

Falconer School

Falconer School, Falconer Road, Bushey WD23 3AT

Inspection dates

01/03/2016 to 03/03/2016

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good **2**

The quality of care and support

Good 2

How well children and young people are protected

Good 2

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good 2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- The young people make good progress as a result of the care and support that they receive. Managers promote a culture of high aspirations, both for the young people and for the service itself.
- The young people get on with each other and have good relationships with the staff. The young people enjoy their time in the school house. They have access to a range of activities.
- Parents and external professionals are positive about the quality of the service provided. There is good communication, and the school works with them to ensure a partnership approach to meeting the young people's needs.
- The young people feel safe in the school house. They say that the staff listen to them and that they act on what they hear. They have access to an independent person with whom they can raise concerns. The staff contribute to safeguarding processes to ensure that young people receive the support that they need.
- The staff support the young people to manage their behaviour well. The staff rarely need to use physical interventions or sanctions to achieve this.
- Leaders and managers are open to challenge and are realistic about the need to improve in some areas. Monitoring processes are in place and result in improvements to the quality of care.
- The areas identified as needing to improve include recording and updating of records and policies as well as ensuring that staff have better access to training.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff are assessed as competent to administer medication and that the associated policy fully reflects the Royal Pharmaceutical Society guidance.
- Ensure that staff clearly record physical interventions. This is with particular regard to recording plainly the reason for the physical intervention and recording the detail of any debrief undertaken with the young person by someone not involved in the intervention. Ensure that new staff receive physical intervention training and other key training in a timely manner.
- Ensure that risk assessments contain sufficient detail regarding known risks.
- Ensure that when a significant incident relating to a boarder occurs within the school staff review, and if necessary amend, the school house risk assessment for that boarder.

- Ensure that appraisals fully reflect staff development and progress.
- Ensure that when updating one policy, any linked or corresponding policy is also updated.

Information about this inspection

One inspector carried out this inspection across three days. The inspector informed the school in the morning and arrived on site three hours later. In order to arrive at the judgements, the inspector examined documents including reports, case files and behavioural records. He observed practice, including mealtimes and activities. He spoke to staff, including boarding staff, the residential manager, the headteacher, the school manager, the independent listener and the designated person. In addition, he met with young people and interviewed the link governor. He also spoke to parents and external professionals.

Inspection team

Ashley Hinson

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 eight boys between Monday and Friday. Evening-only support is available for a small number. The last inspection was in March 2015.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

This is a good residential provision. The young people make progress as a result of the care and support that they receive at school house. They make progress educationally, socially and behaviourally. The young people recognise this progress. Asked about the difference boarding makes to them, one young person said: 'I used to cause trouble. My behaviour has improved majorly.' The young people develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. A parent said: 'He has really grown up since being there. He has much more life in him. His confidence, it is like a different child.'

The young people get on very well with one another. They have strong and beneficial relationships with the staff who care for them. The staff and young people interact well. The young people are able to make their views known, both through routine discussions with the staff and through young people's formal meetings. Boarders are included in the school council.

The young people say that they enjoy their time residing in the school. They enjoy a wide variety of leisure opportunities ranging from the physical to the intellectual. There has been an increase in the work undertaken to prepare young people for life after school. The young people are completing life-skills workbooks. These demonstrate the progress that they have made over time. Parents report significant progress with independence skills. One said: 'They are absolutely equipping him for his future. He is 100% more independent.'

The leadership team is ambitious for the service and the young people. Colleagues and professionals respect the residential manager. He was professional and responsive throughout the inspection. The young people benefit from receiving support from a consistent staff team.

The young people report that they feel safe in the residential provision. They have access to an independent person who visits regularly. The residential manager also acts as the deputy designated safeguarding lead. Individual risk assessments are completed. These would benefit from greater clarity and depth. Healthcare arrangements are in place. Managers need to strengthen these to ensure that they fully reflect the relevant guidance.

The staff support the young people to manage their behaviour well. There are very few incidents of physical intervention and staff are able to manage behaviour without the need for this or major sanctions in almost all incidents in the school house. Records of physical interventions need to improve. They need to capture the debrief that takes place between staff and young people afterwards.

The quality of care and support

Good

The young people make good progress as a result of the quality of care that they receive. They receive care linked to their individual needs. There is a phased introduction

to the service, and this works for young people. A parent said: 'Before he started boarding, he came and did activities there and every week he tried to extend the time.' A new boarder was present during the inspection, appearing comfortable in the company of staff and other young people. There is warmth in the interactions between staff and young people. The strength of the relationships helps young people to feel safe. A young person said: 'If you have a problem, they will always sort it out. If you have any problem, you can talk to them.'

There is a close working relationship between school house and the wider school. Teachers also support the provision in the morning, and staff hand over to teachers each time they take the young people to school. The school house, while small, appears an integral part of the overall provision. As a result, there is a joined-up approach to meeting the young people's needs.

The building is sufficient to meet the needs of the young people. The young people are able to personalise rooms. They have access to a range of books, games, gaming machines and DVDs, as well as the opportunity provided by access to the resources of the wider school. They benefit from a wide range of leisure activities. The young people spoke with enthusiasm about these. One young person said: 'It is just a fun, safe place here.' The young people contribute to deciding on and organising these activities. The school is responsive to the suggestions of young people.

The young people say that there has been a recent improvement in the range of food and the catering arrangements. Meal times are vibrant and social occasions. The staff and young people engage in a wide range of discussions. These provide opportunities for informal guidance and support for the young people. The young people enjoy the company of the staff, consistently describing them as fun while also recognising that they are in a position of authority.

Parents and young people report that they are able to call one another with ease. The young people have access to a phone for this purpose. Parents say that communication is good and regular.

The staff actively and routinely seek the views and feelings of the young people. Young people feel listened to. A young person said: 'They like the truth from us.' They are able to give examples of times when staff have heard and acted upon their opinions. The staff member responsible for this area of practice spoke confidently and passionately about engaging the young people in these meetings. This has culminated in the young people chairing their own meetings and reporting back to managers.

The school meets the young people's health needs within the residential provision. The staff model healthy lifestyles, and young people are encouraged to engage in activities that boost their physical fitness. There is a need to improve the arrangements for managing medication to ensure that it fully reflects the relevant guidance. However, there have been no medication errors. The system is monitored and training is provided.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

The school's arrangements for ensuring that young people are safe in their care are good. There are some areas where practice could improve, and these primarily relate to

recording.

The young people say that they feel safe in the residential provision and parents agree. One parent said: 'He feels safe and secure. He has a level of security and comfort there that he does not have at home.' The residential staff are clear about the process for raising concerns about a colleague or a young person. External professionals spoke positively about the work of the designated person. A professional stated: 'She fights for the young people.' She has referred information as necessary to the local authority. This has contributed to additional safeguarding for some young people. Regular fire drills take place.

The young people identify people that they can talk to if they have a concern. This includes staff and independent people. They have access to an independent listener. The independent listener has considerable experience in child protection and visits regularly. This is good practice and provides an additional layer of safeguarding for the young people in the school house.

There has been one new recruit in the residential setting since the last inspection, and the appropriate recruitment checks were in place. Signed agreements and appropriate checks are in place for people living on site. Managers updated the agreement signed by people living on site during the course of the inspection, to better reflect the 2015 national minimum standards.

The young people say that bullying is not an issue in the residential provision. They are clear that staff manage any behaviour well. A young person said: 'The staff do not accept bullying.' However, the staff do not routinely review young people's risk assessments following incidents of bullying that take place in the wider school. In addition, while no young people have gone missing from the school house, some boarders have gone missing from the school. When this has happened, it has not automatically triggered a review of the young person's risk assessment. Individual risk assessments would also benefit from more detail regarding known risk. The residential manager recognises this and acknowledges this as an area for development.

The staff manage the young people's behaviour well. There is little need to use sanctions and there are very few physical interventions. There have only been two restraints since the last inspection. The associated records would benefit from being clearer regarding the actual reason for the physical intervention taking place. In addition, there is no evidence that debriefs have occurred with staff or with young people. Managers are clear that this did happen, and young people report staff asking them about the incident. However, there is no record either to evidence this or to inform risk assessments and understanding of the incident.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The impact of leaders and manager is good. There are some areas that could improve further.

The manager is highly regarded by his team and the headteacher. The young people clearly get on with him. He is very much a part of everyday life in the school house. Professionals also speak positively about him. He is passionate about the service and

willing to hear challenge and to respond to it. There is a consistent group of staff in place. Families and professionals talk positively about the communication that they receive from the service.

The young people are making progress and the school management monitors and measures this progress. Managers are aspirational, both for the young people and for the service that they lead. They instil a belief in the young people that they can achieve. Consequently, the young people speak with pride about what they have achieved. One young person could not hide his smile when pointing out his work on display on the school walls. A parent said: 'They have turned his opinion around about school. He is looking to his future now and deciding what he wants to do.' There are aspirational pictures of previous year groups and their successes adorning the walls. These further inspire young people to see what they can accomplish.

The link governor undertakes monitoring visits. These cover the required areas and provide challenge to the service. They result in changes taking place to improve the quality of care and the experience of young people. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

The staff receive regular supervisions. These are clearly recorded, include targets and evidence, and both support and challenge. The staff also receive annual appraisals. These are very brief. They do not include sufficient analysis of performance. The staff have been able to access a range of training courses since the last inspection. Whole-school safeguarding training has taken place. The newest member of the residential staff has yet to receive this. In addition, she has not yet received training in physical intervention. This means she is not in a position to intervene physically if the need arises and would need to call on a colleague to support her.

The care that staff provide is guided by a wide range of interlinking policies and procedures. The governors review these. Managers need to ensure that when updating one policy they also update any linked or corresponding policy. For example, there were two versions of the safeguarding policy on the website at the point of the inspection.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected, or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

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	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	69
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to16
Headteacher	Mr Jonathon Kemp
Date of previous boarding inspection	03/03/2015
Telephone number	0208 9502505
Email address	head@falconer.herts.sch.uk

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