

Falconer School

Falconer School, Falconer Road, Bushey WD23 3AT

Inspection dates	21/02/2017 to 23/02/2017	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
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 impact of the residential experience is extremely beneficial to children. It enhances the personal and social development of the children. They positively thrive at the school in relation to their starting points and make significant progress in all aspects of their lives.
- Relationships between the children and the staff build on partnership working between the day school and the residential provision. The children receive care from an established, familiar team, the members of which are consistent in their approach to the children. The staff respect individual identities, behaviours and characters. They use positive reinforcement and celebration of difference to allow children's individual personalities to shine.
- The staff are skilled at implementing behaviour management strategies. They are successful in using de-escalation, and are increasing their awareness of when behaviours may escalate. This results in a reduction of incidents from the time when each child begins to access the residential provision.
- The residential provision offers an exceptionally supportive and nurturing environment. The children thrive, from strong relationships with staff, and feel pride about their places in the school. They enjoy the residential experience, benefiting socially and academically, from the set routines and clear boundaries.
- The children feel safe in the school. They can identify staff members with whom they can share concerns. When concerns are identified, the school shares these with appropriate agencies.
- A stable staff team delivers imaginative care with enthusiasm and vigour. Staff go

above and beyond to promote positive outcomes for the children.

- There are no shortfalls against the national minimum standards. Three recommendations are made to improve some aspects of the record-keeping.

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 all of the children's records are kept up to date and include all relevant details.
- Ensure that each child's record is clear and details all of the action is taken following the referral of potential child protection concerns, to protect and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensure that an assessment is completed regarding all potential risks to the children and the staff.

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 held discussions with the designated officer for safeguarding, staff, parents, the headteacher and children. The inspection included scrutiny of documents, policies and observation of practice and care routines. Four 'Parent View' responses were obtained at the inspection.

Inspection team

Natalie Burton

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

This is a maintained, residential special school for boys who have 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 March 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

The children are very positive about the school. They enjoy the wide variety of activities, spending time with their peers and the staff, and they feel welcomed, accepted and valued. Their individuality is respected, and each small achievement is celebrated. The staff are motivated and skilled and enjoy their roles. It was evident during the inspection that their enthusiasm and energy have a positive impact on the children's engagement and their relationships with the staff. This supports the children to improve their behaviours, develop positive self-confidence and engage in new opportunities.

The children's safety is given priority, and incidents are minimal. The children are comfortable and confident in the provision. The parents have confidence in the staff to prioritise children's safety. The staff carefully balance safety in a non-oppressive way to ensure that children enjoy a variety of life experiences when they are on their overnight stays. The children respect all of the staff, and the staffing hierarchy is not evident in the presence of the children. This reflects the ethos of equality across the provision. Peer relationships are strong, and staff support children to understand each other's differences.

The children enjoy spending time with the staff and benefit from their support and direction. They have confidence in the head of care, whom they describe as 'trustworthy'. This is because they have raised requests and minor grumbles to him, and he has taken immediate action when possible, for example, in requests for key worker changes. The children benefit from a stimulating programme of activities with ample choices and they are engaged and motivated. They develop their life skills through a well-structured programme and they develop new abilities such as, ironing, sewing, washing, cooking and planning a public transport route.

The children make exceptional progress in all areas of their academic and emotional development from their starting points. The effective data captured and analysis evidences the children's attainment and their behavioural changes. The staff provide personalised care, which means that the residential stays further enhance the children's progress.

Leaders and management are passionate about the quality of the school and have high aspirations for the children. They have addressed the recommendations made at the last inspection. There have been improvements to the medication system and recording, with training provided to the staff, and new recording systems are now in place. The head of care has updated the risk assessments to ensure that all known information is assessed and action is taken to reduce the identified hazard. The head of care has ensured that all of the staff have received training in physical intervention, and a new recording format ensures that the required details are provided.

Feedback from the parents is extremely positive. The parents spoken to during the inspection are unanimous in their recognition of the benefits of the school and of the positive impact on children's lives. One parent's view of a staff member is, 'The time she has for me and him [her child] has made such a huge difference. It has been fantastic. He has come on [in] leaps and bounds.' Another parent said, 'They keep the boundaries [and] routine and support him to develop his life skills. He is a different boy now, doing

things for himself and the things he has learnt. His mannerism, he is very polite. A few years ago it was different.' A third parent said, 'He is turning into an amazing young man. To see him now, I am so proud of him.'

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision and the care is outstanding. The children make good progress as a result of the quality of care that they receive. They receive care that is linked to their individual needs. The children are treated with respect by the staff who provide excellent role models. This helps to teach the children how to treat others with respect, and this was noticeable throughout this inspection. The children confirmed that they feel valued and respected by the staff, who provide warm, nurturing care that supports the children's emotional resilience while they are away from home. One child, when asked to describe his experience of the residential provision, said, 'It is majestic.' Another child said, 'I wouldn't be able to have the confidence to speak to you, if it wasn't for here and the staff.'

The children's introduction to the residential provision is well planned and individualised to meet their individual needs. This includes extended day visits, with an increase to stay overnight that is at a pace that suits the child and the parents. The staff provide a booklet, which informs the children and the parents of what to expect from the residential provision. It provides them with information before they stay overnight.

The staff provide a wide range of exciting activities that the children thoroughly enjoy. The children access an array of exciting opportunities, enabling them to develop new interests and broaden their horizons. These include cooking, arts and crafts, residential trips away as part of a group, board games, playing music and playing in woodlands. The children are equally encouraged to think of new activities as part of their life skills. During the inspection, one child led an activity that he had designed. A majority of the other children joined in and it was a great success. These opportunities provide the children with a sense of achievement and create opportunities for social relationships to develop.

The children's plans are detailed and thorough. The staff develop these with the children and agree personal long-term targets. These are in areas such as the child displaying consistent behaviour in school and the residential provision, and reintegrating into their home environment when they are ready. To support the children to reach these targets, they also have shorter weekly targets, for example, to join in different activities rather than to stay on a games station. This helps the children to reach their ultimate goals, reintegrate with their families and progress their social and emotional development.

The residential provision is warm, clean and well presented. There are photographs and displays of the children's achievements and activities and personal pictures. The children learn to keep their rooms and communal areas tidy and take pride in themselves and their surroundings. This was evident during the time when some of the children showed the inspector around the provision and school, and also showed how proud they are of their home. Some children refer to the provision as 'home'. The staff actively seek the views and feelings of the children. There are ample opportunities for the children to share their ideas and views, including, weekly individual key worker sessions and group

meetings. The records demonstrate that the majority of suggestions are acted upon, for example, menu, food and activity choices. The children stated that they feel listened to. One child said, 'When a new person is looking to come into residential, the staff always ask us first to gain our opinion.'

The children and their parents can see the positive benefit of the residential provision on their educational progress. Those children who have previously had unsuccessful education placements have overcome barriers with the support of the residential provision.

The children enjoy an array of food when staying here. The staff involve the children in menu planning and balance their likes alongside healthy choices. The staff and children all eat together. This is a calm, relaxed and enjoyable time. The children's manners and willingness to ensure that everyone, including visitors, has what they need to enjoy the meal are impeccable. As a result, the children eat healthy meals and they are provided with the opportunity to try new foods.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

The children said that they feel safe. The school's arrangement to ensure that the children are safe in its care is good. There are some areas in which practice could improve, and these primarily relate to recording. For example, when concerns have been raised with external agencies, not all records detail clearly all of the action taken and the outcome. While there is minimal impact on the children, as the staff have taken appropriate action, this does not ensure that records demonstrate all concerns raised to promote the welfare of children. There have been no allegations against staff since the last inspection. The staff receive regular safeguarding training to refresh their understanding of the procedure to be followed if an allegation was to be made.

The children do not cite bullying as a concern in the provision. Direct staff supervision of children ensures the children's whereabouts and safety. The children have a range of 'safe people' that they can tell if they have any concerns, and some of the children spoken to could identify a range of people that they can talk to, including the head of care, whom they describe as 'trustworthy' as he acts on their concerns. The children can speak with the independent visitor who spends good-quality time with them. This helps to build relationships and to provide an opportunity for the children if they would like to speak with him.

There are no incidents of children leaving the site without permission. This demonstrates the children's clear understanding of the rules, and how stimulated they are outside of the school day. Positive role modelling by senior peers has resulted in a culture in which the children adhere to basic rules. There are no concerns in regard to child sexual exploitation. The staff have a good understanding of the signs to be aware of, in particular as the children go home regularly.

The children are clear about the expectations in relation to their behaviour. The staff implement behaviour management strategies positively and proactively. The children feel that the rules in the residential provision are fair. They are keen to gain daily points in

line with the behaviour management system for positive behaviour, and some children reach the top level, which is platinum. This is because the staff focus on the children's positive behaviour, diffusion and the prevention of incidents, and on enabling the children to be stimulated during their stays. This helps the children to regulate their responses. There have been no physical interventions and there have been minimal incidents. This helps the children to manage their anger more positively. This builds confidence and emotional resilience.

The staff have a good understanding of potential risks to the children, and they are proactive in their approach to reduce risk. Detailed risk assessments inform areas of care, and the staff understand children's individual risk profiles. However, on occasion, a lack of additional action, such as reinforcing the whistle-blowing policy to all the staff, has not been considered. While there is minimal impact on the children, not all potential hazards have been identified.

Recruitment procedures in place ensure that all staff working with the children, or visitors, are suitable. The children are actively involved in the recruitment process. They conduct their own interviews with applicants and provide feedback to the senior leadership team. All of the staff's family members who live on site have a written conduct agreement. These comprehensive measures result in a school that is safe for adults and children.

The manager responsible for the premises ensures that the premises and grounds are well maintained and that there is good risk awareness and risk management. Good systems ensure that checks are completed within timescales. This protects the children from hazards and environmental dangers.

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

The service is effectively led by a strong central management team. The headteacher, head of care and staff form a strong and stable staff team. There is a clear culture of high expectations of the children and the staff, which promotes purposeful achievement for all children. The joined-up school, residential management and staff teams provide effective leadership and care across the provision.

One governor has responsibility for the residential provision. He visits regularly, meets with the children and is passionate about the provision. He identifies and reviews shortfalls. His reports are informative and reflective. The contribution of the active governing body is integral to the children's success and ongoing development. One governor said, 'The pastoral element and the relationships that the staff and children make [are] fantastic. They are developing into well-rounded young men.'

The management team is creative in its use of funds to shape a service that is responsive to the developing needs of the children.

The stable, motivated and supportive residential team is a hugely valuable resource. The staff have the energy, skills, personal qualities and experience to enhance their work with children. They are extremely resourceful in maximising and seeking out new ways to help the children, not only in school but at home with their families. All of the staff are clear about the aims of the provision. They deliver purposeful care, which reflects the

ethos of the school. The management team ensures that the staff receive appropriate training and development opportunities. This enables the staff to consistently meet and adapt to the children's changing needs. The staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisal and have all achieved the appropriate qualification to enhance their work with children. Team morale is good, and roles are defined with clear accountability. The staff skills are utilised well. The staff take pride in their individual task management. This results in all staff working well to provide a safe, welcoming and comfortable environment. All of the staff describe the leadership team as supportive, passionate, approachable and present and accessible to them at all times.

There have been no complaints in respect of the residential provision. Clear and detailed procedures are in place. The headteacher and the governors ensure that the policies are up to date and suitable. They are available on the website for current and prospective parents. Records are generally well maintained. However, on occasion, not all known information is consistently updated on all of the children's paperwork. The impact on the children is minimal due to the staff's in-depth knowledge and understanding of the children and the effective communication between all staff.

The school works well with external agencies and families. The families' feedback about the school is positive. One parent said, 'I can't thank them enough. They have been absolutely amazing. I don't know where we would be without them. They are there for you as well, not just your child.' Another parent said, 'It's fantastic. All I have wanted was help, to actually have people who went, "We believe you." We see these differences, and they have worked with me to help my child become a positive member of society.'

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 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 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 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	10
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Mr Jonathon Kemp
Date of previous boarding inspection	03/03/2016
Telephone number	020 895 02505
Email address	head@falconer.herts.sch.uk

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