

Foremost School

Forest Moor, Menwith Hill Road, Darley, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG3 2RA

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Leaders, managers and governors have failed to get the school established. They do not demonstrate the capacity to bring about necessary improvements in teaching and behaviour quickly enough or without considerable support.
- There are high levels of staff absence and turnover. Frequent changes of staff are hindering students' learning.
- Students' achievement is inadequate and very few make the progress they should. Standards of attainment are very low.
- Students' writing is very weak and little is done to help them improve it. Records of students' progress are inaccurate and unhelpful in keeping track of their learning.
- Teaching fails to interest or engage students. Work set is rarely at a level that matches their ability. Many students respond either by not attending lessons or by behaving badly when they do.
- The curriculum is inadequate because it does not engage or interest students.
- Behaviour is inadequate. Students show very little respect for staff or each other. The use of unacceptable language is commonplace. There is much intimidation and there are too many instances where physical restraint is considered necessary both in the school and the residence. Attendance is very low.
- Safeguarding procedures are inadequate and give cause for concern in the school and residence.
- The overall effectiveness of residential provision is inadequate. The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential schools.

The school has the following strengths

- A small core of dedicated staff shows a strong determination to make the school better.
- The local authority fully understands the problems facing the school and the residence. It has recently given leaders and managers good advice on how to support improvement.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out jointly with a social care inspector who inspected the quality of the school's residential provision. Joint working arrangements took place throughout the inspection. The findings of the residential inspection are included in this report.
- The lead inspector observed 10 lessons. Five of these were seen jointly with the headteacher or assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior staff, a group of three governors and a representative of the local authority. Many informal discussions were held with staff and there were occasional conversations with students.
- Twenty-six responses to a voluntary staff questionnaire were taken into account by inspectors.
- The views of three parents who contacted the inspector were taken into account. There were insufficient responses to the on-line parent questionnaire (Parent View) for the results to be published.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documents including those relating to school improvement and students' safety, their progress and their behaviour.

Inspection team

Alistair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nicholas Murphy

Social Care Inspector

Full report

In accordance with 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 in the school.

Information about this school

- This is a school for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school opened in March 2012. It replaced two of the local authority's residential schools for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, bringing them together on one site. Almost half of the 26 students currently on roll attended one of the previous two schools.
- The long-term plan is for the school to accommodate 60 students, 40 of them residents. The school is currently funded and staffed for 40 students. There are currently 26 students on roll, 11 of them residents.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs because of their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- There has been a high turnover of staff since the school opened. Ten staff, including the headteacher, left in the first term. Five governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, also resigned. At this point, the local authority removed delegated powers from the governing body.
- Two executive headteachers were appointed by the local authority in May 2012. This reduced to one in November 2012. The current executive headteacher will leave at the end of the week of the inspection and a new, permanent headteacher takes up post immediately.
- Eight students receive their education in other settings, including colleges, pupil referral units, or with alternative providers. In this instance, Harrogate College, Hillside Farm and the Ripon Walled Garden are the main providers.
- About a third of students are known to be eligible for free school meals and one is a looked-after child. These students attract the pupil premium funding. This is available to support children in the care of the local authority, children of parents serving in the armed forces and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Nearly all students are of White British heritage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching across the school so that students make at least good progress and attain the standards of which they are capable, by:
 - making sure that what is taught, and the way it is taught, captures the imagination of students so that they want to join in with learning activities and behave well
 - making sure that all teachers in all lessons take responsibility for promoting literacy and communication skills by encouraging students to write more for themselves
 - making sure that teachers use accurate assessment information to help them set work for students that matches their ability and learning needs
 - taking steps to ensure that no teaching is inadequate and enabling good teachers to see what they need to do to become outstanding.
- Improve leadership, management and governance of the school and residence, by:
 - making sure that all safeguarding procedures are followed at all times

- making sure that robust evidence is gathered regularly to help inform senior leaders and governors about standards in the residence and in classrooms
- ensuring that senior staff and governors base their evaluations of the school's effectiveness on robust, accurate evidence so that they can pinpoint what needs to be done to make improvements
- making sure that the school employs enough good quality, permanent teachers, prioritising where support is most urgently needed and working more closely with the local authority to find the most useful help
- making sure that the curriculum includes enough opportunities for students to follow courses that lead to accreditation that matches their potential
- Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

■ Improve behaviour by:

- making it very clear to students that whatever their difficulties certain things are unacceptable in any circumstances and making sure that all staff are consistent in their application of sanctions
- making sure that all staff identify times when students can take more responsibility for their behaviour and learning rather than allowing them to become dependent on adults to help them all the time
- increasing levels of attendance and reducing the amount of time that the students who do attend are out of class.

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

- Where children are to leave the school on a planned date they are given appropriate information and guidance well in advance to assist in the process of transition. (NMS 2.6)
- Children understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed decisions about their own health. They are encouraged to participate in a range of positive activities that contribute to their physical and emotional health. (NMS3.2)
- Children's wishes and feelings are sought and taken into account in their health care, according to their understanding, and staff at the school act as advocates on behalf of children. (NMS 3.3)
- Children's belongings are searched only on grounds which are explained to the child concerned, and where failure to carry out the search might put at risk the welfare of the child or others. (NMS9.4)
- The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of special educational needs. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day to day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans. (NMS21.1)
- 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 policy complies with relevant legislation and guidance and is understood by staff and children [6] . (NMS12.2)
 - Staff receive appropriate training and support to recognise and deal with incidences of challenging behaviour or bullying. This training should include assistance in managing staff members' responses and feelings arising from working with children who have emotional difficulties which result in challenging behaviour. Staff training is regularly refreshed. (NMS12.3)
 - Methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially challenging behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid use of physical restraint. Restraint is only used in exceptional circumstances, to prevent injury to any person (including the child who is being restrained) or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person (including the child who is being restrained). (NMS12.4)
 - A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any physical intervention. Records may include the information in Appendix 2 (use of physical restraint). The record is made within 24 hours of the sanction being applied and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of physical intervention restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (NMS 12.6)
 - All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within three months of confirmation of employment. (NMS19.2)
 - New staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction, beginning within seven working days of starting their employment and completing training within six months. (NMS19.3)
 - The learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and is updated if necessary. (NMS19.4)
 - Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:
 - checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children;
 - assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and
 - opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS20.2)
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students' achievement is inadequate because the teaching they receive overall is inadequate. Work in students' books is very limited. The poor attendance of too many students means that on the rare occasions when teaching could help them make better progress, they are not there to benefit from it.
- Attainment is very low. A few students leave with low GCSE passes in physical education and mathematics but most leave with qualifications that are well below those of students of a similar age.
- Students' literacy and communication skills are very weak. Not enough is done to improve them. In nearly all lessons adults write what students dictate. Virtually all files of students' work contain more adult contribution than their own. Students do not produce writing of good quality and are not expected to do so; consequently their writing skills do not improve. Achievement in mathematics is also inadequate.
- The school's analysis of progress, including that of different groups of students over the last year is unreliable because too much of it is based on inaccurate assessment information. There are too many contradictions in the available data so leaders and managers do not know what progress different groups of students are making.
- The achievement of all groups of students, whether resident or non-resident, is inadequate. Students receiving most of their education with alternative providers make variable rates of progress.
- Leaders remain largely unaware of which students attract the pupil premium funding, although it is clear that their lack of progress is no different from that of any other group of students.
- Residential and classroom activities for students do not support or complement each other. No homework is set by teachers to be supervised by residential staff. Other than the fact that a few senior staff work in both settings there is little formal communication between them to see how residential activities could contribute more to students' learning.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Nearly half of the teaching observed during the inspection was inadequate. As a result of this weak teaching, students are not making the progress they should especially in mathematics and English. Of the 15 students scheduled to be in class on the first day of the inspection, only seven were present. This clearly demonstrates that teaching is not stimulating enough to entice students into lessons. Good teaching is rare.
- Many lessons are characterised by adults talking for too long and students doing very little other than filling in worksheets. On too many occasions, even this is done for them. Too often students show many signs of boredom which frequently escalates into bad behaviour and students walking out of lessons.
- Teachers do too much writing for students. They point out that all the ideas and words come from the students themselves. However, this is not helping students to improve their writing and general literacy skills.
- Teachers' planning usually makes reference to the level at which students are working. Too often though, these assessments are not accurate and result in a mismatch between the students' abilities and the work they are being asked to do. There are also times when a student's reading level is taken as a general indicator of their ability in other subjects. When this happens, the work set is nearly always too easy.
- The school relies heavily on temporary teachers because of current staffing problems. About a half of the lessons observed were taught by temporary or inexperienced teachers and most of this teaching was inadequate. The temporary employment of so many teachers results

discontinuity in the students' learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- Students frequently misbehave. Even when all factors including the students' social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are taken into account, behaviour is inadequate.
- The school's assessments indicate that there are very few signs that behaviour or students' emotional development are improving.
- Behaviour in lessons is frequently unacceptable even when there are as many adults, sometimes more, as students in the classroom. The biggest class group seen during the inspection was of three students. Two had left the lesson and one was being restrained within ten minutes of the lesson starting. There are too many incidents where physical intervention is deemed necessary. There were 82 last term and so far this term there have been 22. This is an improvement but it is still unacceptably high.
- There is too much confrontation by students in lessons and around the school as a whole. That this was very evident on a day when there were only seven students in school gives considerable cause for concern. There is too much swearing, often directed very personally at staff.
- Many students disregard the school's no smoking policy. Too often staff can be seen to be ignoring policy and guidelines about behaviour as a means of avoiding confrontation. This does students a disservice because they lose track of social and moral boundaries and develop a wholly wrong idea of what is acceptable and what is not. In a recent survey conducted by the school, two thirds of staff said that school policies were not consistently applied.
- Students take virtually no responsibility for their own learning and actions. Too much is done for them by adults. Very rarely does anyone continue working if a member of staff leaves their side.
- Absence is too high. It is currently running at about 30%. A few students have registered 100% attendance this year but there are more who attend too rarely to make any progress. Too many students are not given full-time education or expected to attend the school. They receive their education almost entirely with alternative providers, such as with the local authority's pupil referral service. Even when they attend, many students leave lessons for no good reason while others are often very passive in lessons and take very little interest.
- The residential provision does not contribute sufficiently to improving students' behaviour or their personal and social development.
- Although instances of bullying are logged there is no evidence of any system for following up these instances or of recording the effectiveness of actions taken. Many students appear unaware of what constitutes bullying. In a recent staff questionnaire a third of staff said they did not think students were safe at this school. Not enough is done to check up on the views of students attending alternative provision as to how safe they feel.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The actions of leaders, managers and governors have had very little impact on improving the school. On opening the school, not enough consideration was given to the practicalities of merging two schools with different approaches to the education and care of students. Since then, the local authority has offered considerable support. This has had limited impact but there are signs that the contribution of the executive headteacher has stemmed the problems that the school faces.
- There have been very recent signs of improvement but they are too little, too late and rely very heavily on external support. Not enough has been done to ensure the safeguarding of staff and students, especially in the students' residence.
- The few parents who contacted inspectors expressed differing views about the school. Their experiences vary a lot according to the quality of the key tutor allocated to their child. Most felt

that they do not get enough information about the progress their children are making or about what they actually do in school.

- Improvement in teaching has been held back by the reliance on temporary staff. A recent round of lesson observations identified common strengths and weaknesses but as these took place only a few weeks ago the information gathered has not been used to lead to improvement.
- A system of appraisal to evaluate improvements in teaching was set up last term. The teachers who have support plans have been set targets for improving their performance and these are being reviewed. Information about the performance and improvement of other teachers has not yet been formally checked.
- Staff absence, including that of teachers and classroom assistants, is very high and this is further holding back what is already the slow development of better teaching.
- The curriculum is inadequate because it does not meet the needs of students. There are not enough opportunities for older students to follow courses leading to qualifications. Throughout the school, learning frequently fails to interest students, resulting in very little enjoyment and a lack of progress.
- Students do not have equal opportunity to achieve well because assessment procedures are not accurate enough to make sure that they are set work that matches their ability. The more-able students are most affected because work is nearly always too easy for them and opportunities for them to gain qualifications are far fewer than in other schools.
- The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

■ **The governance of the school**

– The local authority removed statutory powers from the governing body shortly after the school was founded. Many governors left soon afterwards and there are many vacancies on the governing body. Governors have realised that they did not know how bad things were. This is because they accepted everything they were told at face value and did not find out for themselves what the true state of the school was. In order to try to address this, governors have formed a school improvement committee whose members regularly visit the school and evaluate what is going on. They have been informed by the executive headteacher about how the quality of teaching is expected to be monitored and judged. This has had little impact so far because the initiative is very recent. A group of three governors has been chosen to oversee the performance of the new headteacher from the day he arrives. Governors’ contribution to checking on students’ progress is hampered by the fact that they are not being given enough accurate information. No governors were aware of their responsibilities for checking up on how the pupil premium is spent and its impact on students’ progress.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are inadequate
Quality of residential provision and care	is inadequate
Residential pupils’ safety	is inadequate
Leadership and management of the residential provision	is inadequate

- Living at the school does not result in recognised benefits for students in comparison with their peers who attend the day provision. In general, residential students are healthy and can take part in a reasonable range of activities.
- Most students say that time spent in residence is ‘alright’ but some actively dislike staying at the school.
- Staff use physical restraint inappropriately. Internal monitoring by managers does not evaluate individual instances of student restraint nor reflect upon or learn from these incidents. Some

training has been provided for staff in the de-escalation of challenging behaviour but this has not had the desired impact in practice.

- Residential students have mostly good relationships with staff. They say they feel comfortable in approaching staff if they have a concern or worry. The behaviour of residential students is variable. Inspectors observed some good relationships between students but at other times the atmosphere was tense and behaviour was volatile and challenging.
 - There are good day-to-day links between the school and residential units. This is helped by the fact that some staff work in both settings. The provision of written information across the settings is sometimes poor. This means that education staff may not be aware of the circumstances of particular residential students, for example whether they are looked after or subject to a child protection plan.
 - Care staff respond warmly to residential students and strive to meet their individual needs. However, care plans are variable in quality and depth. They do not include actions needed to prepare residential pupils who are due to leave the school. Health plans are not specific about how to encourage residential students to make positive lifestyle choices. These shortcomings in planning mean that staff are less effective in ensuring that each residential student's welfare is promoted. Additionally, documentation from the placing authority in relation to residential students who are looked after is missing. As a result, staff are unaware of the residential student's assessed needs and cannot know whether the school's care plan is consistent with their local authority plan.
 - Residential students have some say in the life of the residential unit. For example, they are able to choose activities and personalise their bedrooms. However, there is little opportunity or encouragement for residential students to have input into their care plans or health plans, or to read information about themselves. Consequently, residential students do not feel involved in decision-making about what happens to them.
 - Accommodation, furniture and fittings for residential students are of a good quality. There is ample space for group activity or to enable residential students to spend time alone. The provision of en-suite bathrooms to each bedroom enhances the privacy of residential students and promotes dignity.
 - There are robust systems in place to ensure that the building is safe and fit for purpose. The arrangements for fire safety are good, with regular fire drills so that residential students know what to do in case of emergency.
 - All staff, including ancillary staff, have had training in safeguarding policy and practice. This means that everyone working in the school knows what to do if they have a concern or if a residential student makes an allegation to them.
 - It is routine procedure for staff to search residential students for prohibited items but there is no policy to guide this practice. This means that staff and residential students cannot be clear about the criteria for searches or how they should be conducted.
 - Residential students say that bullying is not a major problem and that they generally feel safe within the school. However, staff have not had training in preventing and dealing with incidents of bullying. This limits their ability to deal sensitively with any incidents of bullying and effectively support the victim while addressing the needs of the perpetrator.
 - Staffing resources are good. There are always sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of residential students. The school has plans in place to deal with any unforeseen shortfall in staffing.
 - External monitoring of the residential provision does not meet requirements. It has failed to identify significant shortfalls in practice and does not evaluate patterns and trends, for example in numbers of restraints.
 - Care staff have a range of backgrounds, experience and skills which they use to good effect in caring for residential pupils. However, not all staff have the required level of qualifications. In addition, new staff do not undertake the required induction programme. This means that some staff are insufficiently prepared for the task of working within the residential setting. There is a range of training provided for staff as part of their personal development. However, there is no systematic evaluation of each individual's learning needs to ensure that any particular training deficits are rectified.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Boarding/Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	121780
Social care unique reference number	SC007919
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	406050

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection of residential 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.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Number of boarders on roll	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body (with limited powers as delegated responsibilities have been removed and replaced within the local authority)
Chair	Robert Heseltine
Headteacher	Fiona Dodgson (acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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