

# Fosse Way School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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**Inspector** Wendy Anderson

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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**

The school is a maintained specialist school, located in the town of Radstock. It provides education for 175 aged 3 to 19 years who have a statement of special educational need. In addition, it offers weekly residential provision for up to 14 pupils of either gender who have autistic spectrum disorders. Whilst the majority of these pupils will be between 11 and 18 years of age, where appropriate, accommodation may be made available to those aged 19 or 20. The residential provision forms part of the main school building. The residential provision was last inspected in February 2011.

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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/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

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

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is outstanding. The quality of the boarding provision has a positive impact on the development of young peoples' social skills, self-esteem and self-confidence. The school is an inclusive environment, which celebrates the individual and provides them with good opportunities for growth and development. This includes increasing the confidence within the community.
- The major strength of the school is the relationships between young people and staff, which is key to the work they undertake. This linked to the staffs excellent knowledge of the young people they work with, their effective communication and working in partnership with the parents means young people receive consistent holistic care which meets their identified needs.
- Staff are very committed and proactive at ensuring young peoples' needs are met. There is an excellent training and development programme for staff that ensure they are kept informed of current practice and legislation. Staff report they feel well supported by both senior management and colleagues.
- Young peoples' care is based on excellent individual care plans, which are frequently reviewed and updated. This actively takes into account their disability, race, culture, religion, communication and behavioural needs.
- Young peoples safety is protected by robust systems of risk assessments, recruitment and health and safety procedures.
- The school has excellent systems for consulting with and involvement of young people in all aspects of their care and the day to day life at the school.

- The school fully meets the national minimum standards. The school strives for the highest standard for the young people in their care. This is evident through a robust review and self-assessment process which is the basis for future development. Children are at the heart of the service and there is a clear desire to continually improve outcomes.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Outcomes for young people are outstanding. The school is a highly inclusive community which strives for the very best for the young people they care for. The school's commitment to equality and diversity is evident throughout their practice and the policies and procedures support this.

There are exceptionally good relationships between the young people and staff. Young people enjoy spending time with the staff and there is a lot of laughter in the boarding house. It has a very relaxed nurturing atmosphere. The staff team are incredibly committed to the young people and the parents they work with. Young people are fully involved with their care planning and they are supported to make a significant contribution to their living environment and school life.

Young people said that they love their school, 'it's the best place ever', 'it's fun and there is always lots to do.' Parents report that their children are happy when they come home for the weekend and equally happy to return to school on Monday mornings. One parent commented that their child has a better social life than they do and this is due to the increased social confidence and the friendships they have made at school.

Young people make exceptional progress from their starting point whilst at the school. This is evidenced through their individual targets and the feedback from parents who have reported excellent improvements in personal hygiene, domestic tasks and behavioural issues. Parents said their children were calmer, more socially confident, integrated and developing skills for independence.

Young people are able to engage in an extensive range of activities and access the numerous school facilities during boarding time. There is a considerable level of choice, enabling them to participate in group or individual activities.

Young people are purposefully prepared for independence and adulthood. They learn independent living skills and are exceptionally well supported by staff.

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

The quality of the school's boarding provision and care is outstanding. The staff team are an exceptional group of people who are very child focused, committed to achieving the best for the young people they care for and proactive in developing

their skills to further improve the work they do. The school is a centre of excellence in the provision of specialist education and has been a specialist technology school for four years. As a result, the staff are experts in this field and have disseminated their expertise to other providers.

Prior to admission, staff work successfully and collaboratively with parents and professionals to comprehensively assess young people's individual needs. As a result of this, young people are provided with high quality personalised care and support from the outset. Extremely detailed care plans give staff a thorough understanding of how to carry out the personal care needs of young people including their preferred carer and the products they like to use. The school also provides input from a speech and language therapist who works closely with the staff team. The induction period into the boarding house is tailored to the needs of the individual to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. Very detailed placement plans are developed which are frequently reviewed and updated. These plans include information and agreement for the use of any chimes used on individual young peoples' bedroom doors. Each young person has an allocated key worker, who works with the young person on a regular basis. The residential staff, with one exception, also work with the young people in the education setting as well as boarding. This provides excellent continuity and a true holistic approach to the young peoples' care. This also demonstrates the excellent communication that exists between both aspects of the school and provides a truly holistic approach to the overall care of the young people.

Staff at the school have high expectations for the young people in their care. This is not only focused on their academic achievements but also on their social and personal development. Young people are enabled to access a wide range of activities both on and off the school campus. These enable them to increase their self-confidence, integration with the wider community and independence. Parents were very positive about this aspect of the work the school undertake. One parent said, 'my child is learning to be more tolerant of others, to become more independent in preparation for adulthood and their social skills and confidence have improved considerably.' This view was echoed by many of the parents. Within the clubs and activities the school run, the young people are enabled and supported by staff to set up and run some of these clubs. All of the young people are able to exercise choice as to what activities they undertake whatever their level of communication.

Consultation and the involvement of the young people is at the heart of the work the school undertake. There are numerous methods used by the school to consult both with the young people and their parents. This consultation takes place across all aspects of the young person's care from menus to involving the parents and young people in preparing/decorating their bedroom prior to admission.

Young people receive excellent support to lead a healthy, active lifestyle. Parents and residential staff work effectively together to promote the health of the young people. Young people remain registered with their own doctors and dentists, and parents

retain primary responsibility for meeting their child's routine health needs. The staff are trained in first aid and they also receive further training in additional health issues relating to the young person they care for. This is carried out prior to the young person entering the boarding house so that staff fully understand the needs of the young person. Medication at the school is exceptionally well managed and includes a consent form which is signed by the parents, the general practitioner and the headmaster prior to any medication being given or any change in dosage. This is also supported by comprehensive records on all aspects of health care for the young people.

The quality of the school's catering arrangements are good. Young people prepare their own meals in the house for two nights of the week, and eat in the school's central dining area for the other two nights. Menus demonstrate a healthy, balanced and suitably varied diet for young people, and allow for specific dietary needs as well as likes and dislikes. The school has recently gained a healthy lifestyle award.

The accommodation is of a good standard and provides young people with a comfortable, homely, nurturing, safe environment in which to live, grow and develop. There is ample communal space for the number of boarders and each young person has their own bedroom. There is a wide range of books, games, DVDs and art materials for the young people to access. They are also able to access the school swimming pool, hydrotherapy pool, sport equipment, catering facilities and information technology suite in boarding time. Maintenance issues are addressed promptly so that the accommodation is well maintained.

Young people board Monday to Friday and then return home at the end of the educational day on Friday. Parents said they are kept well informed by the staff on what their child has been doing. This is done through the home/school book and also by frequent phone contact and emails. This contact is not only from the staff but also from the young people and staff assist those young people with limited communication skills. Parents reported that nothing is too much trouble for the staff and that they always make time to talk to them. One parent said, 'Staff are kind, helpful, wonderful people. Nothing is too much trouble.' Another parent summed up the school as a wonderful place. Their only wish was that they had accessed it earlier in their child's life and that their child could stay longer.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

The school makes outstanding provision to safeguard young people's welfare with their safety being woven throughout the schools ethos. This is supported by robust policies and procedures which are closely adhered to and comprehensive records which demonstrate that policies and procedures are adhered to in practice. All staff receive safeguarding training which is frequently updated and staff demonstrate a robust knowledge of the school procedures and processes. Young people say they feel very safe at the school and parents say they feel the school is a safe place and

are happy for their children to be there. Individual work is undertaken with young people on keeping themselves safe. This is important as the majority of young people are very vulnerable and very trusting of adults. The school links this work to developing young people's integration/involvement into the community. A number of parents commented on how their child has now an increased understanding in this area.

The main focus of behaviour management at the school is that of positive reinforcement and the development of proactive behaviour strategies for individual young people. These plans are consistently applied by the staff team and have also been adopted by parents. This work stems from the excellent in- depth knowledge the staff have of the young people in their care. This includes the identification of triggers, signs of stress, anger, frustration and upset and then addressing these before the young person reacts. This information forms the individual's behaviour plan which has specific learning objectives and a comprehensive risk assessment. Staff receive training in the school's chosen form of physical intervention but actual physical intervention is very rarely used. Robust records are maintained of any incident or sanction and this includes input from the young person. These records are closely monitored by senior management.

Bullying is not seen as an issue at the school either by the young people or the parents. There are robust policies and procedures to address bullying as well as individual work with the young people on this issue. This includes work on appropriate hugs and personal space which can be an issue for some young people placed.

Young people benefit from the school's extremely robust staff recruitment and vetting system. Recruitment records demonstrate the range of ongoing checks, which ensures the continued suitability of staff. There is also a robust health and safety process at the school, which is strictly adhered too. This includes excellent risk assessments and fire safety records. These systems ensure the young people live in a hazard free safe environment.

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

The leadership and management of the boarding provision is outstanding. Although the boarding provision is small in number, it is the very heart of the school and valued for its contribution. The staff team are extremely committed, proactive and creative in meeting the individual needs of the young people. They are exceptionally competent at giving young people opportunities that address their diverse range of needs and are particularly successful in addressing communication needs. They have very high expectations for the young people they care for and work closely with the young people's parents towards achieving these. The boarding aspect of the school has a major influence on the young people's personal and social development, which was verified by the feedback from parents. The boarding house runs very smoothly and has very high staff to young people ratio which enables the young people to



receive highly individualised care they need and deserve.

The school has excellent monitoring systems in place which ensure that young people receive a high standard of care. This process is also used to inform and develop future work, staff training and includes reviewing and challenging the work undertaken and targets achieved to ensure continued development and improved achievements. There is also an independent person who regularly monitors the work undertaken in boarding and they produce a thorough report.

The senior staff team are very well trained ,as are the boarding staff team. This high standard of training is supported by a robust supervision and annual appraisal system. All staff are trained to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 with a number of staff either undertaking or have completed NVQ Level 4. The team have also undertaken a number of training courses specific to the current needs of the young people currently placed. Staff are very positive about their supervision and the support they receive from senior staff and one another. They feel the management team are very committed to the school and to their development and careers.

All the required policies and procedures are in place and adhered too. There are all regularly reviewed and updated in light of changes to legislation. Consultation with young people and parents also inform the development of policies and procedures as do lessons from events at the school.

Feedback from parents have all been extremely positive. One said, 'My child has made tremendous progress since attending Fosse Way School. We know they could not be in better hands and we never worry about them during the week, because we know they are happy and contented.' Another parent said, 'My child adores the staff as we do.'

The school provides parents and young people with excellent written and pictorial information about the house, which summarizes the Statement of Principles and Practice. This information covers all the required areas and reflects current practice at the school

The school maintains all the required records and these are securely stored.

## **National minimum standards**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

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



**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.**



13/06/2012

Dear Boarders

### **Inspection of Fosse Way School**

I recently met you whilst carrying out an inspection of your boarding house. I found that you receive an outstanding standard of care at your school.

You have lots of space in the boarding house and in the school that you can use to play games, swim, cook, ride bikes, walk and much much more during the evening. You are able to choose what you want to do during the evenings so you get to do things that are fun and you enjoy. You are also able to go to local youth and sports clubs.

You each have your own rooms and these are decorated as you want them. You are able to bring in your own toys and photos of your family, pets and friends.

There is plenty of food to eat, and you can help choose the menu and prepare meals with staff help. You help with tasks around the house, and this will help you when you leave the boarding house in the future.

You have a great staff team who look after you really well and there are always enough staff on duty so that you can spend one to one time with them.

The school has lots of systems in place to make sure you are kept safe.

I really enjoyed my time at your school and it was wonderful to meet you all. Thank you for making me feel welcome.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Anderson