

# Furrowfield School

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

**Inspection dates** 2 March 2016 to 4 March 2016

<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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

- Young people have positive residential experiences that contribute to their overall progress and development. Their outcomes are good, and they are consulted and listened to. Relationships with staff are very good, and this enhances young people's care and support.
- The quality of care is consistently high and delivered by committed, motivated staff. Residential accommodation meets the needs of the young people, and staff have endeavoured to make the unit homely and comfortable. All areas are clean and very well maintained. Young people's health needs are met, and meals are varied and nutritious.
- Young people are safe and reside in a safe environment. Behaviour is managed positively and there is no bullying. Safety checks on new starters and visitors are robust.
- Leadership and management are strong. Excellent relationships between school and residential leaders and managers create a seamless, consistent framework in which young people thrive and flourish. Monitoring and oversight is effective and drives continual improvement.

### Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

## Information about this inspection

The school was notified three hours before the inspection began. The inspector spent two evenings with the young people and joined them for meals. Young people were consulted individually and during a group discussion. Key staff members were interviewed. Parents were interviewed, and their views from the school's consultation were taken into account. An inspection of the school and boarding facilities was undertaken and the school's records scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Debbie White

Lead social care inspector

## **Full report**

### **Information about this school**

The school is a day and residential special school for a maximum of 71 boys and girls aged between 11 and 16 who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The residential facility is directly attached to the school and provides care for up to 14 young people for up to four nights a week on Mondays to Thursdays. Currently there are 12 young people in residence. The school is set within its own enclosed grounds in the suburbs of Gateshead. The school's residential provision was last inspected in February 2015.

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

- Review the current systems for the safe administration and storage of medication in the residential provision.

## Inspection judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Good**

Young people have meaningful relationships with staff that are based on mutual respect. Staff have a very good understanding of each young person's needs and see each young person as a unique individual with strengths and potential. Young people understand this, and have consequently formed very good bonds and attachments with staff. This significantly increases young people's self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. A young person said, 'The staff are mint. They really care about you and talk to you. They are a laugh and they are there for you.'

Interactions between young people are positive, and they develop good friendships that continue outside of school. Staff are attuned to young people's moods and behaviours and carefully managed group interactions. This steers young people to understand empathy and develop good social skills.

All young people are progressing and achieving because of the impact that residential care is having on them. Their academic achievements and behaviours have significantly improved since they commenced boarding. All parents consulted at this inspection also said that their children's behaviours have improved at home since they started at the residential provision. A parent said, 'My child attended for five years and did really well. He is much more confident and happy.' Another commented, 'It is an amazing place. My child used to fight all the time and this has stopped. He has friends now.'

Behaviour management is a strength. Young people positively respond to nurturing, caring staff. Rewards, encouragement and praise are key features, which enable young people to develop good social and communication skills. Young people are supported to reflect on their behaviours to gain an understanding of why they may feel distressed or upset, and of how their actions have an impact on others. This helps them to gain a healthy insight into their behaviours and reduces feelings of self-blame.

Activities are varied and offer young people new hobbies and experiences that they can maintain once they move on from residential care. These give them positive alternatives to anti-social behaviours and encourage them to follow their aspirations. A young person said, 'I joined army cadets and I go all the time now. I want to be a soldier when I leave school.'

### The quality of care and support

**Good**

Young people's needs are known and very well met. Individualised support from residential staff and a range of other professionals provides high-quality support. Comprehensive planning and regular residential and educational reviews ensure that each young person receives the care and support that they need to improve and to reach their potential. Parental involvement is pivotal to young people achieving, and the school has a very good inclusion policy that is reaping benefits to young people's outcomes. A family member said, 'I can't say enough about the school and residential. Staff are always kind, pleasant and understanding. It's been a lot better since the new

headteacher took over. It's like a private school now. They fully understand the young people and they listen to and work with families.'

Consultation with young people is meaningful, and staff are genuinely interested in young people's views, wishes and aspirations. This respects young people and gives them a voice in important decisions in their lives. A young person said, 'Yeh, they talk to us and ask us what we think. I think they listen to us.' A parent added, 'They talk to young people now, inspire them. I can't praise the school highly enough. They make young people's self-esteem high.' A recent, anonymous young people's survey showed that over 90% of young people are happy at the school, including at the residential provision. This outcome reflects young people's positive views about their care and experiences.

Young people's health needs, including those of their emotional health and well-being, are very well met. Staff have a very good understanding of mental health issues, having received additional training and ongoing support and advice from the school's psychotherapist. Key staff are also responsible for providing young people with 'mental health first-aid', which is an effective approach to support young people in crisis. Young people know which staff can offer this immediate support on a one-to-one basis, or they join one of the many support groups that help young people to talk through their concerns or worries. The school also works in partnership with other professional healthcare agencies, which ensures that young people have access to the services that they need.

Some young people are prescribed medication that includes controlled drugs. Staff are trained to administer medication safely, but it is not clear that the school's procedures are fully followed at all times, for example, the procedure about when controlled medication is administered. Additionally, medication is not stored in line with current guidance when it is moved from the school into the residential unit. This creates a potential for medication to be tampered with, as it is not stored in a bespoke medication cabinet.

The residential accommodation fully meets young people's needs and is homely, comfortable and spotlessly clean and tidy. There is ample room for activities and private time, and all young people have their own bedroom that they can personalise. Young people and the residential staff take a pride in the unit and maintain all areas to a very high standard. There is no damage or signs of wear and tear, which shows that young people fully respect the unit. This is a credit to the young people and shows that they are happy during their residential stays.

### **How well children and young people are protected**

**Good**

Young people are safe and their ongoing safety and welfare is paramount. Robust child protection procedures and regular staff training ensure that all staff know what to do if they are concerned about a young person's safety. Senior managers have very good links with local safeguarding officers and fully support young people when there are concerns outside of school. Young people feel safe and emotionally secure. This improves their confidence and promotes their well-being. A young person said, 'I think it's safe here. I know the staff will look after me and I can talk to them.'

Risk management, health and safety, and fire safety are very well managed. Key staff have individual responsibility for these areas and communicate outcomes to senior managers and all staff. Record keeping that includes health and safety risk assessments, fire safety and utility checks, and potential environmental hazards, is good and reduces risks to young people, staff and visitors.

Young people's individual risk assessments reflect known risks and ways in which these will be minimised. The school has a bespoke software system to evaluate risk factors for activities, including those that take place outside of school. This allows young people to take part in a range of community-based activities while keeping them safe.

There is no bullying in the residential unit, and no young people have gone missing. Young people are supported to understand e-safety and signs of exploitation. This support informs and educates them to prevent unnecessary exposure to potential abusers. Staff recruitment is vigilant and all visitors to the school have their identification checked and verified. These measures ensure that young people, as far as possible, are protected from external, negative influences.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

**Good**

Leadership and management are strong. The headteacher is a very experienced, committed professional who clearly puts young people's needs and wishes at the heart of the school's ethos and practice. The senior management team members know their roles and responsibilities and work effectively to ensure that young people receive high-quality, innovative care and support. Communication throughout the school and the residential unit is very good, and results in a knowledgeable, informed workforce. Staff feel valued, appreciated, supported and listened to. This is reflected in their commitment to young people and their focus to improve the services that they provide.

Oversight and monitoring are detailed, and seek out areas of strength and areas to develop. Written plans show how the school intends to make improvements based on monitoring outcomes, which facilitate ongoing improvements. Independent monitoring visits to the residential unit involve a full review of young people's care and support and the visitor regularly consults with young people to ascertain their views. The independent visitor said, 'I always visit after school, look at the records, have a look around, have tea with the young people and chat to them. I think the residential unit is very good, and the young people are very relaxed.' This additional monitoring gives young people further opportunities to express their views and to influence the running of the unit.

Staff receive the statutory training that they need to meet young people's needs. There is a programme of additional training that staff can access, in line with their aspirations and personal development. This encourages staff to be self-motivated to improve their knowledge and practice. A staff member said, 'We get lots of training and if we want to do something extra we ask at supervision. We have had a lot of extra training, including attachment and training about autism that has been really good.'

There are clear, identified aims and objectives to develop further the residential

provision and these have been discussed with residential managers, staff, young people and parents. This involvement and engagement takes into account a range of views that complement prescribed residential frameworks and statutory guidance that are in place to drive better social care and educational outcomes for all young people.

## 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 that 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 that 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**

**Social care unique reference number** SC054500

**DfE registration number**

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the NMS for residential special schools.

**Type of school** Residential special school

**Number of boarders on roll** 14

**Gender of boarders** Mixed

**Age range of boarders** 11 to16

**Headteacher** Mrs Michelle Richards

**Date of previous boarding inspection** 2 February 2015

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