

Furness School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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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.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Furness School is a residential and day special school for secondary-aged pupils with emotional and social development needs; it is maintained by Kent County Council. The school is situated in semi-rural surroundings on the outskirts of Swanley, Kent. At the time of the inspection there were 86 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are male. There are 24 residential places, all on the school site.

Residential pupils currently reside in two of the three houses, Leicester and Lady Furness House. Each house has a separate lounge, dining area and games rooms. Residential pupils benefit from single en-suite rooms or single rooms with adjacent bathrooms. Residential pupils have access to a large playing field, a sports hall and a conservation garden in the grounds. The residential provision was last inspected in September 2010. At the time of this inspection there were 14 residential pupils, one of whom was female.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	satisfactory
Outcomes for residential pupils	satisfactory
Quality of residential provision and care	satisfactory
Residential pupils' safety	satisfactory
Leadership and management of the residential provision	satisfactory

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the welfare provision at Furness School is satisfactory. Residential pupils enjoy their boarding experience. The majority are making steady progress in relation to their emotional well-being, social and independent living skills. The residential provision is a stable base and provides a welcome refuge for them. They receive support from a caring, experienced staff team who are dedicated to improving their quality of life. The school offers comfortable, spacious personalised accommodation, with a range of additional facilities. The décor and furnishings within the houses are generally sound, however, parts require redecoration and updating.
- Safeguarding arrangements are adequate. Residential pupils feel safe within their boarding houses. Their mutually respectful relationships with care staff have a calming influence on their challenging needs. This results in the limited use of sanctions, minimal restraints and unauthorised absences. Relationships between residential pupils are generally harmonious and they do not complain of bullying within their boarding houses. Residential pupils, however, did highlight bullying incidents and unacceptable behaviour within the main school by day pupils.
- Care planning reasonably focuses on the individual needs of residential pupils. There is, however, insufficient detail in relation to equality and diversity. The qualitative progress of each residential pupil can be seen in each file, however, it has not been quantifiably collated. Residential pupils have sufficient opportunities to influence decision making. They would, however, like more fun activities. Activities available are fairly general. They do not fully enable residential pupils to develop their emotional, intellectual, and creative skills.
- The main shortfalls in the residential provision are linked to stagnancy and limited

progress to moving the service forward. National minimum standards have not been met. Most of the recommendations from the last inspection have been met. There has, however, been limited progress as the school has not fully embraced and implemented the new national minimum standards. Policies and procedures have not been appropriately updated. Internal monitoring within boarding is not rigorous and there is insufficient self-evaluation, reflection and action planning. There is a lack of strategy and vision. This does not have a detrimental impact on residential pupils as they are happy and are adequately thriving. Residential pupils benefit from a new dynamic senior leadership team who are fully aware of the school's shortfalls. They have mechanisms in place and are vigorously working towards improving outcomes.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are satisfactory. Residential pupils are making steady progress in relation to their starting points. They describe their care as 'good' and state that they are 'helped a lot'. They give appropriate examples of how boarding positively influences their lives. The majority of residential pupils are learning to be self-reflective, manage their moods and take responsibility for their actions. They demonstrate greater self-esteem, emotional resilience, confidence and improved social skills. Residential pupils appropriately interact with each other and have developed meaningful friendships. They generally benefit from mutually respectful relationships with staff. This is fostered by the firm boundaries and the safe, relaxed atmosphere within each house.

Residential pupils engage in activities which contribute to their educational and social development. They are able to improve on their numeracy and literacy through the completion of supported work. Residential pupils identify their weaknesses with care staff and are given basic tasks to undertake. Examples include multiplication and reading. Residential pupils enjoy an adequate range of activities. These include playing games consoles, watching DVDs, going to the cinema, out for a meal, shopping, art and craft, day trips to places of interest and bowling. Residential pupils gave an example of the good time they had at theme parks and Quasar. They would like to have the option of 'more trips' and 'fun' activities. The activities currently on offer do not fully enable residential pupils to develop new talents, skills and interests. The school has not fully addressed national minimum standard 10, which relates to activities and free time.

The school offers residential pupils an opportunity to influence boarding practices. Residential pupils regularly voice their opinions during house meetings, discussions with staff and the independent visitor. They are also able to share their views on wider issues through the school council and pupil questionnaires. Residential pupils are able to maintain contact with their relatives. Since the last inspection cordless phones have been purchased, which enable them to converse privately with family members.

The school offers an independence programme where residential pupils can acquire basic practical and life skills. Weekly activities enable residential pupils to practice their cooking and baking skills. During the inspection, residential pupils made scones. Residential pupils manage their personal monies, which enables them to practice their budgeting skills. Residential pupils are aware of the need to pursue a healthy lifestyle. They participate in a range of physical exercise which includes swimming, walking, boxing, going to the gym and playing football. Residential pupils take responsibility for their emotional and psychological health. This includes discussing their feelings with care staff and using the school counselling service.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the boarding provision is satisfactory. Staff pride themselves on the fact that the residential provision offers a 'family atmosphere' for pupils. They demonstrate a strong commitment to the role, and comment that they 'saw the job more as a vocation'. Parents and teachers are invited to visit and have meals in the boarding houses. This contributes to the school's aim to promote a homely environment. Residential pupils convey great satisfaction with their quality of care. They comment that they 'prefer it here than at school'. Care is taken to balance the individual needs of children to ensure harmony within each house. The school aims to work in partnership with parents. Residential staff and the school counsellor are also an additional source of support to parents.

Residential pupils benefit from individualised care. Their files detail the progress they are making, however, this information is not collated to inform service development and the overall effectiveness of residential life. The school's placement plans provide a basic evaluation of the child's general needs. They do not contain sufficient information relating to their ethnicity, culture, faith or sexuality. New residential pupils have a satisfactory induction process. They receive their own guide, which provides them with adequate information on the residential provision, rules and expectations. Residential staff meet on a daily basis to discuss the needs of each child. There are suitable communications between school and residential staff, so that concerns about pupils are passed on appropriately.

Residential pupils have access to the services and support they need to meet their health needs. An appropriate health index details all the information required, in accordance with the national minimum standards. The school has a good drug awareness system. Pupils benefit from their own counsellor, which is a valuable, well-used resource. Residential staff securely store medication. Staff, however, inappropriately record all medication administered in the controlled drugs book. The school has Healthy Schools status and pupils benefit from nutritious, balanced meals from a variety of cultures. The school effectively caters for young people's dietary needs and preferences. Mealtimes are a social occasion. Food is of an appropriate quality and quantity. Healthy eating is actively promoted and fresh fruit is available in each house.

Residential pupils reside in clean, comfortable boarding houses. Each house is self-contained, with its own lounge, dining area, kitchen and games room. Residential pupils have their own bedrooms, which they are able to personalise. Some rooms are en-suite and other rooms have adjacent bathrooms. This makes it easy for residential pupils to maintain their personal hygiene. Residential pupils have access to facilities in the main school building and grounds. There is a reasonable range of leisure facilities within each house, which are suitable for their ages and interests. They have access to games consoles, pool and table tennis tables, books, computers, and board games. Most areas in the houses are adequately maintained. There are areas, however, which need repainting. Some carpets are stained. Mattresses in both houses and the settees in Lady Furness House are also worn. The school has not fully addressed national minimum standard 5 related to the maintenance of the accommodation.

Residential pupils' safety

The school makes satisfactory provision to safeguard boarders' welfare. The recent completion of a safeguarding and child protection audit provides a comprehensive review of the school and details pertinent recommendations. The commissioning of this review demonstrates the school's commitment to pupils' safety and welfare. There are strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and safeguarding personnel. All staff receive regular training; this includes ancillary staff. All staff, however, were not fully aware of the external agencies they could contact if they had concerns. The school operates safe recruitment procedures. Staff understand the importance of whistle blowing and highlight poor practice. The school is aware of the need to update their policies related to safeguarding and child protection; for example, the child protection policy refers to terminology no longer in use. The school has not fully addressed the national minimum standard 11 related to child protection.

Residential pupils report that they feel safe. They identify a range of adults they would talk to if they felt unsafe. Residential pupils know how to make a complaint. They are also aware of external organisations they can contact; this information is on display in their boarding houses. There is a policy for countering bullying; this has not been updated to reflect the diverse aspects of bullying, an example being cyber bullying. The school's website, however, provides a dedicated page to bullying which includes racism, homophobic and cyber bullying. This internet page provides contact details for an external agency which specialises in bullying matters. The school monitors racist incidents, and pupils discuss bullying in a range of meetings. Residential pupils do not experience any bullying within their living environment, stating 'staff look after you'. They did, however, report bullying in the main school by day pupils. The school has not fully addressed national minimum standard 12 which relates to promoting positive behaviour.

Residential pupils enjoy boarding and are not absent without authority. They are

making steady progress regarding their challenging behavioural needs. The sound relationships they have with residential staff enable them to reflect and learn strategies to manage their moods and anger. Staff are generally able to diffuse contentious situations. There is a good electronic system for monitoring pupils' behaviour. This details incidents, disciplinary measures and rewards. In response to positive behaviour, residential pupils are able to earn additional monies, activities and treats. The number of sanctions and incidents within the residential provision is reasonably low. Staff rarely have to restrain residential pupils. Although staff are trained in positive handling, a refresher course is imminent.

The residential provision is physically safe and appropriately secure. There are appropriate health and safety arrangements. Engineers undertake relevant checks and the subsequent certificates verify the safety of the environment. There are regular fire drills and alarm tests. Residential pupils regularly participate in fire drills. The main shortfalls relate to policies and procedures. These have not been updated to reflect the new national minimum standards and government guidance. This relates to the search policy, missing from care, behaviour management and those mentioned earlier in this outcome area. The school has not fully addressed the national minimum standards 12 and 15.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The management and organisation of boarding are satisfactory. Residential pupils benefit from a more strategic management approach. This is due to recent changes within the senior leadership team. This comprises dynamic individuals who are working proactively with their local education department to drive forward improvements. The senior leadership team is very aware of the weaknesses throughout the whole school. It is committed to provide care which enables residential pupils to flourish. The school has a Statement of Purpose which clearly highlights its aims and objectives. Information is also available on the website, which highlights the strengths of each boarding house. The stated ethos is to equip residential pupils with 'an understanding and consideration for others, with self-control and acceptable behaviour being the principal factor'.

Residential pupils receive care from a stable, experienced staff team who value each other. Staffing is sufficient, and individuals demonstrate a strong dedication to promoting positive outcomes for children. Care staff have the necessary vocational training or are working towards this qualification. Residential pupils feel staff are 'good'. Staff members receive sufficient support through their team meetings and individual supervision. Performance appraisals are in progress. Staff also receive ongoing training to further equip them for their role. The learning and development programme, however, has not been evaluated. Therefore it is difficult to establish the effectiveness of staff training. The school has not fully addressed national minimum standard 19 which relates to staff training. Currently due to staff shortages, residential staff are having to assist within the main school, for example, escorting on trips and supervising breaks. These additional duties have an impact on staff shifts.

The senior leadership team is aware of the issues regarding this arrangement. It is recognised that this situation is unable to continue indefinitely. Relevant parties are addressing this matter.

The leadership and management of the residential provision are inconsistent. The school has not fully embraced and implemented the new national minimum standards. There has not been a review of the residential provision. The internal assessment regarding compliance with the new standards was not readily available for examination during the inspection. Internal monitoring within the residential provision is not rigorous. The school has not fully addressed the national minimum standards 13 and 20. The culmination of these factors results in stagnancy, a lack of strategy and vision and limited progress in moving forward. There is inefficient self-evaluation, reflection and action planning. External monitoring, however, is good. This complies with national minimum standard 20 and has a strong emphasis on safeguarding children.

Strong leadership is emerging. Although some aspects of the national minimum standards are not met, this does not have a significantly detrimental impact on residential pupils' safety and well-being. Senior leaders are aware of the school's strengths and shortfalls and have plans to rectify issues. There is a sound awareness of the need to drive up standards, work in a smarter way and better evidence progress. The school has acted on most of the recommendations from the previous inspection. There is good capacity to further improve.

National minimum standards

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

- Accommodation for children complies with any requirements set out in regulations relating to school premises (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards'), is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any children with restricted mobility. Toilet and washing facilities provide appropriate privacy for children. The accommodation contains suitable specialist facilities to support children whose disabilities require them. (NMS 5.1)
- Children develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills through the accessible and stimulating environment created by the school. Children are supported to take part in school based and out of school activities. (NMS 10.1)
- 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)

- 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's procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the Head of Care follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority. (NMS 15.7)
- The Headteacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to: its Statement of Purpose, its staffing policy, the placement plans for individual children; and an internal assessment of its compliance with these Standards. Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school. (NMS 20.4)
- 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)
- The learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and is updated if necessary. (NMS 19.4)

What should the school do to improve further?

- record non-controlled drugs separately
- ensure care plans fully address residential pupils' ethnicity, culture, faith and sexuality
- ensure staff split shifts do not have a detrimental impact on the residential provision.

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.



26/03/2012

Dear residential pupils

Inspection of Furness School

As you will know Ofsted recently inspected the residential provision in your school. I had the pleasure of meeting most of you. I greatly appreciated your assistance during this inspection. Thank you for showing me around and openly sharing your views on life at the school. Your comments were very helpful and assisted with the final judgement I made regarding your care. I feel you receive a satisfactory service.

I recognise that the staff team are very caring and committed to your care. They work very hard both in the boarding houses and in the main school. You are all happy with the boarding facilities and are making reasonable progress. It was great to see your positive behaviour being rewarded and that you can earn treats and extra pocket money.

I was very impressed with your confidence and social skills. It was good to see you are able to enjoy a range of activities, including baking and playing on the games consoles. You requested more fun activities. I would like the school to provide you with more ways for you to further develop your emotional, intellectual, social and creative skills.

Your boarding houses are clean and comfortable. There are, however, areas which require redecorating. I would like some of the carpets in the communal areas to be steam cleaned. I would also like new settees and mattresses to be purchased for you.

You report that you feel safe in the boarding houses, but some of you complained about bullying in the main school. I would like this to be addressed. I have highlighted a few other areas for improvement. These relate to the school policies, practices, record keeping and monitoring, the aim being to further improve your quality of care.

I greatly enjoyed meeting you and wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Lewis
Social Care Regulatory Inspector

Yours sincerely,

Sharon Lewis