

# Furness School

Rowhill Road, Hextable, Kent, BR8 7RP

**Inspection dates** 4–5 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement is not good enough because not all learners have been able to catch up with where they need to be when they leave school.
- English subject teaching is not good enough and so students make less progress in English than they do in other subjects.
- The strategies that have been effective in helping students to improve their behaviour in one-to-one situations are not always used to support their learning in class.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are sometimes too quick to provide help for students in lessons and so limit opportunities for students to try things out for themselves and to learn on their own.

### The school has the following strengths

- The leadership and management provided by the principal and senior leaders are very strong and have helped the school to improve quickly since its last inspection.
- All staff are committed to supporting the students and pastoral care is very effective. Students feel safe in lessons and around the school.
- Recent initiatives to improve students' reading have had very positive impact.
- Governance provided by the interim executive board, working with the local authority and an external education provider, has helped to steer the school effectively through a challenging period of development.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 teachers teaching 11 lessons; all but one of these were joint observations with a member of the senior leadership team. They also observed tutor groups and visited the off-site provision.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and considered a number of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and planning, arrangements for safeguarding and promoting equality, and details of the curriculum.
- Inspectors joined students at lunch and in the residential houses after school. They talked to students in class and at break times and heard a small number of students read individually.
- Meetings were held with the Director of Education from Lilac Sky Schools (a provider of educational services to the school) and with the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB). Discussions were held with school staff, including senior and middle leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 43 responses to a questionnaire for staff and the school's recent questionnaire for parents and carers. There were too few responses on Parent View (the online questionnaire) to provide an analysis but the lead inspector held telephone conversations with three parents who had requested a call.
- Although inspectors visited the residential houses, the residential care provided by the school was not formally inspected.

## Inspection team

Anne Duffy, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hugh Betterton

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.*

### Information about this school

- Furness School is a special school which provides for day and residential students of secondary age who have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. It makes additional provision off site for a small number of students who receive one-to-one or small group teaching in a rural setting.
- 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 at previous schools.
- Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage. Currently, all students are boys.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding which has been provided to the school for children in the care of the local authority, and students known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- The school did not have any Year 7 students last year and so has not yet received any additional funding to support this year group in catching up.
- The school's last inspection took place in May 2012. After a short period of closure, the school reopened later in May 2012.
- Prior to the school's reopening, the local authority entered into a contract with Lilac Sky Schools who have provided the senior leadership team and other additional staffing or guidance as required.
- The IEB held its first meeting in September 2012 and has provided governance for the school since that date.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help students to make the best possible progress in all subjects by:
  - improving staff training to teach English so that the quality of English teaching rises as quickly as other subjects
  - ensuring that teachers make full use in class of the strategies that are helping students in one-to-one sessions to improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning
  - encouraging students to try for themselves before staff provide help with challenging tasks.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of students

### requires improvement

- Recent improvements in teaching have enabled many students to catch up so that all are now making reasonable progress. Achievement is not yet good because, despite this improved progress, students do not reach the levels expected of them by the time they leave school.
- Due to the small numbers of students, no conclusions can be drawn about the performance of different groups or year groups.
- Gaps in teaching and learning in the past have meant that by the end of Year 11 students do not reach the levels expected of them in GCSE qualifications. In 2013, no students gained GCSE A\* to C qualifications in English and mathematics. The school's information shows that a small number is on track to do so this year.
- Across the school, progress is slower in English than in other subjects. Improved teaching in mathematics is helping students to make accelerated progress in numeracy.
- Progress against targets for the high proportion of students who are eligible for the pupil premium is tracked in careful detail by the senior leadership team. As a result of this evaluation, initiatives to accelerate the progress for any individuals seen to be falling behind show good impact. For example, students with reading difficulties, identified as making less progress than others, have made noticeable progress as a result of recent successful intervention.
- In lessons, students make good progress when challenged to try different tasks on their own. They respond well to opportunities to evaluate how well they have done in lessons and are also able to identify what they need to do to improve.
- The best learning takes place in lessons where teachers use a range of techniques, such as practical activities, to build up students' knowledge and consolidate previous learning. As a result, the students enjoy these lessons more and are more actively involved. For example, students who were making jerk chicken made full use of their literacy, numeracy and independent skills to create and evaluate their individual meals.
- Following alterations to the provision, students who attend off site are now making better progress than before. They benefit initially from one-to-one and small group teaching away from school. Over time, improved attitudes to learning help them to return to the main school when possible.
- All parents who were spoken to were very pleased with their child's recent progress. Those with older students are aware that there is still some catching up to be done.
- As they continue to develop their literacy, numeracy, communication and social skills, students are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their education or training.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Senior and middle leaders have an accurate view of teaching in the school. A great deal of work has been done to raise the quality since the school's last inspection, and much of the teaching is now good. However, teaching requires improvement because it is not yet good in all subjects, and it is too early to judge the impact made by new teachers on the progress of their students.
- In the best lessons teachers plan well and make full use of the very detailed pen portraits that are provided for them and which identify each student's strengths and difficulties. As a result, tasks and activities match students' learning needs well and help them to make good progress.
- Recent interventions to support students in overcoming their social and emotional difficulties have been very effective on a one-to-one basis. Effective teaching and support techniques from individual sessions are not yet employed consistently in class. As a result, the very good progress made outside the classroom is not always transferred successfully to lessons.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge in many subjects enhances their planning of activities to capture students' interest and enjoyment. For example, Year 9 students enjoyed a mathematics

lesson where they discovered, and discussed with their teacher, the different ways of reaching an answer to a problem. Where subject knowledge is less strong, for example in English, students' enthusiasm for the subject is dampened and the students make slower progress.

- Many teaching assistants make a strong contribution to students' learning when they lead sections of a lesson, model tasks and question students effectively. Sometimes both teachers and teaching assistants are too quick to intervene when a student is trying something new. This hinders students' opportunities to try things out for themselves and stops the students from learning new skills on their own.
- Opportunities to reflect on and discuss their work, and to help others, support students' social and moral development well. Humanities lessons and enrichment days provide students with the chance to consider cultures and backgrounds that are different from their own.

### **The behaviour and safety of students** requires improvement

- The behaviour of many students has improved markedly since the school was last inspected. One parent spoke of how, at that time, she felt that there was no hope for the future, but now she cannot praise the school enough for how much the staff have helped her son.
- Although students do not always show great enthusiasm for every lesson, attitudes to learning are increasingly positive. Students know what is expected of them when they enter the classroom and they usually comply with these expectations.
- Attendance in class is generally good. It is still too low overall, but increased attendance to lessons and on enrichment days reflects students' increased motivation. Some students have been temporarily excluded and then helped to return more positively to school; there have been no permanent exclusions in the past year.
- Students say that they feel safe in school, in the residential houses and when attending the alternative provision. Those who board at the school enjoy a relaxed atmosphere and a range of activities as well as benefiting from the support they receive in managing their behaviour.
- Very effective pastoral support and individual counselling help students to overcome their anxieties and improve their social and communication skills. As a result, incidents of violent behaviour have lessened considerably over the past two years.
- Incidents of bullying have decreased and students have received good advice on aspects of sex and relationships, attitudes to those with different lifestyles and the dangers of cyber bullying. The use of homophobic or racist language has diminished significantly. Students, as well as staff, often correct those who persist in using inappropriate language.
- The school is committed to providing equal opportunities for all. However, a few students feel they are not always treated fairly. The school is rightly planning to extend the newly-introduced system of restorative justice to help students to be involved in finding their own solutions to disputes more readily.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Employing Lilac Sky Schools' motto of 'flooding the place with positivity', the principal has led the continuing, and at times dramatic, improvement of the school with unwavering determination. In this, she is supported by a strong senior leadership team and increasingly effective middle leaders.
- Staff spoken to talked very positively about the support they have received in improving their practice. They have benefited from a range of continuing training opportunities that have included individual coaching and visits to other schools. There is scope for further work to ensure that the teaching of all subjects, including English, is consistently good.
- All share a commitment to the school's continuing improvement and are ambitious in their drive to ensure equality of opportunity and extend the life chances of the students.
- Lilac Sky Schools and the IEB hold leaders strongly to account. In turn, all staff, and particularly

those on the upper pay spine for teachers' pay, know and understand the standards that are expected of them. Systems to manage the performance of teachers and other staff are now well established, and teachers' effectiveness is linked to pay progression. Where necessary, senior leaders have taken rigorous and effective steps to address issues of poor performance.

- Changes to the range of subjects on offer, particularly the introduction of weekly enrichment days, mean that students are provided with a range of learning experiences that are well suited to their needs and aspirations and promote their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.
- The school works very effectively with local services and external partners to provide students with a rich mix of in-school and out-of-school opportunities. Older students, in particular, benefit from well-planned work-related placements and visits.
- Regular support from the local authority has helped the school to tailor its provision more closely to the needs of the students.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are secure and training for child protection is given a high priority. Parents speak warmly of the support they and their children have received from the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The IEB works hard to support and challenge school leaders, gathering a wide range of evidence. This has given them a good understanding of the work taking place to improve the quality of teaching and raise levels of achievement. Members are involved in decisions about what additional pupil premium is spent on and check carefully to ensure the impact of this spending is as effective as it could be. IEB members track the progress and attainment of the students carefully and, as far as possible, compare these to outcomes from similar schools. Due to the contract between the local authority and Lilac Sky Schools, the IEB is not involved in all decisions concerning the performance and pay of staff. However, it is knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and care in the school and, where necessary, takes appropriate action to address any shortcomings.

## 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 students' needs. This ensures that students 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 students' needs. Students 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 students 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>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119038
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	424226

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of students</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of students</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of students on the school roll</b>	34
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	13
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Interim executive board
<b>Chair</b>	Deborah Bruce
<b>Principal</b>	Jill Howson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15–16 May 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01322 662937
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