

# Fairfield House School

**Inspection dates** 10-11 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Leadership and management	Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings

### This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and managers, including those that provide governance, do not have a clear understanding of the independent school regulations. As a result, many regulations, including some affecting students' welfare, health and safety, have not been met and it is difficult for leaders to accurately check the quality of their work. These factors mean that the school's work to keep students safe and secure is inadequate.
- Some of the required pre-employment checks have not been carried out on staff. The school has not recorded the results of the checks that have been carried out in a single central register.
- The school's safeguarding policy does not comply with current guidelines. Furthermore, it is not made available on the school's website.
- School records do not show whether all staff have received up-to-date safeguarding training.
- Arrangements for first aid and for washing hands are not good enough.
- The school's complaints policy does not comply with requirements. There is no admissions register.
- As a result of these regulatory failures, the sixth form provision is inadequate.
- The lead teacher has insufficient time to carry out lesson observations and long-term planning.
- The systems for tracking students' progress and their behaviour are not easily accessible and lack objectivity.
- The weaknesses above represent a decline in the school since its previous inspection.

### The school has the following strengths

- Students who entered the school exhibiting very challenging behaviour are now much calmer. Their behaviour is good and they are able to participate in learning.
- The school offers highly individualised timetables which enables all students, including those in the sixth form, to make good progress and to achieve well.
- Staff have an excellent understanding of their students' learning difficulties and their academic abilities. They work with patience and flexibility to provide students with appropriate learning opportunities.
- Leaders and managers have secured good teaching and achievement based on effective use of community-based learning opportunities.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. The inspector carried out a range of activities to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspector observed learning both in school and off the premises. He analysed the school's records of students' achievements and behaviour. He scrutinised school policies, including those relating to safeguarding, and other documentation.
- The inspector spoke to students, staff and senior managers. He spoke by telephone to the proprietor, to a small number of parents and to a social worker from a local authority placing students in the school.
- No members of staff returned questionnaires. There were too few responses Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, to be analysed.

## Inspection team

Michael Glickman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Fairfield House is a small special school for students with autism, severe learning difficulties and complex health needs and challenging behaviours. It is located in the North West of England.
- The school is registered for up to five students aged between eight and 19 years of age. It currently has four students on roll, two of whom are in the sixth form. All students have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. Two are looked after by local authorities.
- The school believes that 'young people learn and thrive when they are healthy, safe and engaged.' It aims to 'take account of the needs of each individual student's well-being, goals and aspirations by putting each individual at the centre of planning for their support and development.'
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.
- The school opened in October 2010. It was last inspected in March 2012, when it was judged to provide a good standard of education. At that time, one regulation relating to the provision of financial information to local authorities placing students in the school was not met.

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

- Improve leadership and management including governance by:
  - ensuring the lead teacher has time to carry out lesson observations and long-term planning
  - implementing a centralised recording system to evidence and track students' small steps of progress in learning and behaviour in an objective and easily accessible way
  - ensuring there is an adequate complaints policy which fully meets the regulations
  - ensuring that leaders gain a clear understanding of the independent school standards so that they can carry out an accurate self-evaluation and ensure that all regulations are met.
- Ensure that all students, including those in the sixth form, are kept safe and secure by:
  - providing first aid training for all staff to ensure that students are always accompanied by a trained first aider when out of school
  - making sure robust pre-employment checks are carried out on staff
  - making certain that the school's safeguarding policy is on the school website and therefore is easily accessed by parents
  - improving washing facilities for students so that the hot water is at a suitable temperature and students are able to hygienically dry their hands
  - making certain that records of safeguarding training are accurate and that all staff have had the required training
  - maintaining an admissions register.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
  - The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
  - The proprietor must ensure that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first aid policy (paragraph 13).
  - The proprietor must ensure that an admission register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15).
  - The proprietor must ensure that no person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the

school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction (paragraph 18(2) and 18(2)(b)).

- The proprietor must keep a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question. The register referred to in sub-paragraph (1) may be kept in electronic form, provided that the information so recorded is capable of being reproduced in legible form. The information referred to is in relation to each member of staff ('S') appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether S's identity was checked; a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act; a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction; checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant qualifications; an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained in respect of S; checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(d); a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made; and checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e), including the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained; and in relation to each member of staff ('S'), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed; in relation to each member of staff in post on 1st August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1st May 2007, whether each check referred to in sub-paragraph (3) was made and whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained (paragraphs 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), and 21(3)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).
- The proprietor must ensure that the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users (paragraphs 28(1) and 28(1)(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request (paragraphs 32(1) and 32(1)(c)).
- The proprietor must ensure that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e), makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint; ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school; allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish; provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher; provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) and whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them (paragraphs 33, 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii) and 33(k)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders and managers have successfully created an environment in which teaching and good behaviour can flourish. Students who have exhibited extremely challenging behaviours in their previous schools now participate in learning and, as a result, make good progress, including in communication and number recognition. However, due to their lack of familiarity with the independent school regulations, leaders and managers have been unable to ensure that many independent school regulations, including those relating to students' welfare, health and safety, are met. This means that students' well-being is not assured.
- The school's safeguarding policy does not conform to current guidelines and does not cover such risks as forced marriage or radicalisation. The policy does not appear on the school's website. The school does not have clear records of when staff have received safeguarding training and cannot be certain that their training is up-to-date.
- The school has not carried out all the required checks on staff as it has not checked whether they are subject to a prohibition order barring them from teaching. The results of the checks that have been completed have not been recorded in a single central register. The school's arrangements for safeguarding do not meet statutory requirements.
- The school premises are specifically designed for students with autism and those with mobility difficulties and provide a calm environment. There is a sizeable grassed garden which is used to good advantage for outdoor activities such as games and planting. However, the hot water in the washroom poses a risk to younger students and all users share a fabric towel, which could encourage the spread of infection.
- The school maintains an attendance register in which staff use the recommended absence codes. However, there is no admissions register.
- The school's complaints policy provides for informal and formal complaints. However, it does not contain provision for a panel hearing when complaints cannot be resolved at an earlier stage and does not refer to confidentiality.
- The lead teacher is supported by three learning support assistants. There is no middle management tier in the school. The lead teacher has a full teaching timetable and no time for lesson observations or long-term planning and development. This is because students are taught individually. He is therefore unable to directly monitor the quality of teaching. The school does not link pay progression to the quality of teaching.
- The school works well to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination. Educating students in the community enables them to meet different types of people and also provides an opportunity to educate the public about autism.
- The school makes good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, on an appropriate level for the ability of the students. When out in the community, staff point out and comment on features of other cultures that students encounter. Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Students are taken to museums and art galleries and enjoy their visits. Great emphasis is put on recognising right and wrong and appropriate behaviour in different situations.
- Students learn about British values and society through a range of visits. Some greatly enjoy visiting fire stations and, with support, can talk about using a hose and sounding the siren on a fire engine. Staff recognise that students are very vulnerable and ensure that they are not exposed to extremist views within school or in the community.
- The school offers staff appropriate professional development opportunities. The learning support assistants are supported to gain recognised qualifications and staff are able to attend specialist courses.
- The school arranges appropriate work experience opportunities for students who are capable of participating in them. Students receive suitable careers guidance to help them make choices and think about their next steps. Staff work with parents and carers to prepare students for the next stage of their lives when they leave school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is not effective.
  - The sole proprietor, who founded the school, is closely involved in every aspect of its running. She receives copies of all communications and regularly meets with the lead teacher and staff to ask about how well the school is doing. Recognising that she lacks educational expertise, she has engaged an external consultant to monitor the quality of teaching and receives regular reports on student progress.
  - The external consultant carries out lesson observations on the lead teacher and supports him in

developing learning opportunities. The school does not link the lead teacher's pay to his performance.

- Neither the proprietor nor the external consultant has an in-depth understanding of the independent school standards, so they have been unable to ensure that they are met in full.
- The proprietor is named as the contact for reporting safeguarding concerns in the school's safeguarding policy. While she has considerable experience of safeguarding in other settings, she is not familiar with the current guidelines for schools so has been unable to ensure that they are met.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are inadequate

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. As a result of their learning difficulties, students often exhibit extremely challenging behaviours when they enter the school. By identifying the triggers for these behaviours and what students enjoy, the school has successfully implemented individual behaviour plans which have calmed students and enabled them to participate in learning.
- Although the school maintains logs of instances of serious misbehaviour and physical interventions, no incidents have been recorded. This is because the school's policy of praise for every small instance of positive behaviour and ignoring negative behaviour has proved highly effective.
- Information on student behaviour is noted in every lesson and is often accompanied by photographic or video evidence. However, the recording system makes it difficult to have an overall view of what are often very small steps of progress without having detailed knowledge of each student's previous abilities and levels of achievement.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is inadequate. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students do not meet requirements and the premises themselves contain potential hazards. As a result, a number of standards which relate to the welfare, health and safety of students are not met.
- Staff spend most of each day off-site with students on an individual basis. Although all staff members carry first aid kits, they have not all received first aid training, so may not be able to treat illness or injuries. The first aid policy does not contain guidance on when to call an ambulance or take a casualty to hospital or on how to dispose of spilt body fluids and there is no list of first aiders on display, although the policy requires it.
- The school has an effective anti-bullying policy, which includes reference to cyber-bullying. Students are well supervised at all times.
- Full risk assessments have been carried out for all activities. Fire and safety systems in the school are professionally maintained and regularly tested and fire drills are carried out.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching is good, which results in students making good progress, including in their communication skills and understanding of number. Teaching at appropriate levels enables students to understand the concepts of reading and counting and some are able to communicate by pointing at pictures or by sticking pictures on charts. The school fully meets the standards relating to teaching, learning and personal development.
- All students in the school have been unable to cope in previous special school settings. The school therefore educates them as much as possible within the community or on a nearby farm. The aim is to gradually reintroduce them to a classroom once they are capable of tolerating it, although some students may be educated out of school for their entire school career.
- The school uses the often limited information it is given about students by their previous schools and its own discussions with parents and carers to identify appropriate educational opportunities within the local area. For example, visits to parks, museums or zoos are used to develop students' communication and social skills. Shopping trips provide an opportunity for learning about number and colour. Lesson planning identifies these objectives and links them to each student's individual education plan.
- Students have individualised timetables and are taught separately, except where two may be brought together for an activity to encourage the development of social skills. The lead teacher is supported by three learning support assistants and each is responsible for one student which enables them to build a close relationship. As a result staff have an excellent understanding of students' learning, some of whom

are unable to communicate verbally, and can accurately identify which learning activities are successful.

- Formal lessons are often short and repetitive, with pictorial symbols and gestures used to reinforce verbal instructions. This works well because the needs of the students are met including their very short attention spans and volatility. Staff show remarkable flexibility as they try to engage their students in whatever learning opportunities can be presented.
- Staff meet at the beginning and end of each day to share planning and discuss student progress. However, these sessions are not formally recorded, so valuable data on students may be lost.

### **The achievement of pupils**

**is good**

- All students have learning difficulties and a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. The severity of their learning difficulties means that progress is often measured in very small steps, for instance the ability to concentrate on a task for a few extra minutes or to turn to look at a stimulus.
- Available evidence shows that, as a result of good teaching, all students are making good progress from their very low starting points, including in their communication skills and understanding of number. In some cases, communication is non-verbal and involves pointing at pictorial symbols or the use of body language. The attainment and progress of students compares favourably with students in similar schools.
- The school currently uses a commercial scheme with appropriate scales to track the progress of students. It has found that this is not well adapted to the needs of all students and it has proved impossible to apply it consistently. The school has therefore devised its own tracking system, involving photographic and video evidence as well as detailed teacher logs. However, this system is not fully embedded and it is difficult to interpret without the use of personal knowledge.
- More able students are enabled to progress at an appropriate rate. Some are able, with support, to read simple books and to talk about them.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the school fully meets all the standards relating to learning and assessment.

### **The sixth form provision**

**is inadequate**

- The sixth form provision is inadequate because a number of regulations affecting the welfare, health and safety of students are not met. The school is not doing enough to keep students safe. This is a result of inadequate leadership and management.
- Students in the sixth form are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Where appropriate, students are given work experience within their level of ability. They are taken to various public places and learn to cope with crowds and sudden stimuli. Their behaviour is good.
- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching. They enjoy participating in the activities and visits that the school arranges and some are, with support, able to talk about them. They have learned important social skills which will enable them to function within wider society when they leave school.
- At present, no student is capable of accessing external qualifications, but the school is able to offer appropriate qualifications if suitable students are identified.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the GOV.UK website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook).



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136239
<b>Inspection number</b>	463015
<b>DfE registration number</b>	358/6019

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	4
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	2
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Tzaranie Cope
<b>Chair</b>	Tzaranie Cope
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matthew Hudson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 2012
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£30,400
<b>Email address</b>	management@fairfieldresidential.co.uk

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