

Furrowfield School

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

Inspection dates	7–9 February 2017	
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

- Residential pupils make significant progress educationally, socially and emotionally. The improvement in their academic attainments as compared to day pupils is clearly evidenced.
- Staff at all levels in the residential provision as well as the wider school are exceptionally caring, and committed to the welfare of residential pupils. They have an excellent knowledge of each individual residential pupil's needs and provide wraparound support to help them develop in all areas of their lives.
- Residential pupils are highly appreciative of the care they receive. They value the time they spend with staff and form close and trusting relationships with them. Activities are stimulating, varied, and promote physical and emotional health.
- Residential pupils feel safe. Staff are skilful in ensuring harmony and calm in the residential provision, reducing the incidents of bullying and challenging behaviour. Staff work closely with other professionals in reporting and managing safeguarding issues.
- Staff and managers establish good partnership working with parents. This helps residential pupils to derive the maximum benefit from their time here. Transitions into and out of residence are sensitively managed and tailored to each individual pupil.
- Leadership and management is sound. The governing body provides good oversight of the residential provision. Some aspects of practice need further development as recent changes to the staff team bed in. However, the determination of managers to drive ongoing development provides good reason to believe that the residential

provision can achieve even greater success.

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?

- Improve the quality and detail of the head of school's report to the governing body, with particular emphasis on performance monitoring and the evaluation of restraints.
- Provide staff with individual supervision which encourages them to reflect upon their practice and so promote their professional development.
- Ensure that individual residential students' plans are regularly updated and contain relevant targets to help them achieve greater progress.

Information about this inspection

The school was given two hours' notice of the inspection. It was aligned with an inspection of the education provision. The inspector met with: the executive headteacher; head of care; a governor; residential care staff, teachers and support staff; and a number of residential pupils, individually and in groups. Seven residential students had also completed the Ofsted point-in-time survey. School policies and procedures, general records, and individual case files were scrutinised. In addition, the inspector interviewed two parents and had access to parental surveys. He also observed routines in the residential accommodation in the morning, afternoon and evening.

Inspection team

Nick Murphy

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Furrowfield 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/or mental health difficulties. The residential facility is directly attached to the school and provides care for up to 14 pupils for a maximum of four nights a week from Mondays to Thursdays. Currently, there are 14 pupils in the residential provision. The school's residential provision was last inspected in March 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Residential pupils make excellent progress. The school is able to demonstrate the difference that residence makes to pupils' schooling. For example, the attendance of residential pupils is 6% better than that of day pupils, and their academic performance is markedly better. Pupils greatly enjoy the residential experience, valuing the relationships they make with staff and their peers. One said, 'The best thing about residence is seeing your friends and spending time with the staff.' Another commented, 'Staff are class – we have some cracking banter. All the staff are fair – it's the same for everyone, there are no favourites.' Three pupils were asked to give marks out of 10 for the residential provision. Two said '10', the third said '11'.

Staff throughout the school ensure that residential pupils are effectively safeguarded. Residential pupils have a clear sense that they are safe, and trust staff to protect them from any threats, such as bullying. Leaders and managers work effectively with other agencies to share information and cooperate with plans to promote the welfare of residential pupils.

Residential staff – and, indeed, the wider staff group – consistently promote an ethos of mutual respect and consideration for others. The impact of this is clearly evident in everyday life in the residential provision. Residential pupils are extremely well behaved, acting with kindness and respect towards others. They learn, and put into practice, social skills such as tolerance, negotiation and taking turns.

The management of the residential provision is very effective. Routines are well established, providing consistency and security for residential pupils without being in any way regimented. Staffing levels ensure that there is always a sufficient number of adults on hand to provide support to residential pupils. Recent changes in the staff group have resulted in a wider range of skills and interests being brought into residence. This is further enriching the experience of residential pupils.

Staff value the opinions of residential pupils. Staff provide time to listen to what the pupils have to say, and explain carefully and patiently if what the pupils want cannot be acted upon. There are several other ways for residential pupils to express their views. Formal meetings take place on a regular basis, with requests or suggestions being considered and the decisions fed back promptly. One residential pupil said, 'The old Xbox was broken, so we asked in the meeting for another one and staff got it for us.' There is a suggestion box for residential pupils to use if they lack confidence to speak up in a group setting. Also, regular monitoring visits by a governor, and the availability of an independent person, provide additional opportunities for residential pupils to raise any issues.

Residential pupils are enthusiastic about coming here and taking part in the range of activities available to them. Good use is made of the gym, for both group games and individual activities such as circuit training. Trips out to the beach, the woods, and overnight camps provide exercise, as well as give residential pupils insights into nature and the environment. The budget for activities has recently been substantially increased, making available a wider range of activities, such as ten-pin bowling. A noteworthy development since the last inspection is the greater involvement of residential pupils in

activities within the community. For example, one pupil attends cadets twice weekly, while another began training with a local football club to get fit and is now a regular in the team.

The quality of care and support

Good

Staff have a very thorough knowledge of each residential pupil. They understand their history, family circumstances, and their individual needs and vulnerabilities. Staff plan the induction of pupils into residence very carefully, placing introductions to suit the pupil and their family. This ensures that any anxiety is minimised, and pupils can start to make friendships before committing fully to living in residence.

Close working between residential and education staff enables a consistency of approach to each pupil, while maintaining a clear distinction between the school day and the evening in residence. For example, poor behaviour in school does not result in a sanction in the residential provision. When pupils arrive for tea, they start the evening with a 'clean slate'. A residential pupil said, 'If you are bad in school it doesn't get carried over into residence. When you come across at tea time, you can start again.' The majority of staff work within education as well. This enables them to provide skilled support to pupils when they are doing their homework. A parent said, 'My son does better at his school work as he does his homework here, with the support of staff.' A residential pupil agreed, saying, 'If I had to do my homework at home, I just wouldn't do it.' School resources, such as the IT suite, are also available out of school hours. Staff take every opportunity to help pupils learn, even informally. For example, staff play counting games with residential pupils who struggle with numeracy.

Staff maintain case files on each residential pupil. These include placement plans which set out the individual needs of each pupil and how to meet those needs in day-to-day living. Some of these plans are not up to date, and do not set targets or objectives which would promote a residential pupil's development in a more consistent and effective way.

The school is effective in promoting the health and well-being of residential pupils. Food is plentiful and nourishing, with fresh fruit always available. Staff model a culture of physical activity, encouraging residential pupils who may be reluctant to take some kind of exercise. This not only benefits their health, but enhances their self-esteem. For example, one residential pupil, who less than six months ago could not swim, can now cover two lengths.

Additional support is in place to address the emotional needs of residential pupils. Twice-weekly visits by a psychotherapist enable direct work to be done with residential pupils as well as providing consultation to staff. Staff work in close liaison with health professionals, for example, attending meetings with consultants to review a residential pupil's medication. In one case, the headteacher attended weekly meetings for a residential pupil who was hospitalised following a near-fatal accident out of school. The commitment of the headteacher and other staff to reintegrating the pupil back into residence as soon as possible was praised by the pupil's consultant as being instrumental in his recovery.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

The school's safeguarding policies are up to date and well understood by staff. Staff attend regular refresher training to keep their knowledge current, for example, in areas such as radicalisation and e-safety. The inspector witnessed a presentation in school assembly (involving pupils) on sexting. Pupils listened attentively and clearly took on board the points being made.

There have been no incidents of residential pupils going missing for some time. The close support provided by staff, as well as the sheer enjoyment that pupils derive from being here, are important factors in this achievement. Nevertheless, should such an incident happen, there are clear protocols in place for staff to follow.

An individual risk assessment on each residential pupil identifies what makes them vulnerable and the strategies in place to manage these risks. Where there are concerns about an individual's safety outside the school, such as within the family, staff take full part in multi-agency meetings to agree and implement protection plans. Because of their role, residential staff are often able to provide information which no other professionals are able to do. This is important in tailoring any plan more closely to the residential pupils' needs and so enhance their safety.

Staff are particularly skilled in managing the behaviour of residential pupils and creating a harmonious, orderly, constructive atmosphere. At the dinner table, staff will discreetly prompt a residential pupil if they are behaving inappropriately, promoting good manners and teaching important social skills. Staff are alert to any developing tensions within the group and act swiftly to intervene. They use negotiation and counselling techniques to help residential pupils understand their behaviour and arrive at alternative ways of dealing with frustration or distress. Not only does this approach maintain good relationships between residential pupils, but it also helps them to develop greater self-control and an appreciation of the needs and feelings of others. As a result, bullying in the residence is effectively controlled. A residential pupil said, 'Bullying? Yes, there is some, but when it happens staff step in straight away and sort it out. Because of this, I feel safe.'

Parents appreciate and acknowledge the benefits for their children of being in residence. One said, 'Residence has kept him safe, and given him boundaries, guidance, and security.' Another said, 'My son's behaviour has really changed for the better, his attitude in general is so improved, the structure and routine here really helps him.'

Each residential pupil has a bespoke behaviour support plan. It identifies what situations might trigger challenging behaviour and the specific strategies which work in managing it. Staff strive to avoid the use of physical restraint. Other techniques, such as brief 'time-outs', are often effective in helping a residential pupil reflect on their actions and return them to more acceptable behaviour. Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the use of restraint within the residential provision since the last inspection. Although each incident is well documented, and demonstrably appropriate and necessary, there is no evaluation of overall patterns and trends. An opportunity is, therefore, missed to gain a better understanding of why restraints have increased and how staff can work to reduce them.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

All leaders and managers are committed to the welfare of residential pupils and have the

highest aspirations for them. The head of care works in tandem with the head of school and executive headteacher to provide and maintain a high standard of care. The school recognises the value of the residential provision and the contribution it makes to the achievement and progress of pupils. Therefore, there is no sense that residence plays a lesser role in the lives of pupils than the wider school.

Staff are experienced and skilled in working with children with complex needs. The great majority are qualified, while those who are not are enrolled on suitable courses of study. At night, three members of staff sleep in the building to provide support to pupils should they need it. In addition, senior staff are available on call in an emergency, providing further assurance that pupils are safe.

Staff receive regular performance appraisals. There is also group supervision for staff by the head of care. This is helpful in ensuring consistency of approach and passing over important information in relation to policies, or the circumstances of individual pupils. However, such a model does not provide staff with the opportunity to reflect on their practice and so develop their skills further.

The head of care provides termly reports to the governing body. These are in addition to the report of the head of school. The school's self-evaluation of its compliance with national minimum standards needs to be more explicit and detailed, in order to give assurance to governors that basic expectations are being achieved. A governor visits the residential provision termly. He has established excellent relationships with residential pupils, and spends time talking to them as well as inspecting records and checking the premises. The quality of these visits, and of the reports produced, enables leaders to have confidence that the welfare and safeguarding of residential pupils continues to be promoted.

Senior staff work very effectively with parents. They provide support to them when they are having difficulties with their children. They also provide reassurance should any parent have concerns about their child's safety or happiness. This is particularly important when pupils are making the transition into, or out of, residence.

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 the '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 exceed the standard of good and result 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 if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

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	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	14
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Mrs Michelle Richards (executive headteacher)
Date of previous boarding inspection	2 March 2016
Telephone number	0191 495 4700
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