

# Farleigh College

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Thomas Webber

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

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Farleigh College is part of the Priory Education Services which provides specialist education and cares services.

Farleigh College is a co-educational, residential and day school situated in the Somerset countryside 12 miles from Bath. It provides education and specialist care for residential pupils who have a statement of special educational need.

The college accommodates residential pupils between the ages of 11 to 19 years. At the time of the inspection there were 30 residential and 15 day students both male and female. The main building is a grade two listed Queen Anne house and accommodates three residential units. The college also provides four separate satellite houses in the local community which provide additional accommodation. The school was last inspected on 8 December 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>inadequate</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	satisfactory
Quality of residential provision and care	satisfactory
Residential pupils' safety	inadequate
Leadership and management of the residential provision	inadequate

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of Farleigh College is inadequate. The school lacks effective leadership which impacts on the overall care provided to residential pupils.
- The school has failed to meet all of the recommendations identified at the last inspection.
- The procedures for safeguarding residential pupils' safety and well-being are not robust and effective. These include safeguarding, bullying, health and safety and fire prevention.
- There are not always sufficient staff on duty. Most staff are not adequately qualified or do not have sufficient experience, which restricts their contribution to the residential provision. The problem is compounded by staff not receiving effective training. The performance of staff is also not appropriately monitored. Communication between the school and residential provision is not always effective.
- Comprehensive records are not always maintained and suitably monitored.
- The behaviour management of residential pupils is not fully enhanced.
- The majority of residential pupils and their parents regard the residential provision as a positive experience.
- The health and dietary needs of residential pupils are well met.
- Opportunities are available for residential pupils to contribute to and influence the way the school and the residential provisions are run.

- The promotion of equality is well understood and practiced well within the residential provision. The diverse needs of residential pupils are well catered for.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Outcomes for residential pupils are satisfactory. The experience of boarding enables residential pupils to develop independent life and social skills to equip them to cope with the transition into adulthood. However, not all aspects of the welfare of residential pupils are sufficiently safeguarded.

Residential pupils live in a supportive and relaxed environment where positive relationships exist between themselves and staff. Staff undertake their duties in a caring and supportive manner and residential pupils are relaxed and at ease in their company. Most residential pupils enjoy and benefit from a positive boarding experience. They also feel safe and are treated fairly by staff. These sentiments are echoed by most of their parents, who also feel that staff look after their children well. They feel that the boarding experience helps their children to progress and develop. Residential staff recognise them as individuals and respond to their needs.

The school operates a culture of consultation. Residential pupils are encouraged to contribute to decision making regarding developments to the school and the boarding provision. The school council is well established and the contributions from the pupils impacts positively on the provision. Consultation within houses is also a particular strength and contributes to the high value that residential pupils attach to their house groups. Residential pupils are supported to express their views freely about any issues, which are then listened to and acted on by staff.

Residential pupils generally interact well with one and other and with adults. They are supported to develop positive behaviour within the residential provision. This has enabled some to make significant progress in the management of their behaviour. However, there are occasions where unacceptable behaviour encountered during the school day is, out of necessity, dealt with by residential staff. As a result this can cause disruption and animosity between the residential pupils and staff.

Residential pupils live in an environment where their physical, emotional and healthcare needs are met, primarily by their parents. However, healthcare emergencies are dealt with appropriately by the school.

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

The quality of the residential provision is satisfactory. Residential pupils receive satisfactory to good levels of care and support. However, communication between residential and academic staff to support residential pupils' personal and academic development is not always maintained. This, together with the inexperience of some residential staff, restricts the support provided to residential pupils.

The needs of residential pupils are fully assessed as part of the clear admission process. All residential pupils are provided with a care plan. This, together with a range of detailed documents, provides staff with clear guidance on how to meet the needs of residential pupils on a daily basis. Residential pupils are fully aware of the information which outlines their needs, strengths, targets and progress achieved. These documents are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the changing needs of the residential pupils. However, the needs of residential pupils are not always being fulfilled due to limitations within the residential provision. Residential pupils are also fully encouraged and supported to attend their annual reviews.

Residential pupils take part in the wide range of recreational activities both within the school and the wider community. Residential pupils are fully consulted about what activities they wish to partake in. Personal talents and interests are fully supported. However, sometimes the mix of staff limits the range of activities that residential pupils can access.

Residential pupils live in an environment where their physical, emotional and healthcare needs are met. The parents of residential pupils maintain the primary responsibility in this area of practice. However, effective arrangements are in place for residential pupils to access the school's local surgery, if necessary. Most residential pupils feel they are well cared for if unwell, with suitable facilities and effective procedures being in place. There are suitable practices and arrangements for the safe storage, receipt and administration of medication, including homely remedies. Residential staff, in conjunction with the in-house specialist support team, work hard to promote the health, welfare and well-being of residential pupils. They provide residential pupils with the necessary individual support to assist in developing their self-esteem as well as dealing with specific emotional and behaviour issues. Residential pupils are fully supported to take responsibility for their healthcare needs. This is achieved through the school's programme of personal social and health education as well as within the residential provision.

The school provides residential pupils with a nutritious, varied and balanced diet. The religious, cultural and special diets of residential pupils are also well catered for. They are able to access drinks and snacks as well as a selection of fresh fruit on a daily basis. Opportunities are also available for them to be involved in various aspects of budgeting, shopping, preparation and the cooking of meals with the support of staff. This is particularly so in the satellite houses, to assist with the development of their independent life skills. The school has successfully addressed the concerns raised, at the last inspection, regarding the quality and choice of food served at lunchtimes. Most residential pupils are happy with the range and quality and quantity of food provided.

Accommodation within the main school site is well maintained and provides sufficient facilities to meet the individual and collective needs of the residential pupils. The off-site houses provide excellent standards of accommodation, including opportunities

for older residential pupils to live more independently. A small percentage of residential pupils expressed concern about the safety of their belongings. However, residential pupils are all provided with locks to their bedroom doors together with suitable lockable facilities within their bedrooms to keep their belongings safe.

Residential pupils can easily maintain contact with their families and friends and they commented positively about these arrangements. They have easy access to the school's landline telephones which they can use in private. Families are also welcome to visit and take their children out after school hours. Residential staff maintain strong links with the parents of residential pupils to ensure that they are kept informed of their well-being and progress.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

The school makes inadequate provision to fully safeguard the welfare of residential pupils. The school has robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place and staff have received appropriate training. However, the school's systems for dealing with safeguarding concerns are not effective.

The school does not have effective procedures in place to protect residential pupils from bullying. An anti-bullying policy is established for the protection of residential pupils. However, comments from residential pupils strongly indicate that bullying is a major area of concern. Of the small number of residential pupils' parents who contributed to the inspection process, most raised similar concerns. Records also fail to show whether residential pupils are happy with the action taken in response to incidents of bullying.

The school ensures that effective measures are taken when residential pupils go missing. Any incidents are dealt with promptly to ensure their safe return. Residential pupils are responded to positively on their return.

Residential staff actively promote good behaviour through positive relationships, encouragement and reinforcement of the school's rules and expectations. The support received by some residential pupils has enabled them to make significant progress in the management of their behaviour. However, the behaviour management (points) system established by the school can actually hinder this process and has a negative impact on residential pupils both socially and educationally. The school has also identified this issue and is actively addressing it. Unacceptable behaviour encountered during the school day can impact negatively within the residential provision causing disruption and animosity between the residential pupils and staff. Therefore, this does not achieve positive outcomes for residential pupils.

Staff are suitably trained in physical interventions. Sanctions and restraints are also used as a method of control. However, comprehensive records of these incidents are not always maintained. Sanctions are not always age appropriate or suitable for the

behaviour displayed.

The school does not currently take appropriate steps to keep the residential pupils and staff safe from the risk of fire and other hazards in accordance with health and safety and fire legislation and guidance. Although no specific health and safety issues were identified from a tour of the various residential accommodation, there are significant deficiencies in the various health and safety and fire prevention records. Effective monitoring arrangements are also not in place to ensure that the various fire risk assessments, checks, tests and servicing arrangements are established and being carried out at the required intervals. The school is fully aware of these deficiencies. As a result a new management structure has been put in place and a full audit is in the process of being undertaken to address these deficiencies. This is to ensure that the living environments for residential pupils and staff are safe.

Robust staff recruitment procedures and practices are now being maintained for the protection of residential pupils. New staff do not commence employment in the school until all the relevant checks are carried out.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The leadership and management of the residential provision is inadequate. There is a lack of effective leadership. The aims for the residential provision are clearly set out in the school prospectus, although they are not clearly reflected in practice. The prospectus is, however, currently under review. The promotion of equality is well understood and practised well within the residential provision. The diverse needs of residential pupils are well catered for.

The general routines of the boarding provision are well managed. The staffing levels established within the residential provision do not always meet the care needs of the residential pupils. New staff shadow more experienced staff for the first three months of their employment in a very restrictive role. This, in turn, impacts on the number of staff available to care for the residential pupils. However, there are always additional, suitably qualified senior management staff on duty who provide support and guidance to residential staff.

All new staff undertake a thorough induction programme. Although regular online training is provided for residential staff, this process is not always effective. This training on its own does not necessarily equip them to meet the challenging needs of the residential pupils. The provision of specialist training is also limited. Currently only 46% of the staff have achieved the relevant qualification. However, a number of staff are working towards the qualification.

Residential staff are extremely positive about the support they receive from all levels within the school. Daily handover and staff meetings are held regularly. These enable staff to keep up to date with the day-to-day operation of the residential provision and to provide consistency of care to residential pupils. Although formal staff supervision



has improved since the last inspection, annual appraisals are still deficient. This means that the professional development and practices of residential staff are not being properly managed and adequately monitored. This in turn impacts on the care provided to residential pupils.

The school maintains positive links with parents and provides them with information relating to their children. Parents feel that residential staff are accessible. Residential pupils and their parents know how to make a complaint. Most residential pupils stated that there were a number of people they could go to if they had concerns and were confident that the concerns would be acted upon. All complaints are responded to and addressed promptly. Residential pupils' records are safely stored. However, the records are not effectively monitored internally and many are not comprehensively maintained.

There are arrangements in place to ensure that the views of residential pupils are regularly sought in a variety of situations in relation to the care they receive. However, there is not a clear audit trail to show how any suggestions received from residential pupils are implemented. Regular external monitoring on behalf of the responsible body (Priory Group) is undertaken on a regular basis. However, the internal evaluation by the school of its residential provision is currently ineffective. The interim management team are well aware of the deficiencies within the school's residential provision and its impact on the residential pupils. They are currently reviewing the practices and systems within the residential provision to improve outcomes for residential pupils.

## **National minimum standards**

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff. The school's governing body or proprietor has a system to monitor care and welfare provision in the school. (NMS 13.1)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 (Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards) are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.3)
- There is a sufficient number of competent staff deployed appropriately, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, to fulfil the school's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children resident in the school. (NMS 15.1)
- All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards') or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these Standards hold these qualifications or begin

working towards them within 3 months of confirmation of employment. (NMS 19.2)

- All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (NMS 19.6)
- The school has regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State 'Health and Safety: Department for Education Advice on Legal Duties and Powers for Local Authorities, Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies' (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 6.2)
- The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards') and any requirements set out in regulations relating to school premises. (NMS 7.1)
- In addition, fire drills are regularly (at least once per term) carried out in 'residential time'. (NMS 7.2)
- The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 11)
- The school has and consistently implements a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint is to be used; and arrangements for searching children and their possessions. (NMS 12.1)
- All children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by. (NMS 12.5)
- A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any physical intervention. Records may include the information in Appendix 2 (Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards) - 'use of physical restraint'. The record is made within 24 hours of the sanction being applied and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of physical intervention restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (NMS 12.6)

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

- review and consider expanding the current range of in-house specialist services as well as providing the school with its own sensory facilities to meet the challenging and complex needs of the residential pupils
- review the shadowing and restrictive role of new staff while they are on their first three months of probation
- review the effectiveness of the training provided to staff.

**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.**



20/09/2011

Dear Residential Pupils

### **Inspection of Farleigh College**

As you will know, Ofsted recently inspected the residential provision at your school. We visited where you live while at school and spoke to many of you about your experiences. Most of you also filled in questionnaires as did some of your parents which were very helpful to us and you told us lots of good things about the school.

We think that there is a good atmosphere in the residential provision and that you are looked after. Most of you are happy living at the school and feel well cared for. Most of you also feel that you get plenty to eat and like the meals provided. It was good to hear that the meals have improved since the last inspection. You all have individual rooms and although some of you were worried about keeping your possessions safe, you all have locks on your bedroom doors and lockable storage facilities within your bedrooms. These facilities help to keep your personal belongings safe. You are provided with a range of activities which you can join in with after school. Most of you enjoy the opportunities provided to you.

Although our inspection showed us that the care provided is satisfactory, the overall provision is inadequate. There are range of issues which could affect your safety. Some of these such as bullying, were raised by a number of you. All of the concerns have been brought to the attention of the school principal. He has agreed to deal with the concerns to make sure that you all live in a safer and happier environment.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Webber