

Farney Close School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Liz Driver
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Nominated person	Barry Robinson
Date of last inspection	05/02/2010

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This is an independent residential special school for young people aged 11 to 17 years, who experience social emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A board of directors, a board of governors and a board of trustees oversee the running of the school. The school is approved to accommodate a maximum of 72 residential pupils, both male and female. All pupils board on a weekly basis and return home at weekends.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This announced key inspection looked at all the key national minimum standards for residential special schools.

The school is outstanding in every aspect and continues to develop further and make changes that result in consistently excellent outcomes for young people across all the Every Child Matters outcome areas. This inspection has shown the school's ability to maintain outstanding and also respond to changing needs.

Parents were invited to comment on the school but no one responded so comments have been taken from the schools own parents questionnaire carried out in 2010. The headteacher was fully informed of comments made by parents. Contact with numerous young people during this inspection was had in the form of spending time on individual houses, discussion groups with young people, joining young people for lunch and much interaction during the three days spent on site. The results of the setting's recent pupil questionnaire were also taken into account.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations made at the last inspection that required revisiting this inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are provided with excellent health care, with innovative health practices for vulnerable young people. Their individual health needs, including emotional, physical and medical needs, are identified and comprehensively assessed prior to their arrival at the school. Each young person has a medical file in which are

details regarding their past medical history, appointments attended whilst at the school and records of individual growth and development.

Young people's needs are regularly reviewed throughout their school life. The school liaises closely with parents and young people in the drawing up of the health care plans and actively seek out the services needed to address these; for example, involvement of specialist health workers, child and adolescent mental health services and specialist tutors for dyslexia. Virtually all education and care staff and a range of ancillary staff are either trained to emergency first aid level, or to full first aid at work level.

The setting has very close links with the local health authority for guidance on diets. As a result introduced a colour coded menu aimed at helping young people to make good, informed choices regarding healthy eating. The setting accessed a local authority initiative called Mind, Exercise, Nutrition - Do it (MEND) where young people with high body mass index attended a ten week course, with staff, to look at how they can live a healthier life. The benefits to the children have been considerable. The care manager, senior residential social care worker responsible for medical matters, and other staff of the care team have attended training on dealing with obesity and healthy living.

Since the last inspection the school has continued to develop effective working relationships with a nurse practitioner from the local general practitioners surgery, the local looked after children's nurse, who now visits on a regular basis, and the community school nurse who visits the school to give support with particular health issues, such as weight or hearing tests. Various members of the care team have undertaken a National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at level 2 certificate in health and nutrition and courses in health and exercise.

The school employs a designated senior member of staff with specific responsibility for the health needs of young people. She is knowledgeable and well structured in her work delivering a high standard of care with excellent procedures for staff to follow. The medical room has been refurbished since the last inspection and is bright and very well organised. Medication procedures are highly organised, tightly monitored and safe in practice. Staff complete medication training with senior care staff completing NVQ at level 2 for the administration of Medication.

Food on offer is nutritious and varied with fresh food available at each meal. In the main young people enjoy the food provision. Food is high on the school forum agenda where young people raise suggestions that are taken seriously. Special diets are well catered for. There are no outstanding recommendations from the last environmental health inspection. Development over the last year has seen the setting working closely with the local school's liaison nurse to further develop staff and young people's knowledge of healthy living and the importance of a healthy diet.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Robust policies and procedures help to ensure that appropriate levels of confidentiality are maintained. The privacy and dignity of all children are managed sensitively and effectively. Staff have a good awareness of the issues of privacy and confidentiality of the young people. Many of the young people require close supervision, however, the staff are sensitive to their needs and choice to be alone at times. Secure systems are in place to ensure the safety of all young people around the school site. The personal files and data of all young people and staff are stored in a secure room, which has recently been updated to further improve the archiving and storage of information.

The school has a clear complaints policy which is known to children and staff. Children know that any complaints would be dealt with considerately and appropriately. The 'worries and complaints' leaflet is displayed on the house's notice boards. The three complaints registered in the complaints book have been dealt with professionally and in a timely manner with sound outcomes. The head of care confirmed that the staff have a good relationship with the pupils and parents and carers, enabling them to deal with concerns as they become evident. The school focuses on informal resolution of matters wherever possible. The school's quality assurance survey completed by pupils in September 2010 confirmed that young people were clear about who to speak to if they were worried or wanted to complain. In addition young people can raise concerns with the school's two independent visitors who visit regularly without notice. The independent visitors photographs and contact details are prominently displayed in each house.

Comprehensive policies and procedures support staff in keeping young people safe. The setting has highly experienced staff displaying a sound understanding of key child protection and safeguarding matters. The setting's commitment to this is clear with the safeguarding training on offer and links the school maintains with other professionals. Especially the very regular contact with a designated social worker from the local children and young people's services in relation to child protection and safeguarding. This contact supports the school in providing a high level of safety and intervention work with young people. A recent young people's questionnaire evidence 100% of young people felt safe at the setting all or most of the time.

A recent initiative to keep up to date with ever changing risks for young people saw the setting inviting a guest speaker to talk to both staff and young people about knife crime. The guest speaker was herself the mother of a victim of knife crime. Young people undertook related work and the setting followed this up with a visit to a local theatre to see a drama production on the same theme.

Bullying is taken extremely seriously at the setting. Staff are extremely vigilant and high levels of supervision lessen the opportunities for bullying to exist. Any bullying incident tends to be spontaneous verbal bullying rather than being premeditated and physical. The work carried out and put into highlighting all kinds of bullying is

exemplary, involving young people at every level. The setting carries out its own yearly quality assurance questionnaires for young people with a very in depth questionnaire around bullying. There is a clear commitment to identifying trends and to act on results of the questionnaires, for example work carried out on cyber bullying in school with young people was extended to parents and carers at home. The school has undertaken a great deal of work with staff and young people on bullying and discrimination, including specific training for staff. The young people and staff participate fully in the annual anti-bullying week and the school won the special schools section of a Safe Place competition in 2008 and were finalists in 2009. Anti-bullying and anti-discrimination forms part of the school's curriculum and is a fixed agenda item on every school forum meeting.

Clear policy and procedures are in place for young people who go missing. Each child has a plan which details action to be taken when they are absent without authority. Staff are involved in going to look for the children and are involved in collecting them and welcome them back to the school when they return.

Appropriate strategies are in place at the school for behaviour management. Young people are made very aware of the expectations of behaviour and staff model and encourage acceptable behaviour. Close supervision ensures potential problems are monitored. Staff receive training on physical interventions and are provided with frequent refresher courses. Staff aim to de-escalate at every opportunity rather than physically intervene. As part of the setting's policy of care and control they use incentives and rewards to reinforce appropriate behaviour. When young people's behaviour is inappropriate sanctions are applied reasonably and proportionately. Records of sanctions and restraints are very well maintained, including a section for the child to record their comments following restraints, and monitored closely by senior management. Restraints are evaluated on a half-termly basis, to identify any patterns and to work on how to reduce future restraints. Records show that majority of physical interventions occur during the school day and not in social time. Pupil risk assessments are of an excellent standard and include triggers, locations and strategies for avoiding and managing predicted behaviours.

Health and safety matters are addressed to a commendable standard with the deputy headteacher taking responsibility. She has an excellent knowledge of current legislation having completed a national qualification in health and safety. All records are highly organised and kept to a very high standard; from fire records to risk assessments. Since the last inspection a fire safety visit has taken place with no outstanding recommendations. Overall there is a robust programme to ensure that risk assessments and yearly health and safety inspections are completed to a very high standard. There has also been a recent full review of health and safety procedures. All staff and young people respond to fire evacuation drills in an organised and timely manner; as seen during the inspection when a fire alarm was unexpectedly activated. Staff have completed fire training delivered by the local fire and rescue services.

Young people are protected by the setting's robust recruitment procedures. The school ensures a thorough recruitment process to ensure the right person for the job

is employed. Criminal Record Bureau checks are renewed every three years. All staff files are securely stored.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential contribution to education is extremely well established involving close liaison with the teaching staff. Residential staff give very active practical and emotional support to young people who have difficulties. The residential care worker's role is enhanced by the time spent in education that enables them to support young people educationally out of school hours. The high sustained level of input has improved pupils basic skills so they have better chances of accessing the overall curriculum. The school fulfils its aims and significantly improves pupils' life chances. It is also successful in making young people feel good about themselves. A recent parent questionnaire, carried out by the school in June 2010, has provided the setting with information about how well parents feel the school is meeting their child's needs and areas that could be developed further. The setting take these comments very seriously and have responded to them. Comments expressed by parents include 'an exceptional school' and 'my child is more confident and is now looking forward to looking at colleges and preparing to move on next year; my child now has a bright future thanks to the input from the school'.

The setting has successfully completed the Investors in Careers Award, which has enabled the school to be clearly focused and effective in the processes to support young people leaving school and moving into work or further education.

The setting has worked hard on developing young people's independence skills. Young people's independence skills assessment provides young people and their link worker with a focus and structure by which each of the areas for development can be addressed. Reviews on independence skills are completed on a yearly basis so that progress can be measured and new targets set.

Care plans identify how support for individual young people's needs will be provided and which person or agency will respond to that need. Staff are fully open to addressing a wide range of possible needs, including, for example, disability, race, culture, sexuality, language and personal safety. The school has very well-established links with a range of agencies who can offer appropriate support. Therapeutic input includes two adolescent counsellors, an art therapist and a drama therapist. In support of young people who experience specific learning difficulties the setting has a dyslexia specialist and a speech and language specialist. Young people confirm that staff are approachable and they receive the support they need. Information is available for young people to access agencies independently if necessary.

Young people are assisted to gain valuable experience outside of the school; for example, voluntary and highly supervised work at a local children's nursery offers young people an excellent opportunity to learn about others, to help them and to

gain a greater sense of self-esteem for themselves. This has proved very beneficial to the young people who volunteer to take part.

Young people are actively encouraged by staff to take part in leisure activities both inside the school and in the community. Young people's own interests are also actively encouraged and supported. Activities on offer are very closely supervised with excellent risk assessments in place. Activities are a key aspect of school life and provide young people with meaningful and enjoyable pursuits after the school day. A recent young person questionnaire carried out by the school in September 2010 resulted in all young people stating they enjoy the activities on offer.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The young person's voice is seen as a priority at the setting. The school places a high emphasis on the importance of consulting with children parents and carers. Annual questionnaires are sent to parents and young people with results audited and used as a tool to define current practice and future developments. Young people have numerous avenues to express their feelings, views and wishes openly, both individually or in a more formal arena, such as house meetings and the school forum. Young people have appropriate elements of choice in their day-to-day lives, within the constraints of the structured routines. No onerous demands seen or heard of. As a result of suggestions made by young people the setting has installed new televisions in the houses and has successfully supported two national charities days.

The setting has a very comprehensive admissions and leaving policy. Prospective pupils visit the school before they move in and usually they are visited at home by the care manager and link worker. Young people confirmed the very good admissions procedures and stated they experienced a smooth transition when joining the school. Children are involved in the plans for moving on from the school unless exceptional circumstances occur. Prospective pupils and their families are provided with the necessary information and advice following a referral and the school invests much time and effort in ensuring that the pupil, their family and the staff are well informed prior to admission. Much work has been carried out over the last few years on developing further opportunities for young people when they reach 16 years old. The setting has looked at the effectiveness in helping young people leave school by developing and consolidating independence skills and participating in the investors in careers award. Transitions away from the school are considered in depth to lessen any negative impact. One young person, having commenced at the school this term, stated 'I love it here, its the best school ever.'

Very high standard placement plans detail individual needs based upon comprehensive assessments. Each young person's placement plan includes their statement of special educational needs, their individual education plans, care plan packages, their independence skills assessments, health records and other relevant information. This provides staff with a clear understanding of the young people and allows the setting to set a baseline on which progress can be measured and

developed. Children understand the purpose and contents of their care plans and work on them with their link worker. All records are maintained to a high standard. The school works closely with parents and carers and the placing agency through the statutory review and pathway plan process. Young people are involved in the plans their reviews. All Year 11 pupils have the option of undertaking work experience from home on Fridays, which helps them to find their feet in the world of work away for the school.

Contact with family and carers is encouraged at the school. All relatives and carers of the children visiting the school are welcomed. Contact details are contained in placement plans. Restrictions of contact are clearly acknowledged with enhanced safeguarding procedures put into place if necessary. Some pupils express annoyance that they are not allowed mobile telephones at the school, as they wish to be able to contact friends and family. The young people are aware that the school does not allow this due to their overall vulnerability and the possibility of text bullying. This is made clear prior to arrival at the school. All children are allowed free calls each week and they may also use a private pay phone, although some concerns were raised by parents and young people about the number of phone lines available for parents to ring in on. The setting is very aware of this difficulty and is working closely with telephone companies to try and install more lines.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The location and layout of the school is well suited for its purpose. The layout of the rooms fits very well to the needs of the young people. The accommodation is of a high standard with one house having been remodelled and refurbished to a standard the setting is planning to introduce to all the houses over the next few years. Individual houses present as being modern, clean and homely. Recent upgrading of all three girls' houses bathrooms has added to the quality provision. Most young people's bedrooms are doubles. The toilets, bathing, and showering facilities are very good. Young people are able to personalise their own rooms and have a very good range of resources such as pool tables, computers, and Karaoke machines available for their enjoyment in the houses.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding with every aspect of the setting's care, policies and procedures and practices embracing differences in education ability, presenting behaviours, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and religion. To raise awareness and extend staff's knowledge, a range of training via distance learning courses has recently been set up for the care team. The school has also produced its own reference document regarding different cultures and religion

for both staff and young people's information. Cultural and diversity awareness posters around the site are changed regularly. The setting actively embraces a cultural awareness month where different cultures are celebrated.

The school's Statement of Purpose, reviewed annually, is presented to a very high standard. It clearly states the manner in which the residential provision contributes to the whole school approach to meeting young people's needs. The young person's information pack contains a wealth of information that young people find helpful, it is of excellent quality and in a suitable format. Parents and carers can access a wide range of information including the school's website.

The school benefits from a high number of established, highly committed and experienced members of the care team who provide consistently high standards of care. The number of staff on duty meets the needs of the young people and support them in their activities, visits and appointments. There is a very low turnover of staff that results in consistency of care and excellent relationships being formed between staff and young people. The staff team has a balanced mix of male and female staff. Staff are happy at the school, clearly enjoy working with the young people and are complimentary about the support they receive.

Staff training continues to be a strong focus with structured processes from induction to NVQ training, plus other training relevant to changing needs. Staff confirmed that induction and staff training is comprehensive and suitable for them to meet the needs of the young people. The school invests much time and money in its training programme and is committed to having a highly skilled team of care staff, who are clearly proud of their role in the whole school strategy. Staff receive very regular supervision and yearly appraisals carried out by senior residential care workers. The head of care exceeds the qualifications standards and continues to access further training.

Farney Close is an extremely well-run school that offers stability and efficiency for young people and staff. The senior management team provide excellent leadership and is supported by an active and involved board of governors and directors. The headteacher has a wealth of experience, is highly visible and always available for young people and staff to have informal or formal discussions. Monitoring of every aspect of the setting is robust and fed back to the governors. There is consistent and effective use of self-evaluation that informs practice. The school continues to maintain the high standards of care while seeking to develop and improve when ever they can, as seen at this inspection.