

Farney Close School

Farney Close School, Bolney Court, Crossways, Bolney, HAYWARDS HEATH, West Sussex, RH17 5RD

Inspection dates	27/01/2015 to 29/01/2015	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Excellent induction processes fully consider and respond to the needs of all prospective pupils. Admissions only take place in a planned way, following reciprocal visits to and from the school. Each pupil makes a conscious decision to come to the school by telephoning the headteacher to say they would like to attend. Pupils benefit from sensitive and comprehensive support from staff, augmented by the appointment of a buddy to support new pupils in the first few weeks.
- Input from residential pupils is central to effective care planning. This ensures that individual needs are sensitively identified, addressed and met. A clear picture of each pupil is presented. Long and short term targets are negotiated and agreed between pupils and staff. Documents are now routinely shared with parents and carers, providing the opportunity for their input and support. Clear evidence is recorded to demonstrate when positive outcomes are achieved.
- Leaders and managers model high aspirations for pupils whose potential is not limited.
- Residential pupils recognise positive changes in themselves that they perceive result from the outstanding quality of care they receive. This drives them to build upon their personal development, do more and progress further.
- Excellent arrangements exist to suitably prepare residential pupils for the next stage of their education and for life after moving on from this school. They mature and grow in self-confidence in a safe and encouraging environment where their individuality is recognised and respected.
- All national minimum standards are met.

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

Inspection team

David Putnam	Lead social care inspector
Louise Hocking	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

This is an independent residential special school for young people aged 11 to 18 years, who experience social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A board of directors, a board of governors and a board of trustees oversee the running of the school. The school is approved to accommodate a maximum of 72 residential pupils, both male and female. All pupils board on a weekly basis and return home at weekends. At the time of this inspection there were 55 residential pupils on roll.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- help residential pupils to better understand how they do influence improvements within the school
- utilise independent visitor reports to drive improvement further

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding.

Residential pupils are fully aware of the fundamental difference being at this school has made in their lives. Comments made by different young people include, 'I have completely changed since being here'; 'This school has changed me so much'; and 'They have turned my life around'.

Their understanding and insight into the genuine academic and social progress they make enables them to positively look to the future. They formulate clear plans of where they see themselves in confident and optimistic personal visions of their future. This is all the more striking when their previous experiences and individual starting points are considered. Some residential pupils acknowledge that changes brought about at school directly impact upon their attitude and relationships with others when back at home. For them, this is evidenced through improvements in behaviour, attitude and a willingness to help and support others.

A value of caring for others is instilled through the overall ethos of the school. As a result, residential pupils consider the needs of others. Within the school difference is recognised and accepted, allowing individuality to be expressed. By engaging in entrepreneurial projects residential pupils seek to raise money for external charities, demonstrating a willingness and desire to take social responsibility seriously.

Residential pupils demonstrate a genuine openness with staff that allows them to express any concerns or worries. This is done with a clear expectation that support and advice will be freely available, providing them with a reassuring sense of safety and emotional well-being. Residential pupils report that their physical health needs are also identified and met fully in any circumstance when they are unwell. They take full advantage of a wide range of activities available to them each and every day. These provide stimulation for their bodies and minds. Consequently, residential pupils benefit from extensive opportunities to promote their own health by keeping fit, build upon existing hobbies, develop new ones, or simply have new and exciting experiences.

Exceptional facilities are provided for residential pupils to prepare for the next stage of their lives. To enhance the continued implementation of the sixth form, certain houses have been designated to assist residential pupils develop the skills they need to safely promote independence to the fullest extent. Young people blossom into young adults as they grow in confidence and competence in an environment where mistakes are possible, but support and guidance is always available.

The views, opinions and ideas of residential pupils are consistently sought in a range of ways. For example, formal consultation takes place at the annual review of each residential pupil's statement of special educational needs. Each house provides a representative to a forum that meets every half term to put forward ideas for change. Daily house meetings take place when information is shared and everyone has the opportunity to express any thoughts or concerns. Residential pupils describe senior staff as 'accessible' and demonstrate a willingness and ability to speak candidly with them. The inspectors found that ideas of residential pupils have influenced a significant number of developments within the school. For example, changes to menus and the ways food is served; the range of activities on offer during the evenings; and the design of a new uniform for those undertaking vocational courses. However, with limited exceptions pupils found it difficult to provide direct examples of the influence they have.

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding.

No residential pupil is admitted to the school without a carefully considered planning process being completed. Following sharing of essential information, extensive opportunities are taken to get to know and understand the individual needs of each pupil. The views and opinions of prospective residential pupils are valued from the outset as the final decision to attend is made by them through making their choice known to the headteacher. The extensive awareness of each residential pupil and their needs, leads to the formation of comprehensive and clear plans for their care. The focused nature of these individual plans ensures that, from the outset, pupils are supported to make the most of their stay in the school. From their perspective, residential pupils receive key information in an accessible format that sets out details of what it is like to live in the school. This helps them settle quickly and understand expectations. Some keep their folder for a number of years so that they can continue to make reference to it if needed.

Residential pupils enjoy and benefit from friendly, warm and nurturing relationships with staff. They describe those caring for them as 'amazing' and express a confidence that they can, 'talk to them about anything'. One young person described a poignant personal experience to justify their claim that, 'the staff never give up on you'.

While residential pupils refer to the use of humour and what they describe as 'banter', staff are also able to skilfully, politely and calmly provide direction. This has the effect of setting out expectations clearly while encouraging and promoting positive behaviour. Residential pupils respond extremely positively to this approach. Care staff cross over to provide support when necessary during the school day. This holistic approach leads to a continuity of care for residential pupils from which they derive clear benefit. Furthermore, limited turnover of staff also results in consistency, stability and continuity for residential pupils, many of whom also attend the school over a number of years. Because residential pupils are known so well their attainments, achievements and the progress they make are consistently recognised and celebrated, encouraging further development.

Leaders and managers commission external providers to deliver therapeutic services when this is identified as a specific need. This supports individuals to come to terms with their feelings and emotions and get the most from the learning and development opportunities provided.

Feedback from parents about the residential provision and the progress their children make is universally positive. One said, 'I cannot praise the school highly enough.' Others use words such as 'amazing', 'incredible' and 'brilliant' to describe the care provided and the changes they see. They make extremely favourable comparisons of this school when reflecting on previous experiences of other specialist provision. They say that the transformation in their children's lives, 'gives hope for the future'.

Living accommodation is decorated and maintained to a very high standard, providing a homely and welcoming feel. The provision of a daily newspaper to each house gives residential pupils the opportunity to explore and consider news stories of interest to them that impact nationally or worldwide. Residential pupils make the most of opportunities to personalise their own rooms. This individual investment reflects their commitment to get as much as possible out of their time in the school.

Important changes to the processes for recording how medication is received, stored and administered were introduced immediately following the last inspection. These changes ensure that practice is now of a very high standard, reducing the likelihood of any errors occurring. Regular weekly audits provide a further safeguard and increase understanding of all staff as to

what constitutes best practice. Parents identify a willingness to learn and understand specific medical conditions as a key strength of the residential provision. They relish opportunities provided to learn alongside staff from external professionals. They acknowledge that their own awareness of health conditions affecting their children increases as a result.

Residential pupils benefit from a well-planned and well-balanced menu with individual needs considered carefully and discretely. On the whole residential pupils are extremely positive about the food provided and the quality of choice. Comments were made about the practical arrangements for collecting food in the dining room all at the same time and disappointment that they cannot choose all options at every meal. However, they demonstrate clear understanding of the reasons for any restrictions, acknowledging that too much carbohydrate in their diet is not good for them.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

Safeguarding arrangements within the residential provision are outstanding.

Training for all staff in safeguarding and protecting residential pupils is consistently provided and updated regularly. This helps to communicate the fundamental value that, the safety and well-being of all pupils is at the centre of the school's ethos. Residential pupils assuredly express that they feel safe. Their demeanour, attitude and presentation serve to confirm this.

Robust and effective policies and procedures are in place, but regularly updated. For example the school's child protection policy has recently been revised to incorporate how threats such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation are to be identified and addressed. Face-to-face training supports understanding about these issues. A straightforward, but clear complaints procedure is in place. Residential pupils spoken to expressed complete satisfaction that any complaints or concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. They confidently state that they can talk to any member of staff, up to and including the headteacher. This assertion promotes their safety and results in them feeling listened to and valued.

Furthermore, information about individuals and organisations who can be contacted with any concerns or worries is widely displayed within residential accommodation and around the school. The majority of residential pupils say that they know the identity of independent visitors to the school and often take time to chat with them about their experiences. This provides an additional safeguard should individual concerns relate to the school. The residential pupils spoken to stated that bullying is not a significant issue within the school, but if it does occur it is dealt with promptly and effectively. Examples of inappropriate language and comments that do not respect difference and diversity are suitably challenged by a vigilant staff team to create an environment where emerging identities can be safely expressed.

Accessible advice and guidance on e-safety promotes the well-being and security of residential pupils. Leaders and managers involve outside agencies to provide information and support to parents and staff alike. For example, local police recently delivered a workshop on cyber-bullying to raise awareness of possible signs and symptoms of this abusive behaviour.

All staff are trained to the correct level in recognised techniques to de-escalate difficult and challenging behaviours. When absolutely necessary, appropriate restraint techniques are utilised by the same staff to promote safety or prevent serious damage being caused. Instances when physical restraint is required are rare within the residential provision. On average less than two restraints take place each month during residential time, representing less than 20% of all such incidents within the school. Robust monitoring leads to a sound understanding of residential pupils' needs and circumstances and pro-actively supports a progressive reduction in the use of restraint over time. This demonstrates that positive behaviour is safely promoted in a school

where all pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Prior to attending this school many residential pupils have been excluded from mainstream or specialist provision. This further emphasises the progress residential pupils make in an environment that is safe.

Robust health and safety systems help to safeguard all residential pupils, staff and visitors. At the same time, a realistic approach to health and safety ensures that residential pupils are not over protected. For example, ideas residential pupils have for new activities are openly considered and suitable safeguards put in place. This ensures opportunities are not missed. In addition, non-hazardous cleaning products are kept in each individual house. Staff apply these, but residential pupils take responsibility for household chores on a rotational basis as part of developing appropriate skills to safely look after themselves later in life.

The frequency of fire drills exceeds national minimum standards ensuring that all are fully aware of what to do in an emergency situation.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

Leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding.

A well-established leadership and management team is comprised of the headteacher, head of education and care manager. Together they bring a wealth of experience and knowledge, augmented by having worked together for many years. This ensures that systems, processes and routines run smoothly and efficiently. Through their passion, commitment and care they communicate a vision for a school in which all residential pupils grow, develop, mature and achieve. Over the years they have built a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the service but a desire to constantly improve is a key feature of this outstanding service.

Through motivational leadership all staff are encouraged to explore possible areas where the service to residential pupils can be developed or enhanced. The views of residential pupils play a key role in focusing the attention of leaders, managers and staff. Several examples of the influence pupils have were identified during this inspection, but more needs to be done to help them understand how their ideas are followed through. Reports are produced following independent visits undertaken to comply with national minimum standards. These are evaluative and informative and also incorporate the views of pupils. However, in the year preceding this inspection no formal recommendations had been made. While this may be a reflection of the quality of service provided, currently these reports are not effectively contributing to the drive for improvement.

Prior to the last inspection the school had an established history of being judged as outstanding. Consequently, leaders and managers were highly motivated to deliver a thorough response to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Medication practice is much improved and the possible risks caused by secondary dispensing have been eradicated. Enhancements to the quality of restraint practice and recording now ensure that the physical health of residential pupils is effectively monitored during and after any restraint. Furthermore, their views are sought, discussed and recorded in an attempt to learn from and limit the need to use such measures of control in the future. All care plans and personal targets are now shared with parents, providing them with the opportunity to discuss and agree details with key staff.

Parents express immense satisfaction with the quality of communication from the school. They say that they are kept informed of progress, achievements and when necessary, they are notified of any incidents of concern. In the same way, strong, close, professional working partnerships exist between managers and external agencies. When appropriate, these positive working relationships contribute extremely well to ensure that plans for looked after children are facilitated and met.

Staff say that the opportunities for their training and development are 'excellent'. They highlight that courses keep them apprised of current issues and developments in practice. They cite recent examples of training to illustrate their point and are able to coherently identify the impact of learning. Regular supervision and appraisal of all staff ensures that they feel well-supported, but are also challenged and encouraged to take forward their own professional development. Staff see leaders and managers as approachable and accessible. In turn, leaders and managers recognise the value brought by the staff team. This mutual respect results in excellent staff retention which leads to consistency and continuity for residential pupils.

Comprehensive records are stored securely and provide a clear account of each residential pupil's experiences and progress while at the school. All necessary policies and procedures are in place and reviewed regularly to ensure they remain pertinent and up to date.

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	126139
Social care unique reference number	SC014513
DfE registration number	938/6217

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	Non-affiliated independent residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	55
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 18
Headteacher	Mr B C Robinson
Date of previous boarding inspection	13/01/2014
Telephone number	01444 881811

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