

# **Inspection report**

## **Farney Close School**

**Independent special school**

**DfES ref no: 938/6217**

**Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002**

**Dates of inspection: 8 – 11 May 2006**

## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY**

### **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

### **Information about the school**

Farney Close is a weekly-boarding residential school, set in 33 acres of land and located close to the A23 at Bolney, West Sussex. The proprietor, Farney Close School Ltd, is a registered charity and is a non-profit making organisation. The school is registered for up to 78 boys and girls aged 11 - 16 experiencing severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are 62 pupils on roll with boys outnumbering girls by more than two to one. The pupils attend from 31 different local authorities. They mostly come from London or the South East, but some come from as far away as Dorset and Southampton.

All pupils are resident at the school and all have a statement of special educational need. Many pupils have additional needs such as autism, moderate learning difficulties and dyslexia. About a third of pupils have been in trouble with the police and about a half has had some mental health support. Pupils have experienced many emotional traumas prior to being admitted and, as a consequence of their behaviour, have been excluded from mainstream schools.

There are no Year 7 pupils at present and most pupils are admitted part way through Year 8 or in Year 9. Seven pupils are from minority ethnic groups; these are of black Caribbean or black African origin. No pupils speak English as an additional language and 12 pupils are in the care of their local authorities.

It is the school's belief that *'a sound academic and social education will provide confidence in adult life'*. Its vision is that *'all pupils should have the opportunity to receive an education which supports each of them to become the best version of themselves'*.

### **Summary of main findings**

Farney Close is an outstanding school. It fulfils its aims very well indeed and significantly increases pupils' life chances. Pupils' academic achievements and the progress they make in their personal development are excellent. This is because teaching is of high quality so that pupils learn rapidly. The school is highly successful in making pupils feel good about themselves and instils in them a 'can do' attitude. All staff have a thorough understanding of the pupils' needs and the care for pupils is exceptional. As a result of the excellent leadership and management by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and care manager, this is a highly ordered, calm school. Teamwork is paramount, high levels of respect by pupils are apparent and relationships are excellent. The curriculum is good and activities to enrich the

curriculum are excellent. The school recognises that it needs to expand the range of vocational opportunities and is taking steps to do this from September 2006.

#### **What the school does well:**

- it significantly aids pupils' self-confidence, helps them to believe in themselves and raises their self-esteem;
- it helps the pupils to get on with one another and builds in them a sense of trust so that the relationships formed between them are excellent;
- it ensures that the pupils learn most effectively and achieve well;
- all staff, including residential staff, manage pupils in a very consistent way so that the pupils are very clear about the staff's high expectations of them and the boundaries that exist;
- it is a highly organised establishment which is extremely well run; it adheres to its policies consistently, is forward thinking and is always seeking to do the best for its pupils; and
- the very high level of care is exemplified in the concern to improve pupils' health, welfare and safety, ensuring that they enjoy lessons thoroughly and school life in general. As a result they are very well prepared for the next stage of life.

#### **What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:**

- provide parents with up-to-date results of national tests and examinations.

#### **What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002**

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

#### **Next Steps**

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- expand the range of vocational opportunities through making use of facilities within the community as well as exploring the development of on-site courses;
- use the school's points system to award pupils for meeting their personal behaviour targets in each lesson;

- use the interactive whiteboards effectively to increase even more the interest and involvement of pupils in lessons and ensure that pupils have greater opportunities to research using the internet; and
- ensure that the school complies with its policy for collective worship.

# **COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

## **1. The quality of education provided by the school**

### **The quality of the curriculum**

The school's curriculum is good. It meets the needs and interests of pupils well and prepares them for the next stage of life. It also meets the requirements of each pupil's statement of special educational need and helps the pupils make exceptional progress by the end of Year 11. National performance data shows that the pupils in this school achieve highly over the time they are in the school.

A very good range of academic award-bearing courses is undertaken and there are vocational courses in travel and tourism and in junior sports leadership. A few pupils undertake courses at a local college; one is taught motor vehicle maintenance and another construction. However, the range of vocational opportunities is fairly narrow. The school has plans to expand this range. Discussions are underway with a local training institution and colleges so that the pupils can make better use of local facilities. In addition, more could be done to expand the range of vocational courses offered on site.

There is a clear policy and detailed schemes of work for all subjects which are regularly reviewed. A particular strength is the subject leaders' evaluations of all aspects of their subjects; these effectively inform planning and revision of the programmes.

The hours for teaching are near to those recommended and are supplemented by an excellent range of activities after school, as well as homework time. The 24-hour curriculum supports pupils' personal and academic development. Excellent account is taken of pupils' special educational needs and particularly their emotional, social and behavioural needs. The school has expanded its staffing so as to provide support and special programmes for pupils with specific learning and language needs. The impact of this has been extremely positive. Staff work very hard to ensure that all pupils' needs are met. They work together in teams and plan together. Along with the significant contribution made by the speech and language therapist and dyslexia teacher, this ensures that programmes are very well tailored to pupils' needs.

Good account is taken of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and much has been done to ensure that these are developed in lessons across the curriculum. The impact of the support for pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through the 'progress unit' lessons has been remarkable. The opportunities pupils have to use and develop information and communication technology (ICT) skills has also improved considerably. However, pupils do not have sufficient access to the internet in lessons and this limits their opportunities to research. This is because of the school's concern over ensuring a high level of internet security. Provision in art and design has improved well since the last inspection, when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. Provision is now good.

The school provides a very good programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) which includes citizenship, sex and relationships education and work-related learning. Work experience and careers advice are particular strengths of the school. Aspects of PSHE are often reinforced through other activities and there are well planned links between PSHE and other subjects. Pupils' independence, choice, decision-making and reflection are important parts of most activities and these develop their personal autonomy.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

The quality of teaching is high. The teaching in many lessons is good and in a significant proportion it is outstanding. This ensures that pupils achieve exceptionally well. What is more, they thoroughly enjoy their lessons and think that learning is fun. They often concentrate remarkably well, have positive attitudes and rise very well to the challenges set in lessons. At the time of the last inspection lessons were too long and some pupils lost interest. Lesson length is now timely and pupils sustain interest and concentration.

The school's monitoring systems have contributed strongly to the quality of teaching. Where issues are identified from lesson observations, staff are effectively supported. However, not all subject leaders undertake full systematic lesson observations which would inform them in detail of the quality of teaching and learning.

Staff have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They also know the pupils' particular individual needs very well. This reflects the excellent relationships formed with pupils and detailed knowledge of their backgrounds, especially through home visits. These insights are further strengthened by the good quality assessments made of pupils when they first join the school and the ongoing assessments which inform the teachers' plans. The school has a clear baseline from which to set targets and measure progress.

Staff have very high expectations of what the pupils can achieve and they respond extremely well to these. Teachers modify the curriculum skilfully and plan tasks well to reflect the pupils' needs. Varied teaching strategies are used to motivate and engage pupils' interests. However, in lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, full account is not always taken of the visual, auditory or kinaesthetic approaches through which pupils might learn best. Resources for learning are very good. Although the school has a small number of interactive whiteboards which can help to bring learning alive, these are not used to full effect.

The teamwork between all adults who work in lessons is very good. Teaching assistants are well prepared. They have excellent relationships with the pupils and know them well so that they are able to assist with the teaching of individual programmes and the management of behaviour. As a result of the effective planning, clear expectations and the highly consistent management of behaviour, pupils make excellent progress.

Towards the end of lessons pupils are assessed in relation to how they have performed. They are keen to achieve their 'points' for this but their opportunity to say how well they have done varies from lesson to lesson. The way the points are

awarded misses an opportunity to make an assessment in relation to pupils' specific behavioural targets as these are awarded more in relation to following lesson 'rules' and for general behaviour.

Each pupil has an individual education plan (IEP), which charts clearly the progress made in targeted areas since admission. Evaluations are regularly made of progress in all curriculum areas and this information is used for termly reviews of IEPs, annual reviews and end of year reports. Records are extremely well organised and provide a complete overview of pupils' achievements and progress.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. The social and moral aspects are outstanding; pupils' spiritual development is good and their cultural development is satisfactory.

Pupils make significant gains in their ability to get on with one another and live in a community, to behave sensibly in class and around the school and to take part in lessons. The school helps them to believe in themselves through a culture of respect and of valuing pupils. This was encapsulated when one Year 11 pupil said: *'Everyone has boosted me up'*.

Pupils are encouraged to understand right from wrong through sensible, well-constructed policies and through events and topics, such as assembly, that reflect their needs and experiences. The focused approach to moral education helps pupils develop a highly developed moral sense. It also helps to develop long lasting, relationships because pupils learn to value qualities such as trust, reliability and honesty within their peer group. The rewards and sanctions system is a great motivator. The points system enables pupils to evaluate their performance in a lesson against four expectations, including behaviour, and pupils are very keen to maintain a high score. Junior Sports Leader Award sessions demonstrated pupils' understanding of fair play and they have many opportunities to undertake teamwork through their many sporting activities.

Exciting activities give pupils stimulating and challenging opportunities to develop very useful social skills. The 24-hour curriculum ensures this development is continuous. Mealtimes are highly organised and a great social occasion; they give pupils a chance to meet with friends from different houses. The organisation of the houses, as identified in the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) report, is exemplary. Students have responsibilities within their house communities. All activities are well planned with due regard to risk assessment and give a range of options so that pupils and staff can extend their skills in interesting activities such as fishing. Excellent role models from the teaching, support and care staff are appreciated by pupils and influence their attitude toward each other and adults. The school takes positive action to reduce anti-social behaviour and this is particularly

successful. 'Cool-down' areas such as the support room and an effective restraint policy give strategies and space for reducing tensions that may arise between pupils.

The experiences of pupils from non-white cultural backgrounds are used sensitively to help others develop tolerance, respect and understanding of the values and beliefs of other cultures. Work in food studies, music, art and geography often focuses on the lifestyle of other countries. The team has worked hard with the catering manager to enrich the school menu by introducing dishes from a wider cultural background. Displays in history and religious education use wall displays and hangings to celebrate different cultures, but miss the opportunity to label and explain their origins. Resources are being developed to enhance pupils' experiences of citizenship. The School Forum illustrates democracy at work.

Support for pupils' spirituality is growing rapidly as pupils have increasing opportunities to reflect on their personal growth and to strengthen their self-belief. Although the school mention an act of daily worship in their prospectus there is no opportunity for this. The dyslexia department has developed excellent 'mind maps' that reflect specific targets. These maps provide a basis for pupils to reflect on and evaluate how they have improved. Certificates presented in assembly encourage pupils' pride in their achievement. Some handle this recognition better than others. A representative of West Sussex Youth Offending Team visits the school regularly to provide further individual and small-group sessions that encourage pupils to understand their innermost thoughts and feelings. In a similar way, individual work with the school counsellors and therapists supports and consolidates the 'feel good factor' being developed in the school.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

### **3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

This is an outstanding aspect of the school's provision. All policies and practice in these areas are a result of exemplary collaboration between teachers, care staff, support staff and wider stakeholders, including governors. Welfare issues are thoroughly researched and analysed. Outcomes are used to produce an action plan and rigorous, yet realistic, targets for future improvement. Smoking is one issue where collaboration with parents, pupils and staff enables staff to collect information and plan to reduce the percentage of pupils addicted to this habit. The excellent range of sporting and fitness activities ensures exercise is part of the pupils' approach to healthy living.

Close supervision of pupils throughout the school day ensures potential problems are monitored and defused. The active participation of care staff during leisure activities at break time, lunch breaks and after school ensures that policies such as anti-bullying and health and safety are extremely well monitored. The behaviour policy matches the school ethos. Staff expectations are made very clear and pupils behave well as a result; this is a significant improvement.

The school is highly committed to child protection. Procedures are well organised and managed. A very strong and effective link with the Local Area Child Protection Team keeps cases under review and ensures action is taken to support pupils and, in some cases, their families. Training has been implemented across the whole staff team and is regularly updated.

Health and safety policies are rigorous and are closely monitored. Each department has a specialist focus and a senior manager is responsible for risk assessment. Potential issues such as the deep water of the lakes have been assessed and recommendations made to improve safety, with a deadline for action. Fire-safety precautions and First Aid procedures are very effective.

Admission and attendance registers are administered effectively. The school's policies for equality are reflected in all aspects of its provision. The school is conscious of its responsibilities towards all pupils who have disabilities and ensures that they have the same opportunities as other pupils. The school has an overview plan to improve accessibility in relation to the requirements of the DDA. However, it lacks the detail of a written three-year plan.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the DDA?***

*In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:*

- *devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.*

#### **4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The school ensures that all staff have been subject to satisfactory clearance at an enhanced level with the Criminal Records Bureau. There are clear records to show that staff qualifications and identity are checked and that references are taken up with previous employers. Documents are appropriately updated to reflect any change in staff circumstances.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

#### **5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**

The accommodation is of a very high quality. The main accommodation, a Grade II listed building constructed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, has been sympathetically modified to meet the needs of the school. It contains the administrative offices, the cafeteria, kitchen and servery, and main assembly rooms on the lower floor. The upper floors contain a range of classrooms. All the living accommodation is located close within the school grounds, along with a number of further classrooms.

There are specialist rooms for all subjects. The newest accommodation, opened in 2000, has rooms for ICT, music, and art and design. The accommodation for design and technology is somewhat cramped and, because of this, it lacks the equipment to teach the higher levels of the subject. A room is dedicated to the school's youth club. A superb sports hall aids the delivery of high quality physical education. Additional accommodation is provided for staff who teach pupils with specific learning and language needs. There is a room for counselling and a support room for pupils who occasionally find it difficult to manage in lessons.

The accommodation is well maintained, exceptionally clean and very well cared for by housekeeping and maintenance staff and by the pupils themselves. Heating and ventilation are generally good, although one science room and the ICT suite become hot and stuffy. There is no damage to property and pupils show high levels of respect for their environment. The classrooms are light, airy and mostly well equipped, with resources appropriate to the subject.

The school is surrounded by spacious lawns, gardens, lakes and woodland. Outdoor resources are used well for learning in science, for leisure activities such as games and fishing, and for socialising at lunch and break times.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**

Parents are provided with a very good level of information about the school, its proprietor, its statement of purpose and the curriculum. This includes an informative website and termly newsletters. Following an interview, once pupils have been offered a place and have given their personal commitment to the school, their family receives a 'welcome pack'. The pack explains the policies and practice of the school, the staffing and staff training details, expectations of care and control, the complaints procedure and a letter of welcome from the chair of governors. In addition, parents receive a school prospectus that sets out additional information about the school day. The prospectus also describes the residential experience, the general curriculum and the enrichment activities provided within the 24-hour curriculum.

The prospectus provides an overview of examination outcomes, but it does not include the required detailed examination and test results.

Reports on pupils' progress are comprehensive and review procedures are very thorough. The pupils' views are heard through pupils' self-reporting as well as their attendance at reviews.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school complies with all but one of the requirements.*

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *provide particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i)).*

**7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints**

There is a very effective policy for handling complaints which is available to all parents, carers and pupils. The school's procedures place an appropriate emphasis on informal resolution and there are clear arrangements for progressing complaints through to a formal stage. The school responded immediately to the CSCI recommendations for hard-backed logbooks that keep a detailed record of complaints and the action taken to resolve the complaints.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Farney Close School		
DfES Number:	938/6217		
Type of school:	Special residential		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 44	Girls: 18	Total: 62
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 44	Girls: 18	Total: 62
Annual fees (boarders):	£40,422		
Address of school:	Bolney Court Bolney West Sussex RH17 5RD		
Telephone number:	01444 881811		
Fax number:	01444 881957		
Email address:	head@farneyclose.co.uk		
Headteacher:	Mr Barry Robinson		
Proprietor:	Farney Close School Ltd		
Reporting Inspector:	Mr George Derby		
Date of inspection:	8 – 11 May 2006		

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