

Furness School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119038
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	360801
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Jon Carter

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	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dee Morris
Principal	Anton van der Watt
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2008
School address	Rowhill Road Hextable Kent BR8 7RP
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Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2010
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Boarding provision

Social care Unique Reference Number

SC041787

Social care inspector

Diane Thackrah

Age group 11–16

Inspection dates 22–23 September 2010

Inspection number 360801

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors and one social care inspector. During the inspection, 15 lessons were observed and 14 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with school staff, a group of students and a representative from the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at curriculum and school improvement planning, tracking information showing students' progress, health and safety documentation and minutes of the governing body's meetings. Fourteen parental questionnaires were received and analysed alongside responses from both students and staff.

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

- The impact of assessment and monitoring on raising standards across all groups of students.
- How well curriculum opportunities meet the needs of different student groups.
- How well the curriculum of boarding links with main school.
- How successfully the school is engaging with the community.

How well curriculum opportunities meet the needs of different student groups.

Information about the school

Furness School is a special school for students with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties which admits both boarding and day students, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. There are a greater number of boys than girls attending the school and most of the students are of White British heritage. All of the students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school holds the Healthy Schools and Eco Schools awards.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Furness School is a satisfactory school. One parent summarises well two important strengths of the school when they comment: 'Furness is a friendly and personal school that takes on board the individual needs of every child.'

The vast majority of students attending Furness School have had significant disruption to their schooling due to exclusion or non-attendance. Through personalisation of the curriculum, with increasing access to a range of relevant and accredited qualifications, the majority of students are able to successfully re-engage with education and make at least satisfactory progress. Teaching usually takes account of students' needs and prior achievement and this is often sensitively done in consideration of students' previous, and usually more negative, experiences of education. While the school ensures that students who are more able can access examination courses leading to higher GCSE grades, there is an inconsistent level of challenge across the school and students do not always have a secure understanding of what they need to do to improve and move their learning on.

The good curriculum continues to develop, for example through the recent introduction of a GCSE course in electronics and the provision of a hair and beauty facility, and this is starting to address the difference in attainment between Furness students and those of the same age in mainstream schools. Good pastoral care and guidance is effective in promoting positive attitudes towards academic success and, consequently, students usually respond well to the courses that are offered as they can see the relevance to their future lives.

While an increasing range of vocationally based training is available on site and the 'learning centre' ensures more vulnerable students with autistic spectrum disorders can learn in the security of familiar surroundings, there remains a minority of students whose attendance is low or who are persistent absentees. The school's leaders, through good quality self-evaluation, have a clear and accurate view of what needs to be done to address both this and other issues. They have begun to implement appropriate and ambitious plans, demonstrating good capacity to secure further improvement in the future.

Relationships between staff and students are very positive and this ensures that those attending the school feel safe and have adults to turn to in times of need. The mutual respect which is generated often leads to behaviour around the school and in lessons being good and sometimes it is better than this. Where challenging behaviour occurs it is dealt with fairly and systematically so that the impact upon learning is minimised effectively.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of students' progress so that slow progress is eradicated and more students make good progress by:
 - ensuring staff have consistently high expectations of students' achievement, especially of students in Key Stage 4
 - involving students fully in setting challenging targets for their progress over time and ensuring that they always know what the next steps are in their learning
 - ensuring school leaders at all levels, together with governors, rigorously monitor and evaluate the quality of these targets and the outcomes they produce.
- Improve attendance, particularly of those students who are persistent absentees, by:
 - developing the role of the community system in supporting students absent from school
 - improving the rigour with which attendance data are routinely monitored by the school's middle leaders
- The school must ensure that it meets the National Minimum Standards for boarding which have not been met.
- Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In lessons, students usually make at least satisfactory progress in their learning and most enjoy their time at school. This successful re-engagement with education represents a significant achievement in itself for many students. While many respond especially well to work of a practical nature, there is usually no significant difference in progress between different curriculum subjects. Over the past year, a large majority of current students in Years 8, 9 and 11 have made satisfactory progress overall in the core subjects of mathematics, English and science with a minority making good progress. Year 9 students made good progress in mathematics. However, students in Year 10, while still making satisfactory progress overall, were more likely to make inadequate progress than their peers in these subjects. While a significant number of students maintain high attendance rates, overall attendance is low and, in Year 11, the most common reason for inadequate progress was poor attendance. While attainment remains low in comparison with outcomes for students at all schools, the work of the leadership team to develop curriculum opportunities so that students can access relevant levels of accredited qualifications is showing a gradual and sustainable improvement.

Students are clear that they feel safe and secure at school and they demonstrate good regard for working safely in practical subjects. Participation in sports activities both during school and as extra-curricular activities is good for both residential and day students; an increasing number are taking part in adventurous activities as part of the Challenger Troop programme run by the armed forces. This, together with the healthy choices they make at meal times, demonstrates that a good understanding of what it means to live a healthy lifestyle is put into practice by most students, as recognised by the Healthy Schools award. Older students respond well to responsibility and their younger peers describe Year 11 as

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being: 'a bit like teachers here, they help us out'. Stronger links are being forged with the local community than has historically been the case and students' good contribution to open events such as the school fête is well received by local people.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

How effective is the provision?

From a broad and balanced base, senior leaders endeavour to provide a curriculum which closely matches the needs of all the students at the school. Good emphasis is placed upon the development of basic skills in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school; older students are successfully encouraged to value academic achievement as an important way of improving their life chances. In Key Stage 4, students can choose from a wide variety of options, including vocational courses in practical trades on the school site, GCSE subjects and college courses in conjunction with local partners. School leaders recognise, however, that not all students are well engaged by the range of opportunities offered and have begun to implement a long-term plan of expansion and improvement to address this.

In lessons where teaching is good, students' learning moves on at a good pace because planning takes account of their starting points and students are challenged appropriately. This motivates the students well and they make good progress with the assistance of focused dialogue with staff; for example, during a Year 10 art lesson with a 'Banksy' theme, which encouraged students to have high aspirations of themselves. However, this

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quality of teaching is not seen consistently across the school and a majority of lessons leave students insufficiently challenged and without a sound understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and develop their learning further. While teaching assistants often provide good behavioural support, teachers' planning does not always make clear how their contribution is supporting learning and progress and opportunities are missed to develop students' independence.

Staff know the students as individuals and work collectively as a professional team, where necessary with the support of external services, to provide a good range of support to students to help them cope with, and overcome, some of their behavioural, social and emotional needs. There is a particularly strong community ethos, evident particularly at breakfast and lunchtimes when students gather together, which is well supported by a non-teaching team of co-ordinators. While the school's community systems work effectively to support students who are at school, the guidance services that they provide are not sufficiently available to those who choose to stay away from school. Students who are new to the school settle in quickly because staff create an environment which is safe and welcoming for them. As students prepare to leave the school, the provision of appropriate courses which can lead to GCSEs at an appropriate level, as well as work experience opportunities, give them additional skills to be successful in either their return to mainstream education or their move onto further education, training or employment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has undergone and continues to experience significant change since the new principal was appointed just prior to the last inspection. The vision of higher expectations of students' performance is increasingly shared by the staff through very effective senior leaders driving actions to reinforce these expectations. The appointment of qualified and specialist teaching staff, for example, has systematically addressed one of the areas of relative weakness identified by sound self-evaluation. Where lesson monitoring has identified underperformance, swift and robust action has been taken successfully to ensure that a satisfactory quality of teaching is restored quickly. The school recognises that the role of middle leaders is relatively underdeveloped and has realistic plans for improving their contribution to school improvement.

The governing body has undergone some recent changes and, while there is a broad balance of expertise among its members, many are relatively new to their roles. The school correctly identifies that the next stage of development of this supportive group is to increase the rigour with which students' progress is analysed and evaluated. Governors

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routinely ensure that they are available to parents and carers at school events. Most parents and carers feel well informed about all aspects of school life and value the regular communication they have with staff about their child's education and welfare. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory, with all relevant personnel, training and systems in place; however, the school does not have a single designated manager responsible for risk assessments and consequently this aspect lacks co-ordination.

The school's monitoring systems are used effectively to provide information about the progress of all students and outcomes are evaluated for different groups. Some actions have been taken in response to this monitoring but the impact of action taken is yet to be sustained and significant, particularly in the case of persistent absentees. Groups who may be at risk of discrimination, such as looked after children and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, usually perform similarly to other students in the school. This represents satisfactory effectiveness in promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination for all students. The school has an informed understanding of the socio-economic, ethnic and religious diversity of its students and has made a plan to promote community cohesion. However, planned actions do not sufficiently address all of the required strands.

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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Boarding provision

The quality of boarding at this school is satisfactory, with some good and some outstanding features. The school meets all but six key national minimum standards. Six recommendations have been made regarding the need to further improve the audit of medication, staff recruitment processes, young people's access to a telephone in private, the review of risk assessments, the use of wedges in fire doors and information about making a complaint to Ofsted.

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Despite these shortfalls, young people are happy in the school and enjoy being there. Young people say they feel safe and respected and it is clear that the positive relationships that they share with staff members go some way to promoting their well-being. The overall management structure contributes effectively to the protection and promotion of young people's welfare. Clearly written policies and procedures, in the main, underpin the school's practice. All previous recommendations have been met. This has resulted in higher staffing levels, clearer care plans, more communication between staff and a second designated child protection officer being appointed.

The promotion of health in the school is good. Young people have their health needs monitored and staff ensure that any health care needs are addressed. Medication is generally well handled; however, an accurate record is not always maintained of medication stocks held in the school and this does not fully promote young people's welfare. Young people enjoy a well-balanced and varied diet. There is always a good choice of meals and young people's views are taken into consideration in menu planning. Special dietary needs can be catered for. Meals are pleasant social occasions and young people have good opportunities to be involved in food preparation.

The school has systems in place for ensuring that new staff members are suitable to work with young people; these include carrying out pre-recruitment checks. All required checks have been carried out for all current staff members; however, two recently employed staff members commenced work prior to satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau checks being obtained. It is acknowledged that measures were put in place by the school to reduce any risks to young people because of this; however, this practice is not in line with national minimum standards and does not fully promote young people's welfare.

There are generally good systems in place for ensuring that young people live in a safe and secure environment. Regular health and safety monitoring is done in individual boarding houses and checks are made to the gas and electrical installations and to electrical appliances. Fire safety checks go some way to promoting young people's safety; however, the temporary use of wedges on fire doors when cleaning, does not fully promote young people's well-being. Environmental risk assessments help to reduce risks to young people. These, however, have not been reviewed for some time and therefore do not offer full protection to young people.

Young people are treated with respect and information about them is treated confidentially. Young people are encouraged to maintain positive contact with their parents. They are able to make telephone calls; however, current provision means that this can not always be done in private.

Young people's views are taken seriously and they are encouraged to raise any concerns. The school has an appropriate system for handling complaints and young people are provided with contact details for a range of external support agencies, including an independent listener. However, no information is provided about how young people and their parents can make a complaint to Ofsted. The school is good at ensuring that young people have access to support regarding any personal problems because there is a competent staff team, including a full-time counsellor. The school takes bullying seriously and young people feel safe. Overall arrangements for child protection are satisfactory, however safe recruitment procedures require strengthening. Staff are trained and fully understand the child protection policies and procedures.

The school supports young people to enjoy school life and to make achievements. There is good communication between care and educational staff and this helps to promote young

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people's educational attainment and allows for consistency in care. Young people receive very good individualised support from staff who make good efforts to ensure that they understand young people's needs. The positive relationships that young people share with staff enable young people to make their views known. More formal systems also exist for ensuring that young people can make decisions about their lives.

Young people live in an outstanding environment. They each have a bedroom with en-suite facilities. Bedrooms have homely touches and young people are encouraged to personalise these. There are comfortable lounges and dining rooms. Facilities around the school include a sports hall, weights room, 13 acres of grounds with a sensory garden and woodland.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are well supervised and speak highly of the staff. Young people know how to contact staff members at all times. There is a well-trained and competent staff team that receives good line management support.

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

- ensure that the written guidance for storing medication is followed in practice and that there is an accurate record of all medication stored in the school (national minimum standard 14.20 not met)
- ensure that young people can make and receive telephone calls in private and without staff permission (national minimum standard 3.5 not met)
- ensure that young people and their parents are given information about how they can make a complaint to Ofsted (national minimum standard 4.8 not met)
- ensure that wedges are not used to prop open fire doors (NMS 26)
- ensure that environmental risk assessments are kept under review (national minimum standard 26.3 not met)
- ensure that staff members do not begin work at the school until the school is in receipt of a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau check (national minimum standard 27.2 not met)

These are the grades for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	3
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Views of parents and carers

A below average number of responses were received from parents and carers. The vast majority of responses were very positive and many written comments praised the leadership and staff of the school for providing a service which meets the needs of their children more effectively than they have experienced at other schools. Inspectors' conversations with students lead them to concur with this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Furness 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 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 68 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	5	36	9	64	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	10	71	2	14	2	14	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	8	57	5	36	1	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	57	4	29	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	64	5	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	57	4	29	2	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	57	6	43	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)	8	57	6	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	64	3	21	1	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	64	4	29	1	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	50	6	43	1	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	79	2	14	1	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	71	4	29	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



24 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Furness School, Hextable, BR8 7RP

Thank you for making us feel welcome when we came to inspect your school.

We think Furness School is a satisfactory school which gives you good quality care and guidance. Most of you make satisfactory progress and some of you are doing better than this because you are clear about what you need to do next to be successful in your learning. We are pleased that the school's principal and staff want to continue to develop the good curriculum that they provide for you, especially the vocational courses that you get to participate in on the school site. However, the school recognises that it needs to work even harder at getting this right as there are still too many of you who do not attend school as much as they can.

We have asked the school's leaders to make sure that everyone makes even better progress so that they can leave school having achieved as much as they are capable of. We have asked them to do this by:

- giving you challenging targets and ensuring everyone always knows what they need to do to improve their work
- improving the attendance of students by using the community system to support those who don't come to school as often as they should.

You can help by letting your teachers know if the work you are getting isn't challenging enough for you and by making sure you attend school every day.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jon Carter

Lead inspector

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