.
- Pupils are extremely keen to earn reward points for their good conduct during lessons and the school day. Firm action is taken if pupils disrupt the learning of others. Staff deal with swearing and derogatory language in a serious 'no-nonsense' manner, but without being confrontational. As a result, pupils try hard to moderate their language.
- An effective anti-bullying policy helps to create a harmonious and supportive community. Any incidents of bullying are managed strictly. All incidents are examined closely and records show how members of staff have supported all concerned in order to avoid a repetition.
- Pupils are able to work increasingly well together and form healthy friendships. They quickly acquire a strong sense of empathy and sympathy with one another and towards staff.
- Pupils are evidently proud of the school and there is no damage or vandalism around the site. They are friendly and know how to be polite to visitors and to each other. Through consistently vigilant and friendly supervision, no time is wasted in moving from one activity to another or when moving around the buildings and grounds.
- Attendance is good and compares well with that of mainstream schools. Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and are rarely absent without good reason. However, a very small number of parents do not value full attendance as highly as they should and in a very few cases, some local authority transport

arrangements do not fully support the school's efforts to ensure that pupils attend whenever they can.

- All independent school standards relating to welfare, health and safety and relevant national minimum standards for residential schools are met.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- When pupils leave the school, they leave with a range of skills and attributes which equip them exceptionally well for life beyond school. This includes GCSE qualifications, entry level qualifications, vocational qualifications and growth in emotional health and well-being.
- Pupils make rapid progress from their entry and baseline testing in the school, catching up very quickly. Their progress also accelerates at the beginning of Key Stage 4 because they have chosen their option subjects and are keen to succeed. Rates of progress compare well with those of pupils with similar starting points. The school adds considerable value to pupils' achievement, with most achieving far more than would have been expected when they joined the school.
- The school rightly prides itself on ensuring that all pupils are able to take external examinations by the end of their time in school. Before entering the school, many pupils never thought they would be capable of taking formal examinations. As in previous years, Year 11 pupils in 2015 gained a full range of GCSE or entry-level grades, comparing well with those of pupils in mainstream schools, including humanities subjects and a modern foreign language.
- Most pupils have difficulty with literacy because of early difficulties with communication, specific difficulties such as dyslexia and problems with inference and deduction. However, pupils make impressive progress in English that compares well with other pupils with similar starting points. For example, pupils' work with the school's speech and language therapists and literacy specialist teacher leads to excellent and rapid progress in reading and writing.
- Pupils' English work shows pupils' rapid progress from uncertain letter formation to lively and moving extended writing. The choice of challenging set reading texts provokes pupils' interest. Inspectors saw examples of excellent use of quotation from 'Romeo and Juliet', showing pupils' ability to relate ideas to Shakespeare's language and intention.
- Pupils make excellent progress in mathematics. Their rates of progress compare well with those of other pupils. Pupils' work is accurate, neatly presented and shows evidence of practical application of number skills.
- Progress in a range of other subjects is equally impressive. The strong focus on examination readiness and regular tests in every subject works well for pupils' short-term motivation and builds their confidence. Pupils practise increasing control and skill in art; they work with thoughtful reflection and teamwork in physical education and they also produce extended answers and diagrams to be proud of in geography. They quickly acquire skills and knowledge in science and are able to formulate longer answers in tests, demonstrating their scientific thinking and depth of understanding. In history and religious education, pupils are able to debate moral questions, listen to each other's point of view and refer to sources.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged or in the care of their local authorities do as well as, and often better than, their peers in the school. Once settled in the school, their rapid progress compares well with those of other pupils nationally.
- Reading is promoted extremely well. Many pupils have been reluctant to read and lack confidence. Regular reading time, alone or with an adult, gives pupils confidence and enables them to learn about different characters, plots and viewpoints from different cultures, in addition to pursuing their own interests. Many pupils enjoy reading aloud in lessons and make good use of the well-stocked library.
- Preparation for the next stage of pupils' education is excellent. For many years, no pupil has left the school without entering employment, further education or training. Careers education and planning for life beyond school begin early and continue in the forefront throughout pupils' time in the school. Pupils are supported well with their choices through a wide repertoire of careers talks, presentations, visits and personalised guidance. Pupils make excellent progress in vocational courses, such as construction and catering, with many going on to gain apprenticeships and work experience.
- Throughout their time at school, pupils are encouraged to keep their eye on their ultimate goals. A 'job club' enables pupils who are having difficulties to refocus their attention on their ambitions and plans.

Sixth form provision

is outstanding

- The whole package of care, appropriate college courses and work experience provided for sixth form pupils enables them to thrive and be exceptionally well prepared to take their place in society. Their personal development and welfare are safeguarded meticulously, with examples of leaders swiftly taking action when any inappropriate behaviour is identified that may put pupils at risk of harm.
- Thorough research and work with pupils and parents or carers ensure that those pupils who would benefit most from continuing their placement at the school are well placed in the right courses. The school acts promptly and effectively if a course turns out to be unsuitable, making alternative arrangements that enable pupils to complete their studies and move on to something more appropriate. A few most-able pupils move quickly onto higher level courses, including some at Level 3.
- Pupils all complete work experience and are supported with literacy and numeracy as part of their courses and their independent living programmes in the residential homes.
- Transitions to employment, further education beyond school and training are managed extremely well and as a result, all pupils move on to further education, training, employment or apprenticeships.
- All pupils currently on a college course are doing exceptionally well. Their progress and attendance are checked carefully by school leaders, who intervene quickly if there are any setbacks. Teaching, learning and assessment are carefully monitored by school leaders.
- Sixth form pupils are proud to be at the head of the school. They enjoy living in the sixth form areas and appreciate the help that they receive in order to succeed at college. Pupils are nurtured and supported sensitively, boosting their confidence and ensuring that they grow in maturity and self-control.
- Leadership of the sixth form provision is ambitious, with a clear vision for the future. The sixth form leader, who also is responsible for careers advice and guidance, takes every possible opportunity to network and seek out new and exciting opportunities for the pupils.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision

are outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress, especially when bearing in mind their starting points. They develop their skills and confidence to a significant degree, which enhances their chances of success beyond their placement at the school.
- Detailed multidisciplinary planning ensures that each pupil's progress is monitored closely. Bespoke plans ensure that each pupil receives care and support to develop academic and social skills.
- Residential and teaching staff liaise closely throughout the day. Communication is highly effective and there is a strong sense that the whole school community works closely together. Any changes in need or circumstances are noted and acted upon quickly to ensure that pupils are well supported.

Quality of care and support in the residential provision

is outstanding

- Residential accommodation is clean, homely and comfortable. There has been a substantial refurbishment programme which has meant that residential areas are of a very good standard throughout the school.
- There is unanimously positive feedback about the quality of food. Pupils praise the variety of choice. Meals are healthy and nutritious and individual's dietary needs are known and met. 'It's just much better now' is a comment made. Breakfast, lunch and dinners are well organised and comfortable social events.
- Pupils are encouraged to lead healthy, active lives. There is an excellent choice of activities for pupils and these are based both on the school site and in the community. An emphasis is placed upon developing pupils' social skills and learning to work together.
- Pupils are confident that their views are valued and acted upon. They are able to voice their opinions to senior members of staff, key workers and in a formal school forum. They have seen that they can have an influence on the school. For example, pupils' views have brought about changes in menus, refurbishment of accommodation and choices of equipment for their houses, such as homework desks.
- Parents are highly complimentary about the quality and regularity of contact with members of staff. One parent commented that 'they always update us and keep us in the loop, our daughter just loves it there.'

School details

Unique reference number	126139
Social care unique reference number	SC014513
Inspection number	10006011
DfE registration number	9386217

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State

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.

Type of school	Secondary
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	8
Number of part time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	46
Proprietor	Farney Close Ltd
Chair	Sheila Burt
Headteacher	Barry Robinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£63,000
Annual fees (boarders)	£63,000
Telephone number	01444 881811
Website	www.farneyclose.co.uk
Email address	head@farneyclose.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January – 1 February 2012

Information about this school

- Farney Close School is a smaller than average independent residential special school, registered for up to 72 boys and girls aged between 11 and 18. There are currently 48 pupils on the school roll.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plans for their severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Nearly all the pupils board from Monday to Friday in the residential accommodation on site.
- Over 25 local authorities place pupils in the school. About one quarter of the pupils currently on roll are in the care of their local authorities. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English.
- The sixth form opened in September 2011. Pupils currently in the sixth form attend Central Sussex College, Crawley or Plumpton College, East Sussex, studying a wide range of vocational courses.
- The last integrated inspection of the school and residential provision was carried out in January 2012.
- The school's aims are 'that all children and young people should have the opportunity to receive an education that supports each of them to become the best version of themselves.'

Information about this inspection

- This integrated inspection of the education and residential provision was carried out with half a day's notice.
- The social care inspector spent time in the residential homes, observing evening activities, scrutinising documents and speaking to pupils and staff.
- All pupils present were observed learning in lessons across a range of subjects. The lead inspector was accompanied by the deputy headteacher or headteacher on all observations.
- Inspectors met with groups of teaching and residential staff, senior leaders of the school and the residential provision and two governors.
- Documentation and policies relating to the independent school standards and the national minimum standards for residential special schools were scrutinised. Records related to pupils' behaviour, progress and safety were examined.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View to be taken into account. Inspectors spoke to three parents on the telephone and also had conversations with social workers and the manager of a children's home.
- Ten responses to the staff questionnaire were taken into account.
- The lead inspector scrutinised the quality of lesson planning and examples of pupils' work across a range of subjects.

Inspection team

Janet Pearce, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Taylor

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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