

Falconer School

Falconer Road, Bushey WD23 3AT

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This maintained residential special school for children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties provides education for day and boarding pupils. The residential unit is School House, which provides flexible boarding for up to 10 children between Monday and Friday. Evening-only support is available for a small number of pupils. The last inspection of the residential provision was conducted in February 2018.

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 January 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 19 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- The quality of the individualised care is exemplary.
- Children make excellent progress from their starting points.
- The staff work exceptionally well with families and children.
- Parents are extremely happy with the progress that their children are making.
- Two children who have now moved on attained excellent exam results, and one of those children received a prestigious school award.
- The children have strong attachments to the staff and feel valued and listened to.
- Children develop impressive new skills, which significantly improve their prospects for the future.
- The residential provision provides an impressive variety of enrichment activities for the children.
- Due to the staff's unwavering consistent positive engagement with the children, there have been no physical interventions for some time and no significant sanctions.
- The staff are highly skilled at praising the children and consistently rewarding good behaviour.
- The staff genuinely care for the children and provide outstanding support to help them to progress in all areas of their lives.
- Excellent communication between the school staff and the residential staff enables highly effective information sharing and planning.
- The challenging behaviours that children present at school are rarely evident in the residential provision.
- The manager is passionate about making positive changes for children and helping them to realise their potential.
- Highly skilled, consistent and dedicated core staff work exceptionally well together.
- Social workers are impressed with the care provided by the staff and the excellent communication.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The toilet and bathroom areas require renovating.
- The manager needs to demonstrate how training and other qualifications meet the same competencies as a relevant level 3 qualification for each of the staff working in the residential provision.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Renovate the toilet and bathroom areas.
- Match the competencies of individuals' training and qualifications to ensure that staff hold the equivalent of a relevant level 3 qualification, and take action to fill any gaps in knowledge.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The quality of individualised care for children is exemplary. The staff provide exceptionally high-level parenting that follows a child-centred approach. This makes a positive difference to children's lives. Helping the children progress and improve their future life chances is at the core of all practice in the residential provision. The staff celebrate the achievements of each child and are diligent in making sure that this achievement is recognised and rewarded. Consistent positive reinforcement teaches the children to accept their achievements and begin to face any challenges with increased confidence. Consequently, children's self-esteem increases and they develop a strong sense of identity. The children cherish their time in the residential provision. The children said that the residential provision has made a huge difference to them.

The children have secure and strong attachments to the staff and feel valued and listened to. The children's views are regularly sought during children's meetings. The children contribute to all aspects of the residential provision.

Since the last inspection, the manager has developed an excellent tool to track and review the academic and behavioural progress of each child. It is evident that children who stay in the residential provision make excellent progress from their starting points. The manager has fully addressed all of the recommendations from the last inspection. Placement plans have improved to a very high standard and there are substantial improvements to the residential environment.

The manager works well with the careers leader, reviewing children's career options and supporting them to attend college interviews. Two children who have now moved on attained excellent exam results and one of those children received a prestigious school award. Both of these children are now successfully attending college on their chosen courses. The staff and the manager maintain ongoing contact with the children who have moved on. This contact provides the children with significant and invaluable support.

Many of the children faced challenges at school prior to their admission to the residential provision. These challenges included non-engagement in lessons, low self-confidence and difficulties in regulating their behaviour. For some children, these issues were having an impact on their family life. At the outset of the children's residential experience, the staff and the manager identify specific targets for each child to achieve. These targets are broken down into attainable steps that are regularly reviewed in a child-focused way. This enables the children to see the changes that they are making and how these changes can be maintained. This has resulted in exceptional results for the children. They consistently improve their confidence and academic progress. The children's progress is having a significant positive impact on their time at home with their families.

The staff work exceptionally well with the children's families. The staff provide important support and advice as needed and work in partnership with them. This means that relationships at home greatly improve. One child has been able to return home due to the exceptional progress that he has made with his behaviour at school and at home. This child said that the staff have helped him 'incredibly' and that staying in the residential provision has 'helped greatly at home'.

Parents are very pleased with the progress that their children are making. A parent said, 'The residential provision is like an additional family. I can see the difference in my son. He is much calmer now and is managing his anger better at home.'

The staff motivate the children to engage with projects on the school grounds, such as activities on the motorbike track and in the Majestic Gardens. This participation enables the children to learn new skills that may help them in their future careers. The staff recognise the importance of providing interesting activities in which the children can positively invest their time and energy. The residential provision offers a wide variety of enrichment activities for the children to engage with.

The staff provide an impressive life-skills programme for the children. As part of this work, the children were encouraged to plan an evening out with an agreed budget. This was very successful, as the children planned and managed this exceptionally well. Such experiences help the children to build skills for the future and give them confidence to make their own decisions.

The residential provision has a warm and friendly family atmosphere. All of the staff sit down for dinner with the children. The staff engage the children in conversations and encourage their contribution to clearing-up duties and tasks in the residential provision. The routines are consistent and familiar, which means that children feel safe. The children said that they can talk to the staff and that the staff help them to manage relationships with each other, if needed. A child said, 'I have never regretted my decision to come here.' Another child said, '[The residential staff] are the best staff in the whole school.'

The physical environment has improved significantly since the last inspection. However, the toilet and bathroom area for the children is dated and clinical and requires renovating. It does not reflect the rest of the residential provision, which is warm, well decorated and bright.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

The children are, and feel, extremely safe and protected. They see the residential provision as a haven, where they are listened to and respected. Effective safeguarding practice is a priority for the staff. They are extremely skilful at noticing any changes in the children that may lead to issues and concerns and act quickly and expertly to address them.

There have been no significant incidents since the last inspection, because of the staff's persistent positive engagement with the children. The manager of the residential provision is the deputy safeguarding lead and works effectively with the designated lead if there are any matters to address. All records are clear and comprehensive and the liaison with other agencies is outstanding. This ensures that the children are safe.

The manager and the staff are vigilant when dealing with matters that may affect the children and their stability. The staff act quickly to put into place any additional support that is needed. The staff are extremely child focused and child centred in their practice.

There have been no physical interventions for some time and no significant sanctions. The children use a points system that is extremely effective and is improving their self-confidence, behaviour and ability to work together. The children know in detail how this system works and are keen to maintain their good behaviour. They have a tremendous sense of pride and achievement.

The staff are highly skilled at praising the children and they consistently reward good behaviour. The focus of behaviour management practice is positive reinforcement. The children receive important consistent messages of nurture and support from the staff. This highly effective practice is at the core of the work with the children and underpins building their self-confidence.

The staff talk through with the children any incidents that have happened at school, helping them to break these incidents down and look at what happened and why. This important work helps the children to reflect and start to take control of their behaviour. There is excellent communication between the school staff and the residential staff. Together, they expertly share information about children's behaviour and form joint plans as needed. Policies are in place to counter bullying. Staff monitor the children's relationships effectively and are quick to intervene early when an issue emerges. This demonstrates excellent preventative work and forward thinking.

Risk assessments are up to date and comprehensive and clearly identify potential hazards. Although the children present with challenging behaviours at school, it is very rare that these behaviours are evident in the residential provision.

Social workers are very happy with the care provided by the staff and the excellent communication. A social worker said, 'The staff are second to none and go above and beyond their roles.'

The staff have successfully supported a child to undertake a specific piece of work. This has significantly improved his outcomes and has prevented any further unnecessary involvement in the criminal justice system. The professional involved said, 'I couldn't fault the staff. They are all really engaged with the children. They are breaking down barriers. The children seem so happy.'

Children do not go missing from the residential provision. A clear protocol is in place to guide the staff should such an incident occur. Staff understand the needs of the children very well and supervise them closely, making sure that they are safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is an excellent role model for his staff. He is forward thinking and innovative. The manager strives to improve the residential provision and enrich experiences for the children. This means that the children receive exceptionally high-quality care. The manager is skilled at adapting plans and support for each child, taking into account their needs. This has an incredibly positive impact on each child's journey. Concerning behaviours reduce, which enables the children to grow in confidence.

The consistent and highly skilled core staff work exceptionally well together. The staff work openly and honestly to address any issues and plan their shifts. The staff feel well supported and valued. Supervision is of a high standard and is meaningful and effective. Core staff have recently achieved a suitable level 3 qualification and have undertaken relevant training. However, the manager needs to demonstrate how the qualifications of the part-time staff from the school meet the same competencies as a suitable level 3 qualification.

The manager regularly attends and provides feedback at the governors' meetings. He welcomes the involvement of the link governor who visits the home every week. The management oversight of the residential provision is robust and thorough. The manager works closely with the link governor, taking on board advice for improvements. The manager undertakes self-evaluation to ensure that strengths and weaknesses are recognised and addressed. He values the opinions and input of his staff, encouraging them to develop and grow in their roles.

A change of headteacher at the school has not had an impact on the residential provision, which continues to be exceptionally well managed. The manager has excellent oversight of all aspects of his service.

The senior management team discusses potential new referrals with the school staff and the residential staff team. Clear and careful transition planning in partnership with the local authority and parents ensures that the children are welcomed and able to settle in the residential provision.

The manager actively encourages the involvement of an independent advocate for the children. He recognises that the children need to be able to talk openly and independently if they wish. The advocate is welcomed and has built good relationships with the children. The children know that he is available if they wish to talk to him.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC056408

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Paul Clair

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Debbie Young, social care inspector (lead)



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