

Farney Close School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Social care inspectors	Paul Taylor/Jan Hunnam

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

The inspection of boarding provision 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 the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Farney Close is a residential special school, registered for up to 72 boys and girls aged between 11 and 17 years who have severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It opened in 1946. All students have a statement of special educational needs and are resident in the school from Monday to Friday. Many students have additional needs such as autism, moderate learning difficulties and dyslexia. The school and its boarding accommodation of 11 houses are set in 33 acres of land near Bolney, West Sussex. Currently there are 53 students on roll; more than three quarters are boys and three are above compulsory school age. Students are placed in the school from 25 different local authorities, mainly from London and the south of England. No student is learning to speak English as an additional language. Students have often experienced emotional traumas or other difficulties prior to being admitted. For many, their education has been disrupted as a result of exclusion from mainstream schools.

This was an integrated inspection of education and residential provision. The previous integrated inspection of education and residential provision was in December 2008; the residential provision was last inspected in September 2010.

The school's stated aims are 'that all children and young people should have the opportunity to receive an education that supports each of them to become the best version of themselves.'

Evaluation of the school

Farney Close continues to provide an outstanding quality of education and residential experience for its students and very successfully meets its stated aims; a view

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

⁴ www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

overwhelmingly supported by students, parents and carers. The school is exceptionally well led and managed so that all aspects of provision are continually evaluated and improved. School and residential staff work exceptionally well together and arrangements for students' welfare, health and safety are outstanding so that once settled, students thrive in the very safe learning and residential environments. This holistic care, together with outstanding teaching and an excellent curriculum, results in outstanding achievement for most students, and in their outstanding behaviour and overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Safeguarding arrangements are well established and robust. All of the national minimum standards for residential special school provision are met and, with the exception of the required financial information not being submitted to placing authorities, the school meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The quality of education is outstanding. The curriculum is exceptionally well designed to meet the differing needs, attainment levels and abilities of students regardless of when they may join the school. It is broad and balanced and fully meets National Curriculum entitlement, ensuring that the education provided fulfils statement requirements. For example, provision includes Spanish at Key Stage 3. Well-written schemes of work support progression across the school and beyond school-leaving age; these are regularly reviewed and refined to ensure they fully meet the needs of the current cohort. Students gain significantly from the keen focus on developing literacy and numeracy by both residential and education staff. Speech and language lessons are now part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum and make an excellent contribution to the development of students' speaking and listening skills. At Key Stage 4, all students continue to study English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and science and a much wider range of option choices which includes music, art, graphics and junior sports leadership award. All of these courses lead to Entry Level, GCSE or other external accreditation. The comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme supports students' personal development extremely well and also leads to an Entry Level certificate. Excellent careers advice and guidance enables students to be active in making decisions about the future according to their needs and aspirations.

On entry to the school, all students are thoroughly assessed to identify precisely individual learning and behavioural needs and gaps in their basic skills. Excellent specialist support is provided for those with speech and language difficulties or specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia alongside other support and interventions including art therapy and anger management. This provision boosts students' confidence, significantly improves their behaviour and accelerates their learning. Regular assessment of students' academic progress, their reading and spelling ages and personal development is used very effectively to determine the objectives then specified in students' individual education plans. Provision for sixth form students, and for those who require assistance to continue their education beyond compulsory school age, commenced in September 2011 and is based on individualised college and work placements. A small amount of post-16 teaching may

take place in school when there is no suitable college place and focuses on the continuing development of basic skills and students' interests.

Every effort is taken to find something students can excel at through an exceptionally wide range of trips, visits, events, activities and visiting speakers. Students participate well. Some activities are part of the very varied programme provided by residential and school staff, or annual events such as activity week which includes camping trips, while others are organised with outside providers so students can experience activities such as wind-surfing or scuba-diving. Teachers help residential staff support students with their homework, for example by teaching them about their approaches to mathematical techniques. These not only enrich the academic curriculum but also very effectively support students' wider development and thus provide a full 24-hour curriculum experience.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. All members of staff have a thorough knowledge of each student's specific needs. They work exceptionally well together to support students' academic and behavioural needs. Teachers are highly experienced, have very strong subject knowledge and set high expectations for students' behaviour and achievement. They skilfully incorporate assessment information and students' individual learning targets when they plan lessons. Excellent use is made of time, with learning developed step by step, through varied activities and resources that are interesting and well pitched to individuals, small groups and, at times, the whole class. Much-improved use of ICT is increasing the pace and direction of lessons and actively involving and engaging students in their learning.

A particular strength of teaching is the way teachers, and staff who support lessons, build students' self-esteem and independence through effective questioning and encouragement. Throughout lessons, teachers assess students' progress and refine their teaching to revisit or extend learning. Students' work is mostly of high quality and shows considerable improvement over time, as in mathematics, in writing and art. Marking of students' work is thorough. However, students are not always given opportunities to be involved in assessing their work which would help them to be clear about the next learning step. Nonetheless, students know their individual learning targets and can comment on the progress they are making towards them. Students value the help that they get from education and residential staff and they follow the school procedures should problems arise so learning is not disrupted. As students settle into the school, their attitudes to learning and behaviour improve and their progress accelerates. Over time most make outstanding progress from their low starting points, including those with very low levels of literacy. This is reflected in the upward trend of examination results, with all students achieving at least 10 to 12 qualifications including at least one GCSE by the time they leave, preparing them exceptionally well for the future.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students' social and moral development is at the heart of the school's work, with high expectations set for behaviour both in school and the residences. This is underpinned by the school's points/rewards system, the well-developed 24-hour personal, social and health education curriculum and the exemplary collaborative and consistent practices of all staff. As a result, students' behaviour is outstanding because they make exceptional progress in learning how to get on together, showing respect for each other and adults, managing their anger, behaving in class and around school and in understanding that they are responsible for their own behaviour. Consequently, their attitudes to learning significantly improve, they achieve academic success, often for the first time in their lives, and their aspirations rise so that most proceed to college courses or employment in their home locality. For almost all students, attendance is high, reflecting how well they value and enjoy school life. They speak with pride about the school; one student said, 'The school has given me an opportunity to turn my life around.'

Students have good opportunities to reflect on their behaviour, work and wider issues such as racism and tolerance for others; however, there is scope to extend these so that students develop a greater appreciation of the world around them. The active school forum provides excellent opportunities for students to be involved in decision making and improving community life. As their self-esteem and confidence grow they take on more responsibility, for example, successfully organising and participating in regular fund-raising events or helping out at a local school for physically disabled pupils.

Independent living skills are systematically developed following assessment by residential staff on entry. Stronger focus is placed on this for students in the sixth form, who shop and prepare their own meals each evening. Students develop a strong understanding of public services and other cultures and beliefs both across the curriculum and through a plethora of activities during the school day and beyond. These include: Diversity Month; celebratory events, such as Chinese New Year and the Royal Wedding, and cooking food from different cultures. Visits, for instance to the Science Museum, the Tower of London and different places of worship, further enhance provision.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. This is because of the highly collaborative approach of residential and education staff, their excellent attention to detail and the rigorous approach to recording, monitoring and evaluating health and safety provision to improve practice. Relationships between staff and students are exemplary and there are exceptional levels of care. Students are extremely well supervised at all times. Residential staff help to supervise break and lunch times, support those students who are experiencing difficulties during lessons and attend the start- and end-of-day assemblies. This contributes considerably to seamless care between the two aspects of provision, ensuring potential problems are

spotted and promptly managed, and that the high expectations for behaviour are consistently applied in line with the school's policies and procedures. Consequently, students feel safe in school and in the residences. They are clear about what to do if they have any concerns or worries, including how to report bullying on the rare occasions when it occurs, and feel very confident that all members of staff will listen to and deal with any problems promptly and effectively. Excellent attention is given to improving students' understanding of health issues through routine health checks, access to fitness and sports activities, helping students to cease smoking and teaching them about eating healthily.

A significant strength of the school is the rigorous, robust and thorough approach to child protection and safeguarding. Provision is underpinned by good policies, procedures and training that alert all staff to their roles and levels of responsibility. Older students have the opportunity to earn certificates and a qualification related to health and safety. This embeds the promotion of a safe, secure environment and encourages the whole community to be part of maintaining a safe place to live and learn. The school ensures that ongoing health and safety checks are undertaken; fire safety requirements are met and there is regular servicing of the equipment and utilities. Risk assessments for all aspects of school and residential life, including on- and off-site activities, are undertaken effectively. Procedures for first aid are detailed and all accidents are appropriately recorded. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school's procedures for the recruitment of staff are secure and meet both education and national minimum standard requirements. All staff, including those who provide additional specialist support such as art therapy or counselling, and governors and trustees, have been subject to enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks and are suitably listed in the well-kept single central record.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school's accommodation and facilities are impressive and provide a safe and very well-resourced learning and living environment. The main building, which is Grade II listed, houses administrative offices, the kitchens, dining area, assembly rooms and newly refurbished science laboratory on the ground floor, with classrooms for mathematics, English, humanities and special educational needs upstairs. An excellent sports hall and specialist accommodation for speech and language, PSHE, food, ICT, music, design and technology, and art and design, are located in purpose-built accommodation adjacent to the main building. Space is also provided for first aid, counselling sessions and for students who on some occasion find lessons difficult to manage.

Students are accommodated in one of 11 houses all located within the school grounds. The grounds, buildings, houses and education accommodation are all

exceptionally well maintained and cared for and there is a full programme of refurbishment and development. Students' high regard for the school is reflected in the respect that they show for both the education and residential accommodation. The ample, well-kept grounds and play areas are used extensively for socialising, leisure activities and for curriculum learning, such as photography in art and science. In the evenings, good use is made of the specialist facilities for activities such as music, cooking or sport.

Provision of information

The school website, prospectus and 'parent packs' provide comprehensive information about the school's aims and ethos, school life, admissions, the curriculum, and the required procedures and policies, including those for behaviour, care and complaints. The residential experience is fully covered within these to avoid duplication and reflects the excellent links between the two aspects of provision. Students are also provided with a well-designed pack to help them find their way around school, understand who is who, and explain the points system and the expectations for both the school day and social time. This also includes 'child-friendly' versions of the complaints procedure and anti-bullying policy.

Parents and carers are provided with high-quality annual reports about their children's academic and personal development. Link workers make weekly telephone contact with parents and carers to update them on their children's progress and senior education and residential staff also keep in regular contact. Half-termly newsletters update parents and carers on school and community life and they are invited to special events such as the annual Christmas Show. Comprehensive reports, which include students' views, are provided for the annual review meetings. While the school provides detailed financial information to placing authorities on request, it does not do so on the required annual basis.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints policy meets requirements.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. The senior management team places the welfare and protection of the students at the very heart of its practice. Students thrive in the residential provision and are guided and supported to take full advantage of the school's outstanding provision. There is a comprehensive and up-to-date statement of principles and practice, and a students' guide that clearly identifies the aims and ethos of the school and what they and their families can expect. There is a strong and successful emphasis on inclusion, participation and promotion of positive behaviour. The school actively upholds equality, celebrates diversity and ensures inclusion through its policies and practice. Residential students' individual needs are clearly understood and they receive an

excellent level of care tailored to their individual needs. The senior management team and governing body actively and energetically monitor the school's work, reflect on practice and continuously evaluate how they can improve the provision. The residential staff are well trained and very experienced in supporting students who have at times complex and challenging needs. The effective system of supervision, appraisal and team-meeting ensures staff are well supported, clearly guided and kept up to date with all developments. Key records are robustly and regularly monitored. The quality assurance system ensures that practice is not only evaluated by the management team but also by external experts. This ensures that there is no risk of the school being isolated or in danger of missing out on wider practice developments. Policies and procedures are comprehensive and provide clear guidance and support to staff. Students' records are comprehensive, detailed, kept up to date and stored securely. Placement plans, behaviour support plans, risk assessments and daily monitoring records contribute very effectively to an understanding of students' lives. The senior management team is very stable and experienced and provides a strong base on which the school can operate and continue to provide excellent levels of care and support for the residential students.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.⁵

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- ensure that where a registered student is wholly or partly funded by a local authority, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of any students placed there is submitted to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1)(h)).

National minimum standards

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

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

⁵ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

- Provide more opportunities for students to be involved in the assessment of their work and the next steps in their learning.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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Overall effectiveness of the residential experience

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

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special for students with complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties		
Date school opened	1946		
Age range of pupils	11 to 17 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 41	Girls: 12	Total: 53
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 41	Girls: 12	Total: 53
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 41	Girls: 12	Total: 53
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 7	Girls: 3	Total: 10
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,897		
Annual fees (boarders)	£55,863		
Address of school	Bolney Court Bolney Haywards Heath West Sussex RH17 5RD		
Telephone number	01444881811		
Email address	head@farneyclose.co.uk		
Headteacher	Barry Robinson		
Proprietor	Farney Close School Ltd		

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.

2 February 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Farney Close School, Haywards Heath RH17 5RD

Thank you for making inspectors so welcome when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking with you, visiting your lessons, activities and houses. We are pleased to say that all aspects of education and residential provision at Farney Close are outstanding. Here is a summary of the main inspection findings.

- The residential and school accommodation, resources and facilities are exceptional and you show great respect for the premises and accommodation.
- You try to make the most of the opportunities offered to you and, as a result, you make outstanding progress in your learning, social development and behaviour, regardless of when you join the school. You achieve a considerable range of qualifications by the time you leave.
- Your school day curriculum is excellent and the education and residential staff provide you with an exceptionally broad range of events and activities. These broaden your experiences and help you to find things you can excel in, develop your social skills and help you to make choices about your future.
- A wide range of high-quality additional support is given to those of you who need this, which also contributes to your outstanding achievement by the time you leave.
- You are exceptionally well cared for. All staff work well together to keep you safe. You say that you feel safe and secure in school and that you always have someone to turn to if you have any worries or concerns.
- The new sixth form has started well, with excellent opportunities for you to develop your independent living skills and preparation for life beyond school.

Your headteacher and all the staff are highly committed to doing the best for you. I have suggested that you could be more involved in the assessment of your work and in deciding your next steps of learning to help you to develop your independence even more. You can help by continuing to make the most of the opportunities offered to you. I would like to wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector