

Furness School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	119038
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	403837
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2012
Lead inspector	Robert Ellis HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	77
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	N/A
Acting Principal	Annabel Lilley
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 September 2010
School address	Rowhill Road Hextable Kent BR8 7RP
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Age group	11–16
Inspection date(s)	15–16 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Robert Ellis

Her Majesty's Inspector

Anne Duffy

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out at no notice. Inspectors observed 10 lessons taught by nine different teachers and held discussions with a member of the former governing body, representatives from the local authority, members of the school council and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at development plans, the school's tracking data showing students' progress, attendance and behaviour records, teachers' lesson plans and students' work. Joint lesson observations were conducted with senior staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) when planning the inspection and the views of parents and carers were gathered from their responses to students' annual reviews. Questionnaires for parents, carers and students are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Information about the school

Furness School is a special school which provides for boarding and day students who have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs and most students have previously experienced significant disruption to their education due to exclusion or non-attendance.

Most students are White British boys and almost all speak English as their first language. Around one-quarter of students are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. The school is led and managed by an Acting Principal and an interim leadership team. The local authority has withdrawn delegated powers and has assumed responsibility for governance of the school. Boarding provision was inspected on 26 and 27 March 2012 and the report can be found on Ofsted's website. The boarding provision was not part of the current inspection.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	4
Leadership and management	4

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- The school is not satisfactory because students’ achievement is inadequate and there are significant weaknesses in the school’s promotion of students’ moral and social development. Attainment in mathematics and communication skills is particularly low.
- Teaching is inadequate and staff have low expectations of what students are capable of achieving. Teachers do not provide appropriate support or challenge particularly for those students who have behavioural difficulties. Despite recent steps to monitor teaching and identify areas that need to improve, the leadership of teaching and the management of teachers’ performance are inadequate.
- Behaviour and safety are inadequate. Most students do not show respect or courtesy to others. They have poor attitudes to learning. Students experience bullying and harassment because behaviour management is inadequate. Students say they do not feel safe and lack confidence in the staff to keep them safe.
- Despite some recent small improvements, leadership and management are inadequate. Those responsible for leading and managing the school have not secured sufficient improvement. Arrangements for safeguarding students give cause for concern.
- While there have been recent improvements in procedures and systems to ensure the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, these measures have

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had limited impact in addressing the substantive wider difficulties which the school faces.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make urgent improvements in the school's safeguarding arrangements to ensure the safety and well-being of students.
- Accelerate students' progress and raise attainment, especially in mathematics and in communication skills.
- Eradicate inadequate teaching and promote high professional standards by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of students' capabilities
 - using assessment information when planning lessons to ensure that work meets pupils' needs and is sufficiently challenging
 - ensuring that lesson content motivates and engages students in their learning
 - ensuring that lessons effectively promote students' personal development.
- Ensure that all adults respond effectively and consistently to any incidents of inappropriate behaviour.
- Ensure that students develop respect for themselves and others and feel safe in school.
- Develop effective strategies to ensure that all students attend school regularly and adopt safe practices in lessons and around the school site.
- Secure effective leadership and management at all levels in order to promote rapid and sustained improvement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students' achievement is inadequate. Students are admitted to the school with attainment that typically ranges from broadly average to significantly below average. Results by Year 11 students in GCSE and other examinations over the past three years have been low. Most students made significantly less progress than expected considering their starting points and abilities, particularly in mathematics. Scrutiny of students' work and the school's own assessment information shows that students are making inadequate progress because they are not developing the necessary skills, including in communication and mathematics, to adequately prepare them for the next stage in their learning and development. Students also make inadequate progress in their personal and social development and this provides a further barrier to their learning and progress. The progress made by different groups of students is

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also below that of similar groups nationally. While there has been success in accelerating the progress of some 'nurture group' based Year 7 students, they are not making progress in line with students of a similar age nationally. Very few students demonstrate interest in learning when they arrive in lessons. They are seldom motivated or engaged by the work they are given.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is inadequate because it does not meet the needs of the students and results in them making inadequate progress. Although examples of satisfactory and good teaching were observed during the inspection, teachers' expectations are generally too low. Strategies to manage students' behaviour are often ineffective. For example, an English lesson was consistently interrupted by frequent disruptions caused by students shouting, throwing paper and refusing to behave, despite the efforts of several different adults. Senior leaders have taken some steps to address weaker teaching. Increased monitoring of lessons and evaluation of data about students' performance have enabled senior leaders to provide some staff with helpful feedback about their practice and offer information about how they can improve.

In the better lessons tasks and activities are closely matched to the needs and interests of the students and there are productive relationships that support learning. This enables those students who remain in lessons to make satisfactory progress. In an art lesson, where the teacher had high expectations of what students could achieve and used effective strategies to engage and support them, progress was good. However, very few students remain in class throughout lessons and teachers and support staff have limited success in persuading them to return to class or in re-engaging them in their learning if they return.

There is a high level of staff absence and many posts are filled on a temporary basis. Senior leaders have correctly identified that lack of challenge and inconsistent use of assessment information, as well as students' general non-attendance, impede learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety are inadequate. The social care inspection in March 2012 raised serious concerns about students' behaviour and these have not been sufficiently addressed. A new behaviour policy is being introduced. However, there is a lack of consistency in dealing with a very high number of significant behavioural incidents. The high number of exclusions is resulting in a substantial amount of learning time being lost.

Attendance over the last three years has been consistently low and too many students have attendance that is persistently below 85%. Poor attendance to lessons and disruptive behaviour are common. Lessons are frequently interrupted by shouting, swearing and by students entering or leaving the classroom. Inspectors observed many occasions where students showed a lack of respect for staff and each

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other. The use of racist, sexually explicit or homophobic terminology by students often went unchallenged. The school council says that bullying has lessened, but many students are still concerned about the amount of bullying that takes place. One student confided that the reason he is absent so often is due to bullying. Students say they have little confidence in the staff's ability to keep them safe. Parents raised few concerns in their responses to students' annual reviews and several made positive comments about the school.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are inadequate. The interim leadership team has begun to remedy some of the areas of weakness, but improvement has been limited. Leaders and managers have been too slow in intervening where the quality of classroom practice and behaviour management is clearly inadequate. Several new systems and procedures have been implemented recently but these have not had any significant impact in tackling the school's underlying weaknesses, including improving the quality of teaching and students' behaviour. The impact of professional development on improvements to teaching and learning has been limited. Similarly leaders and managers at all levels have not been effective in identifying precise, achievable actions that should significantly improve students' experiences and personal development.

Students' inadequate progress shows that the promotion of equality of opportunity is ineffective. The school is, therefore, not demonstrating the capacity for further improvement. Its capacity is limited because actions to promote improvement are dependent upon a few individuals, most of whom are serving in temporary positions. The local authority has assumed governance responsibilities.

The education and care provided by the school does not meet the needs of students, and strategies for managing and improving their behaviour are ineffective. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students give serious cause for concern. The number of students absconding from the site has reduced but students are regularly absent from lessons. They demonstrate limited awareness of the risks involved in the various activities they undertake whilst out of the classroom. Few students actually receive their full entitlement to the planned curriculum due to disruptions to lessons. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is inadequate.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



17 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Furness School, Hextable BR8 7RP

Thank you for showing us your school. My particular thanks go to those of you who were prepared to talk to us about your school and your experiences. We found that the school does not provide you with a satisfactory education. The quality of care you receive is also inadequate. We have placed your school in 'special measures' and inspectors will visit to check that the quality of education and care you receive improves rapidly.

I know that some of you are keen to learn and are frustrated by the frequent disruptions that occur in lessons. You told us that you do not feel safe and do not have confidence that the school can keep you safe. Our visit raised serious concerns about how the school ensures your safety and we are asking the school and local authority to take urgent action to address this.

We are concerned about the extreme behaviour of some students. The school's own records show that the incidents that we observed during our visit are typical of the behaviour that students routinely experience. We were disappointed that so many students direct inappropriate language at staff and other students and show little respect for each other. Adults try hard to get you involved in lessons, and in some classes we saw that you made satisfactory progress because you stayed in the lesson and adults were clear about what was expected of you.

Adults who are responsible for the school are working to improve the quality of education you receive. We have asked the school to help you make better progress in your mathematics and communication skills. We want teachers to make sure your work is interesting and that it challenges you. We want you to improve your attendance and behaviour. We have asked the school to be more consistent in how it deals with poor behaviour and to give you better support to help you manage your own behaviour so that lessons are not disrupted.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
Her Majesty's Inspector

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