

Furness School

Furness School, Rowhill Road, SWANLEY, Kent, BR8 7RP

Inspection dates	04/02/2014 to 06/02/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Boarders thrive in an environment where staff recognise their individual strengths and vulnerabilities. They make significant personal development and progress in their social skills, behaviour, confidence and self-esteem.
- Positive, sensitive and nurturing relationships with experienced and committed staff enable boarders to trust adults who care for them and benefit from their support and guidance.
- Boarders are positive about their residential experience. A structured activity programme extends and enriches their social experiences and provides opportunities for them to develop their skills and interests.
- Leadership and management of boarding is strong with clear direction provided by the new head of care. Significant improvements are evident since the previous inspection. Monitoring and review are being used effectively as tools for driving forward improvement and enhancing outcomes for boarders.
- Boarding is an integral part of the school and central in advancing boarders' academic, personal, social and emotional development.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The school was given three hours notice of the inspection. Both boarding houses were visited. A meal was taken with boarders and evening activities observed in each house. Meetings took place with the head of care, care staff, individual boarders and staff responsible for health and safety and recruitment. Other inspection activity included the observation of the handover between staff and the boarder's daily meeting, and the scrutiny of school policies and records.

Inspection team

Janet Hunnam

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Furness School is a residential and day special school for pupils aged between 11 and 16 years with emotional and social development needs; maintained by Kent County Council. The school is situated in semi-rural surroundings on the outskirts of Swanley, Kent. At the time of the inspection there were 34 pupils on roll, 14 of whom occupy residential places.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- include details of the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures in the policy and procedures for boarders who leave the site without permission
- ensure records of boarders who are absent without permission include full details of staff action following such an event and details of their return interview
- ensure staff receive up-to-date training in physical intervention
- ensure the effectiveness of sanctions is consistently recorded

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. Boarders speak positively about their residential experience and report they enjoy their time in the residential houses. Their positive experience helps them learn and develop social skills, building their confidence and self-esteem. A parent commented that, 'My son's self-esteem and self-confidence has increased with him finally seeing good in himself and his abilities.' A social worker commented that, 'Boarders present as happy and well-managed which enables them to be successful learners.'

Boarders have strong relationships with staff, who clearly put the needs of boarders and their welfare at the centre of their practice. Within a safe and nurturing environment, boarders develop trust in adults who guide and care for them enabling them to benefit from the support offered by staff. Relations between staff and boarders are warm and friendly with exchanges of good-humoured banter creating an affable, relaxed and calm atmosphere. Relationships between boarders are similarly good-natured and they are learning how to behave appropriately, respectfully and sustain friendships. Boarders make significant personal development and progress in managing their emotions. A boarder commented, 'I have changed. I'm a lot calmer and staff have helped me a lot with my anger.' Behaviour is of a high standard.

Boarders report that 'boarding is fun because the activities are great'. A varied activity programme enables boarders to pursue their personal interests, extend their social experiences and learn how to use their leisure time positively.

The voice of boarders is strong. Numerous opportunities exist for boarders to put forward their views and contribute to community life. Daily house meetings provide a forum for them to review their school day, celebrate achievement together, plan the evening and put forward their view on day-to-day matters. Termly formal house meetings allow boarders to contribute to the operation of boarding in matters that affect them. Recently, boarders have decided how to spend the allocated refurbishment house budget, giving them a real sense of participation and demonstrating that their opinions are valued. A student council for boarders also provides opportunities for elected representatives of boarders to propose ideas and suggestions to senior staff and raise issues of concern. All boarders have regular, individual sessions with their link worker where they can express their views. Surveys during the year allow managers to evaluate the boarding provision from opinions conveyed by boarders and effect change in response.

Boarders are aware of how to keep themselves fit and healthy. Healthy eating is addressed in house meetings and boarders are aware of the benefits of exercise and choose physical activities as part of their activity programmes. Arrangements for addressing all their health needs are in place and they receive appropriate support for their psychological health through community specialists and the school counsellor.

There is a strong focus on preparing boarders for their next stage on leaving the school. Sensitive planning, well in advance of them leaving, takes into account their specific abilities and vulnerabilities. This allows boarders to develop the skills and capability to cope with their transition. Individual programmes result in boarders increasing their confidence as they extend their skills and become more independent.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of the residential provision is good. A stable, experienced and committed staff team provide nurturing, sensitive support and high quality care resulting in boarders making significant progress. A boarder commented, 'I feel supported. Staff have helped me change. I am much

calmer at home with my family. Staff are good at guiding me but I've put the work in myself.' Effective and cohesive links between care staff and education staff provide boarders with individual support tailored to their needs. Sharing of information ensures consistent support, care and guidance in all areas of school life. New boarders have individual programmes to ensure they have the level of support they require to settle in successfully. Close liaison with parents and carers facilitates this transition.

Recently improved care plans identify boarders' individual needs along with targets and strategies to help them achieve positive outcomes. Regular link working sessions provide opportunities for staff to address issues individually and for boarders to be involved in their care plans.

Since the last inspection, the school has increased the budget for activities for boarders resulting in an extended range on offer. Staff structure activity time during the evenings, providing time for boarders to relax using the facilities in each house and to participate in more structured activities both on-site and in the local community. Individual reading time is structured into the activity timetable to provide support for all boarders to develop their skills and support their education outcomes. Boarders also undertake voluntary work in the community. Boarders fully participate in the activity programme. They enjoy their leisure pursuits and are learning the importance of contributing to their community while extending their social skills and experiences.

Staff monitor the health of boarders and ensure they receive the appropriate level of health care while parents and carers maintain the lead responsibility for health matters. Boarders have access to an on-site counsellor and staff work closely with external health professionals when necessary. A robust system for the administration of medication, including rigorous monitoring, ensures boarders receive their medication correctly.

Boarders enjoy the food on offer, which is healthy and varied. One boarder commented enthusiastically that, 'The food is really nice.' Boarders have input into menu planning within their own houses. Meal times are well-ordered, social occasions. Staff promote healthy eating as part of a healthy living approach, encouraging physical exercise and an understanding of a healthy life style.

Accommodation for boarders is spacious and well maintained. A programme of refurbishment is underway to update furnishings and decoration to improve the overall standard of accommodation. Boarders have single bedrooms with en-suite facilities and they personalise their rooms giving them a sense of identity. Communal rooms are comfortable and each house has a well-equipped games room for boarders to relax and have fun together. Bright, colourful displays celebrate boarders' achievements and provide information about activities.

Close communication between care staff and boarders' families ensures parents and carers are fully informed about their child's progress and well-being. Boarders are able to easily communicate with their families enabling them to keep in contact with those who are important to them.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

The arrangements for safeguarding residential pupils are good. Safeguarding boarders is a priority. Managers implement robust recruitment procedures ensuring that only adults who have been checked as being appropriate to work with children are employed. Senior managers are designated to take the lead in child protection. All staff receive child protection and safeguarding training on a regular basis. They are confident in their safeguarding role and alert in recognising causes for concern and taking appropriate action to protect boarders.

Boarders reported that they feel safe. Staff take bullying seriously and boarders report that it is

not a problem. Staff are confident in dealing with all aspects of bullying and are proactive in addressing any issues that arise during the school day. A boarder commented, 'If I am bullied, I tell staff and they sort it out'. A similar approach is taken toward boarders leaving the school without permission. Clear procedures are in place to respond to such events, including working with the police, but the policy does not include details of the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures. Incidents of this nature are not common. However, records of such events are not clear nor is it evident that staff respond positively to boarders on their return.

Promoting positive behaviour is a clear strength of the residential provision. The behaviour of boarders towards each other and staff is excellent. Within an ethos of positive reinforcement, clear boundaries and high expectations, boarders demonstrate significant improvement in their behaviour. Boarders are learning to self-regulate their behaviour in a very positive manner.

Physical intervention within the houses is extremely rare and there have been no recorded incidents of restraint since the last inspection. Risk assessments recognise the specific vulnerabilities of boarders and individual positive handling plans identify detailed de-escalation strategies to manage challenging behaviour safely. Staff receive training in the use of physical intervention but recent refresher training has not taken place. Staff use sanctions infrequently. When they are imposed it is to underline the notion of boarders taking responsibility for their behaviour. Staff record sanctions in detail but the outcome and effectiveness of the consequence is not consistently recorded which could impact on the efficiency of the monitoring process.

Safety of the residential provision is monitored effectively. A range of health and safety checks and fire safety checks are carried out regularly including regular fire drills for boarders.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The leadership and management of the residential provision is good. A new, experienced head of care is in place and is a member of the school's senior management team. He has been effective in driving forward practice within boarding resulting in significant improvement in all areas. The aim of boarding is to meet the diverse needs of all boarders to help them achieve their full potential. The residential provision is integrated into the school and is central in advancing boarders' academic, personal, social and emotional development.

Experienced, well-trained staff continually strive to enhance the care and welfare of boarders and support the purpose of boarding. Boarders benefit from well-known structures, routines and boundaries, which contribute to them feeling safe. Staff know the boarders and their families very well enabling them to provide highly individualised care, support and guidance to meet boarders' complex and diverse needs. Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of boarders. All staff receive regular supervision and appraisal.

The head of care has an accurate and insightful awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the boarding provision. A detailed action schedule is in place to secure continuous improvement and provide enhanced opportunities for boarders to develop and make progress. A comprehensive system for auditing all aspects of boarding ensures that robust monitoring promotes positive outcomes for boarders. Visits by an independent visitor further underpin monitoring and evaluation of the provision to maintain high standards of care. Development of the boarding provision has a high priority within the school's development to drive forward improvement.

There have been no complaints since the last inspection. Meaningful and trusting relationships with staff allow boarders to approach staff with confidence and concerns are dealt with promptly without resort to formal procedures. Clear information is on display for boarders in relation to

who they can talk to outside the staff team if they have concerns. This includes the independent visitor, external agencies and also a representative from Action for Children who visits regularly to secure boarders' views. In addition to house meetings, the student council and individual link working sessions, managers also seek boarders' views through surveys. These forums ensure boarders have the opportunity to make a contribution to the boarding community.

Parents and carers complete surveys to put forward their view of the boarding provision. Feedback from the last survey include the following comments, 'I couldn't ask for better staff to look after my son', 'He has come so far with his behaviour and education' and 'The support my son receives from the staff in house is excellent.'

Records held by the school are current, accurate and appropriate and are stored securely, ensuring the confidentiality of information.

What inspection judgements mean

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	119038
Social care unique reference number	SC041787
DfE registration number	886/7034

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.

Type of school	Maintained
Number of boarders on roll	14
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Ms Jill Howson
Date of previous boarding inspection	06/02/2013
Telephone number	01322 662937

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