

Furrowfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108426
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	337071
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Terry McKenzie

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Tinnion
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Bell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Boarding provision**Social care Unique Reference Number****Social care inspector**

Len Hird

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Introduction

This integrated inspection of the school and residential provision was carried out by three additional inspectors and an inspector of social care. The inspectors visited five lessons and an assembly, activities in the boarding provision and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work on both sites, scrutinised curriculum and safeguarding documentation and examined two questionnaires returned from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of teaching and boarding on outcomes for students
- the impact of the curriculum on promoting future economic well-being
- the impact of leadership in effecting change and improvement
- the effectiveness of management in providing appropriate safeguarding procedures and support for students.

Information about the school

Furrowfield is a day and residential school for students aged between 11 and 16 years. Situated in Gateshead, it occupies two sites about 11 miles apart and Furrowfield has maintained its specialist status as a science college. The school caters for students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and many have been identified as having additional learning difficulties such as communication disorders and attention deficit disorder. All students have a statement of special educational needs. Currently, nine students are accommodated in the boarding facility for either four or two nights each week during term time. Nine students are looked after by the local authority. Students occasionally have dual registration with other educational establishments because of the assessment procedures undertaken by the school on behalf of the local authority.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Furrowfield is a good and inclusive school with some outstanding features. All national minimum standards for boarding are met. Through good leadership and management, support from the governing body and the hard work of education and boarding staff, it provides a good standard of care and support to students. Parents and carers together with the local authority are supportive of the school. Behaviour is exemplary; one student commented, 'This is the best school ever.' Since the last inspection, Furrowfield has undergone changes to staff that have led to the recent restructuring of the senior leadership team. It has also successfully integrated a second school site used as an assessment centre. The good work undertaken here enables some students to return to mainstream schools to continue their education. The school has good resources for specialist subjects but facilities for practical work are not currently used to best effect in science. The Healthy Schools award has helped students to lead healthy lifestyles. Students make good academic progress; although teaching is good overall, assessment of pupils' learning is not always used skilfully enough in planning lessons. In some lessons, classroom assistants are not always advised enough as to how they can best support students. The outstanding curriculum is very well matched to the individual needs of students and enhanced by the additional activities undertaken in the boarding provision. Older students gain external accreditations, some to the higher levels of GCSE. Outstanding opportunities are provided for them to work with other establishments to gain vocational and social skills that prepare them for moving on. Social development is outstanding and the calm, well-organised working environment enables excellent relationships to develop between all. Students report that they feel very safe. Provision for their welfare is good, but some elements in boarding provision are not fully in place. Staff understand the needs of the students very well and maintain effective links with external agencies on their behalf. However, despite great efforts by the school in cooperation with the local authority, a few students remain persistent absentees. The headteacher and new senior team are keen to build on the recent changes and develop the school further. The important improvements made thus far, together with the outstanding elements of its provision, demonstrate that the school has good capacity to sustain further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - linking all lesson planning more closely to recent assessment information

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- ensuring that classroom assistants are better directed by teachers
- providing more opportunities for practical work in science.
- Improve the attendance of a small group of persistent absentees.
- Improve the welfare for boarding pupils by providing training for boarding staff in the safe handling and administration of medication and by ensuring that all boarding staff have completed a refresher training course in safeguarding.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Because of their learning difficulties, the attainment of students is below that expected for all schools but their progress compared to students in similar schools is good. This progress is demonstrated through the impressive range of external accreditations gained, regular recording of outcomes by teachers and by the good work done in most lessons. Students usually work hard. They show enjoyment in lessons and most want to do well to please the adults with whom they work.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school, including boarding, is outstanding; students are very clear about right and wrong and what is acceptable. The whole school is able to come together successfully during assemblies where they consider issues of morality and undertake moments of reflection. Other successful gatherings are evidenced in the breakfast club and lunchtimes when the high standards of behaviour are maintained and very good social skills demonstrated.

Furrowfield works hard to ensure that students feel safe through behaviour management strategies that are understood and trusted by all. The calm atmosphere of the school fosters very good social relationships, as witnessed when the whole school comes together for assembly and lunch. Even the students with communication difficulties, therefore, have opportunities to refine their social skills and to learn how to interact with others. Furrowfield has maintained its Healthy Schools Award and has not relaxed its efforts to help students to understand and enjoy healthy lifestyles. School lunch menus deliver healthy options and individual dietary needs are met in cooperation with boarding. Students enjoy a great deal of physical activity each week through a wide range of activities designed to meet individual needs and interests. The vibrant school council ensures that the voice of the students is heard in a meaningful and productive manner. Delegates are proud to be members of the council and try very hard to be fair in representing the views of their classmates. For example, they have encouraged the school managers to consider amendments to the school day and have helped to bring about changes to the school uniform.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding and is good overall. In the best lessons, teachers are very aware of students' abilities through accurate assessments. Here, they plan very small steps so that progress can be quickly and efficiently evidenced. In these lessons, students are provided with regular opportunities to reflect on how well they are doing and whether they are likely to meet the targets set for them and a few teachers thus use exemplary skills and experience. However, this close attention to assessment is not uniform throughout the school so that learning targets are not always set accurately in lessons. At the recently acquired second school site, the school has set up an assessment centre that is very effective in establishing the nature of students' needs and matching the resulting educational provision accurately. This helps the school to decide whether students should remain in special education at Furrowfield or return to mainstream schools.

The school places much emphasis on providing appropriate learning environments for students with good quality resources in classrooms. In this respect, much improvement has occurred since the last inspection and there is now good access to computers and other information and communication facilities such as interactive whiteboards. These resources enable students to participate more effectively in lesson activities and help to ensure that all have opportunities to be included in lessons, despite their learning difficulties. The school could do more, though, to ensure that support staff are better briefed when working with individuals or groups.

The curriculum in Key Stage 4 is outstanding because it provides a framework for teaching and learning that is carefully matched to the individual needs and interests of

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all students. This ensures that students have every opportunity to be included in education and make the most of the externally accredited courses that are offered. Furrowfield uses a range of curriculum courses in Key Stage 4 including Entry level certificate and GCSE. However, pupils do not all have enough scope to develop investigative skills in science. Very good partnerships exist with local schools and colleges to provide students with a wide range of vocational opportunities and National Vocational Qualifications. In Key Stage 3, most subjects focus on the development of communication and numeracy and teachers plan well for literacy skills to be practised and developed in lessons. New and exciting developments are underway that will ensure even greater choice for older students including the introduction of the Duke of Edinburgh Award and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Students receive good advice and counselling to help them to access the most appropriate courses according to their needs and interests.

High staffing levels and the skills of the adults ensure that the behavioural needs of students are attended to as quickly and efficiently as possible. This helps learners to maintain their classroom presence and make the most of learning opportunities. The strong and positive links with outside agencies support students' social, emotional, behavioural and other needs. For example, parents and carers are helped to ensure that students attend school regularly; although a few pupils are still absent too often.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Furrowfield is an improving school because of the good leadership of the headteacher and recently reorganised senior team. They recognise the value of the outstanding opportunities they have recently created for students to follow individual curriculum pathways both within the school and in partnership with others agencies. Furthermore, the senior team is clear about how it intends to continue to improve the quality of teaching through using the school assessment information in all lessons. Managers are providing clear direction and sense of purpose to the school and are satisfactorily held to account by the governing body. They ensure that all staff understand the priorities for development and the part that each can play in helping the school to improve further through, for example, developing behaviour management strategies. All students have equal opportunities to succeed and none are discriminated against. This is because the school has implemented an excellent curriculum designed to match each student's

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interests and abilities. Additionally, all students have good opportunities to learn how to manage their behaviour so that they can join in and make the most of their educational opportunities. The school mainly deploys its resources very well but managers have not yet ensured that the best use is made of the science resources so that students engage in the productive practical work to which they are entitled.

Furrowfield succeeds in maintaining good links with learners' homes. For example, regular information leaflets are sent home and meetings are arranged for parents and carers to attend. Reports and reviews are used as good opportunities to gather the views of parents and carers but more remains to be done by the school managers to encourage a small group of persistent absentees to attend more regularly. Furrowfield has adopted a satisfactory quality practice in its safeguarding work. All required documents were in place at the time of the inspection including policies, fire practice evacuation record, training records and risk assessments. Community cohesion strategies are good when considered in the context of the work undertaken to engage students with the wider community. Community links are also well embedded in citizenship, as well as personal social and health education courses.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Boarding provision

The quality of boarding provision at Furrowfield School is good. The management structure of the school contributes effectively to the protection and promotion of boarding pupils' welfare. All of the recommendations made at the last inspection relating to medication recording, the provision of information for children and their families,

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recording and record monitoring have been addressed. Senior managers have ensured that the provision for promoting the health and well-being of boarding students is good. Boarders are encouraged to have very healthy and active lifestyles while attending the school. The personal, health, social education and citizenship curriculum, supported by the boarding house staff, provides good advice on matters such as health and relationships. There are good working partnerships with all of the local health services. Clear procedures are followed for the management, secure storage and administration of medication. Members of staff receive training in the administration of first aid but not in the safe handling and administration of medication.

Boarders have a good, healthy and enjoyable diet which helps their health and physical well-being. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award in recognition of the steps it has taken to develop healthy lifestyles. Menus are well planned in conjunction with the boarding pupils, with a number of choices available including a vegetarian option. Boarders commented, 'The food is really good and better than some hotels and the breakfast is good and sets you up for the day at school.' Boarders feel safe at the school and are very supportive of each other. There are effective anti-bullying and complaints policies and procedures in place. Boarders and parents are able to access easily understood pamphlets which detail how concerns or complaints will be resolved. Comprehensive systems are in place to monitor, record, and prevent risks to health and safety at the school. Regular fire drills are held at different times and boarding pupils confirm this.

All staff have in the past received appropriate levels of safeguarding and behavioural management training and all are aware of the relevant policies and reporting procedures regarding safeguarding. However, a few members of staff have yet to complete their refresher courses. The headteacher, as the designated person with overall responsibility for safeguarding matters, provides good guidance to staff. Employment of staff is in accordance with the relevant regulations and this confidential recruitment information is maintained securely. Staff work closely with parents and teachers to ensure that boarders are given the help and support required. Boarding provision makes available a good range of resources such as computers to assist boarders in attaining good levels of academic success and having life enhancing experiences. Boarders confirm they get on well together and that they are treated fairly and equally by a very popular boarding house staff team.

Boarders are actively encouraged to take part in the day-to-day running of the boarding house and can influence decisions made within the school through the school council. There is an 'open door' policy in operation for boarders to speak to staff about any subject. Boarders can also easily access advice or support through an independent listener or Childline. There are telephones in the boarding house for boarders to keep in contact with their family and friends. Great care is given in the levels of support given to the boarders by this very experienced and stable boarding house staff team. The living accommodation is decorated to a high standard and extremely well maintained. The individual bedrooms are decorated and personalised by the boarding students to a high standard. There are very good levels of security, privacy and bathing provision in the

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boarding accommodation.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school has policies and procedures in place for addressing equality and diversity. Boarding students are encouraged to be helpful to each other and this was demonstrated on many occasions such as the volleyball match after dinner in the sports hall. All of the boarding students indicated they are treated with understanding, respect and dignity by the staff. The school provides a statement of its boarding principles and practices for parents, boarders and staff. The organisation and management of the boarding houses create a safe, non-discriminatory and extremely caring environment for boarders to live in. There are good recording systems and up-to-date risk assessments in place to ensure the health, safety and well-being of boarders. The excellent staffing levels during the day and night meet the pastoral needs of all boarders.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

All national minimum standards for boarding are met.

This is the grade for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	2
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Views of parents and carers

Only two parental questionnaires were received and both of these were positive. They indicated that they agreed that the school provides a safe environment where behaviour is managed effectively. The school was able to provide some evidence from its own work with parents and carers indicating great support from this group over a sustained period of time.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Furrowfield School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 2 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 58 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



20 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Furrowfield School, Gateshead, NE10 9RZ

Thank you for making me and the other inspectors so welcome when we visited Furrowfield recently. We very much enjoyed meeting you in lessons, in the dining room and during assembly. You are among the most polite students that we have ever seen in a school! These are some of the things that we found out during the inspection from watching your lessons, talking with your teachers and reading comments from the questionnaires.

- Most of you enjoy going to school and appreciate the support of the staff.
- You make good progress at Furrowfield.
- You get on very well together and your behaviour is outstanding.
- The school and boarding provide good opportunities for you to learn to manage your behaviour and gain qualifications.
- Most of your teachers work hard to plan exciting and interesting lessons.
- All of the adults look after you, including in the boarding provision.
- The headteacher and other senior managers do a good job.
- Furrowfield is an improving school.

I have asked your teachers to set better targets for you during lessons and help classroom assistants to work even more effectively to support you. This will help everyone to see how well you are doing and what you are capable of. I have asked the headteacher to find new and different ways of helping some of you attend more regularly to help all of you to get the most from your good school. I would also like you to have more practical work during science lessons so that you can enjoy your science lessons even more.

With best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Mr Terry McKenzie

Lead inspector

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