

Farney Close School

Farney Close School, Bolney Court, Crossways, Bolney, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 5RD

Inspection dates	21/03/2017 to 23/03/2017	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Experienced staff are highly responsive to young people's individual needs. Through respectful and nurturing relationships, and consistent and sensitive care, young people learn to trust staff and develop a sense of stability, safety and protection.
- Young people are making significant progress in their behaviour, social skills, independence, self-confidence and self-esteem. Improvements in their emotional health has a positive impact on their academic progress.
- Highly effective leadership and management ensures that all young people's needs are met and that they experience opportunities to develop and achieve.
- Staff are committed to protecting young people and promoting their welfare. All staff are well trained in safeguarding and child protection, alert to any concerns and conscientious in reporting such matters. Safeguarding is effective and is given a high priority by governors, leaders and all other staff.
- Thorough planning arrangements for young people moving on from the school commence well in advance and help to successfully prepare them for the next stage of their lives.
- Looked after children and children in need benefit from a dedicated member of staff promoting their welfare.
- Areas for improvement relate to: improving the consistency and regularity of staff supervision; reviewing the use of CCTV when it is used within a residential house;

improving the quality of the independent visitor's reports; ensuring that staff obtain and record all relevant information when a young person returns after being missing; and improving the quality of any independent investigations.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff receive consistently regular, reflective and child-focused supervision of their practice and that annual staff appraisals demonstrate a consistent approach to reflecting on practice and identifying areas for improvement.

- Improve the quality of the independent visitor's reports so that they are an effective part of the quality assurance process to promote improvement.

- Ensure that the use of CCTV within residential houses is regularly reviewed to ensure that it does not unreasonably intrude on young people's privacy and to ensure that its use is effectively contributing to the protection of young people.

- Ensure that when a young person returns to the school after being missing, staff make routine enquiries and record information relating to where they have been and the state of their appearance.

- Ensure that any independent investigation arising from allegations against staff is both robust and child focussed in its approach.

Information about this inspection

The school was given four hours' notice of the inspection. Meetings were held with the headteacher, head of care, deputy head, designated safeguarding officer, residential staff, speech and language therapist, two governors and catering manager. Discussions were held with young people, activities and interactions were observed and the inspectors joined young people for meals. A wide range of documents concerning the residential provision were reviewed. No feedback on Parent View was available due to an insufficient number of responses.

Inspection team

Jan Hunnam	lead social care inspector
Lolly Rascagneres	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 48 residential pupils on roll.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Young people enjoy their residential experience and make significant progress as a result of the nurturing, consistent, individualised support provided by staff. Parents commented, in a school questionnaire, that their child had 'come on leaps and bounds'. Other comments included: 'We are really pleased with her progress and her self-esteem has considerably increased'; and, 'He has reached targets that I never thought possible.' Parents confirmed progress in terms of social skills, behaviour, academic progress and independence. Social workers were equally positive about young people's experience at the school.

Within a culture of respect for each other, young people build positive relationships with staff and friendships with their peers. The supportive and stable environment enables young people to benefit from the warmth, positive interactions and attention of staff. Unvarying routines, boundaries and structure help young people develop a sense of safety and emotional well-being and their behaviour improves. A young person stated, 'My time so far at the school has helped me so much. I have learnt, made friends, managed myself better than I used to and I am learning to get involved with everything good.'

Developing young people's independence skills is a priority as they move through the school towards the next stage of their lives. Staff design specific programmes to advance young people's practical daily living skills so that they can successfully look after themselves. But there is also a focus on increasing their knowledge of how to access facilities and services they will need as young adults. Planning for young people leaving the school begins well in advance to support their successful transition.

The welfare of young people is at the heart of practice. Staff protect young people, promote their well-being and implement individualised approaches to advance each young person's development. Strong, effective leadership and management and the commitment of the experienced staff team ensure that young people's needs are met.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Staff know each young person extremely well and this enables them to provide high-quality, personalised care to promote their development. Staff are alert to changes in young people's moods and react sensitively to support them. Individualised care plans are created with the involvement of young people. Care plans set out the young people's specific targets and strategies for staff in order to guide them in providing relevant support to meet young people's needs. A manager has responsibility for ensuring that care plans are reviewed regularly and that parents know their children's targets.

Parents acknowledge and appreciate the support staff provide. One parent commented in a school questionnaire, 'Every child is treated as an individual. They are not

pigeonholed into categories, but are assessed and supported on their individual special needs.' Another parent commented that their child, 'is treated as an individual and everything is tailored to his needs.' Through patient, tolerant and caring relationships, young people benefit from staff support in managing their day-to-day lives. Collaborative working across the school ensures that all staff implement a consistent approach in supporting young people throughout their day.

Looked after children and children in need benefit from the support of a specific member of staff who is dedicated to liaising with parents and social workers. This member of staff advocates on young people's behalf, attends meetings and ensures that decisions are made in their best interests. This service is a clear area of strength in promoting the welfare of these young people.

Young people receive appropriate support to maintain their physical health and lead healthy lifestyles. Staff are aware of any particular health conditions and protocols are in place to guide staff in managing diagnosed health conditions. Young people's emotional needs are closely observed by staff and referrals are made to therapists when required. External support services, such as drug counsellors and sexual health specialists, are used effectively to assist young people. Staff are well trained in administering medication and monitoring systems are in place to ensure safe practice. Young people benefit from a variety of healthy and nutritious meals; their individual dietary needs are well catered for.

Young people are confident that they can approach staff with any concerns or worries. Each young person has a link worker who provides individual support in accordance with their care plan and risk assessments. One-to-one sessions provide opportunities for young people to put forward their views and their opinions on their plans and targets. Staff respond to young people's views, as is demonstrated by a young person stating that he wished to discontinue his medication. Liaison by staff with the child and adolescent mental health service was effective in reviewing his medication and promoting his emotional health and welfare. School forum meetings are effective in allowing young people opportunities to voice their opinions on a range of subjects, such as menus, bullying and activities. Feedback provided by senior staff clearly demonstrates to young people that their views are important and that they value their ideas and suggestions, and respect their viewpoints.

Staff organise structured activities for young people, providing them with opportunities to extend their social experiences and develop their social skills to become more confident in managing social situations. Young people have fun while keeping fit, pursuing their individual interests or trying new experiences.

Accommodation is of a very high standard. It is comfortable, homely, well maintained and suited to young people's needs. Young people personalise their bedrooms to reflect their individual identities and particular interests.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Protecting young people from harm is a priority for staff and underpins staff practice in

the residential provision. Staff are knowledgeable and well trained in safeguarding. They are confident in their roles, alert to any concerns and conscientious in reporting and referring any safeguarding concerns. The designated safeguarding officer adopts a timely and proactive approach in referring concerns to external agencies by implementing follow-up action to ensure that appropriate action is taken to protect young people's welfare. Effective liaison with external agencies, such as the local authority designated officer and the police, strengthens the school's response to safeguarding concerns.

Staff know each young person very well. They review and update young people's risk assessments and care plans to address concerns and specific vulnerabilities. Risk assessments and individual behaviour support plans provide staff with clear strategies and guidance for managing incidents of challenging behaviour safely. CCTV is currently being used as a protective measure in the internal corridor of one of the residential houses. Such a measure should be regularly reviewed to ensure that it does not unreasonably intrude on young people's privacy and to ensure that it is effective in protecting them.

Staff are trained to use physical intervention and records demonstrate that it is used appropriately and only when necessary. Such incidents are closely monitored by managers to ensure safe practice. The system for analysing this monitoring information enables leaders and managers to evaluate the use of physical intervention and adapt practice to support young people's behaviour safely and effectively.

When young people leave the school without permission, staff take the necessary steps to locate them and inform the relevant authorities. However, when a young person returns, staff do not routinely make enquiries and record information regarding where they have been and the state of their appearance so that additional safeguarding measures can be taken into account.

Staff actively manage incidents of bullying and provide effective support for the perpetrator and the victim in every occurrence. Specific support helps young people understand the impact of their behaviour on others. Staff continuously emphasise the importance of appropriate social interactions; this assists young people to develop social skills and an understanding of the importance of respect and tolerance.

Leaders and managers respond to allegations against staff promptly by referring these matters to the local authority designated officer. However, independent investigations commissioned by the governors into allegations are not sufficiently robust or child centred to demonstrate that young people's concerns are taken seriously and their welfare protected. Senior leaders have recognised the necessity for improvement in relation to the process of managing allegations and have put forward plans to the governors to address their concerns. These plans include a new policy to clarify the process of investigation and additional training for senior leaders and governors.

Health and safety at the school has a high priority. There are comprehensive systems which ensure that routine checks protect young people. Appropriate fire safety checks are regularly conducted, including fire drills.

Rigorous recruitment processes safeguard young people and minimise the potential for unsuitable adults to be working with young people.

Leadership and management

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The long-standing leadership and management team provides cohesive and dedicated direction for the staff team. Using their depth of knowledge, skills and experience, the management team members work effectively and successfully in guiding staff to provide a safe and stable residential experience for young people. The residential staff team similarly has substantial knowledge, experience and commitment so that young people benefit from high standards of care and consistent support to meet their specific needs.

Staff are qualified and receive high levels of relevant training to meet young people's complex needs. They receive supervision, but the regularity and quality of this is variable and there is insufficient attention to safeguarding or child-focused practice to ensure the staff's continued understanding of keeping young people safe. Supervision records also demonstrate a lack of exploration of the impact of their training on the experience of young people. Additionally, annual reviews of staff performance lack consistency in terms reflecting on staff practice and identifying areas for improvement.

Monitoring systems are effective. Continuous oversight by managers is an integral part of the drive to maintain high standards and improve opportunities for young people to succeed and achieve. However, the small leadership and management team, which comprises three senior leaders, is under pressure to maintain this required high level of scrutiny.

Incidents – including bullying and accidents, and safeguarding concerns – are closely examined. Governors are kept fully informed of issues within the school by the headteacher's comprehensive reports. Reports by an independent visitor lack a clear focus on safeguarding and an evaluation in sufficient detail of the care provided for young people. The reports do not identify areas for improvement and do not constructively assist senior leaders in driving forward development of the residential provision. However, leaders and managers demonstrate a continuous 'lessons learned' approach; some excellent practice in scrutiny and oversight was noted, such as an evaluation of the use of physical intervention and recommendations to the governors to improve the management of allegations against staff.

Parents report excellent communication with staff, who work collaboratively with families. Complaints from parents are rare, illustrating the excellent relationships with families. When there has been a complaint, the response is rigorous in that there is an investigation with clear conclusions and actions, and a focus on the welfare of the young person.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceed the standard of good and result in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected, or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, or their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

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	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	48
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 18
Headteacher	Mr B C Robinson
Date of previous boarding inspection	03/11/2015
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