

# Furness School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119038
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	313165
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Timothy Feast

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	54
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sheila Davis
<b>Principal</b>	Anton van der Watt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Rowhill Road Hextable Swanley BR8 7RP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01322 662937
<b>Fax number</b>	01322 615033

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## Introduction

This was a single, integrated inspection of education and social care (welfare). Social care was inspected under the Care Standards Act 2000. The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors and two Social Care Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Furness School is a special school for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. All the pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school admits day and boarding pupils, the larger group being day pupils. All the pupils currently are boys. Most of the pupils come from a White British family background. A new principal was appointed from the start of the Summer Term 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Furness School is a good school, offering a calm and purposeful learning environment and good support for pupils so that they make good progress in improving their learning and overcoming their behavioural difficulties. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and its capacity to continue to improve under the new principal is good.

Attainment on admission to the school is generally much lower than average because of pupils' learning needs. They make good progress with both their academic and personal development. In some years since the last inspection, the overall academic progress of pupils has been outstanding, being typically better in Years 10 and 11 than for the younger pupils, although standards remain well below average. The current achievement of pupils is good and some individuals are making outstanding progress. This progress reflects the good teaching they receive, including some outstanding teaching. Teachers' planning is very well matched to the individual needs of older pupils but less well matched to the needs of younger ones. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. It meets the needs of pupils well, particularly in developing their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). There are few option choices for older pupils and the school has identified the need to improve the range of subjects so that pupils feel they have a real choice.

Pupils' personal development is good and elements of it such as their behaviour and their preparation for working life are excellent. These are impressive gains given the pupils' identified needs on entry. The boarding provision effectively contributes to meeting the particular needs of children for whom residential education is deemed necessary. The pastoral care and support for pupils are good and as a result, pupils feel very safe in the school and express their considerable enjoyment of what the school offers. Academic guidance supports positively the good progress that pupils make but is more effective in supporting the older boys.

Leadership and management are good. School leaders have been successful in developing an effective school since the last inspection. A very clear direction is emerging from the new principal, even within a very short space of time, to accelerate the rate of progress. The school has high expectations for these boys and there is a good commitment to valuing all. Current monitoring procedures do not show sufficiently clearly the relative progress made by different groups of pupils.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 9

The quality of the boarding provision is good. The school meets all of the key National Minimum Standards and is exceeding in some of them. The schools overall management structure and the strong relationships that exist within the school contribute effectively to the protection and promotion of pupils' welfare. Clear written policies and procedures underpin the school's practice and there is good information provided for boarders and their parents.

Refurbishment works to the three boarding houses are now complete. The accommodation offers excellent levels of privacy with boarders staying in single bedrooms with en-suite facilities. Each house enjoys the comfort of pleasantly furnished, well-maintained communal areas, which are free from hazards; each one benefits from a large games area. Computers with internet access are available within the boarding accommodation and boarders are able to access the schools sports fields, hall, conservation garden and library after the school day.

The extra curricular program of visits and activities is good. Boarders can pursue off site activities including the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, cycling club, theatre and cinema trips. Within the school environment boarders enjoy working in the conservation garden and using the music club. A number of boarders access the local community with membership of the army cadets and local kick boxing club.

There is provision at the school for identifying and addressing the routine health needs of boarding pupils, however not all health plans are comprehensive and up to date. There are clear procedures for the management and administration of medication, although these do not include guidelines for the administration of 'as required' medication. Implementation of medication procedures is inconsistent. Most records are appropriately maintained. Qualified first aid staff are always available on site.

Boarders have a strong voice with regards the day-to-day operation of the school. They believe their views and opinions really matter and say they are effectively listened to. Forums include an active student council and each boarding house holds weekly meetings, whereby boarders and care staff plan activities and discuss school issues. The school actively promotes inclusion with lots of activities so children can choose what is right for them. Boarders are given plenty of opportunities to express their opinions. The overall standard of pupils' behaviour at the school is excellent. Boarders' pocket money is stored safely.

Robust recruitment procedures include careful selection and appropriate vetting processes. Bullying is not a problem at the school and the boarders report feeling safe. Staff have received appropriate child protection training and are suitably aware of the relevant reporting procedures. Boarders say they feel valued by the care staff and they enjoy positive relationships. Communication between staff across the school is good and contributes effectively to the welfare of pupils.

Each boarder has a designated key worker who liaises between the school, family and if required external agencies. Although staff are very knowledgeable about the care needs of the boys, the care plans do not reflect this and lack comprehensive up to date information. Regular ongoing contact with parents is maintained using written reports and telephone calls.

Staffing levels are adequate to meet the needs of the boarders, however, there is very little non-contact time available for the care team, which leads to difficulties in completing paperwork and conducting handovers. Adequate supervision levels and risk assessments ensure activities occur safely.

The school has improved in a number of areas since the previous social care inspection. Clearer systems are in place to record the safekeeping and distribution of pocket money. Written risk assessments for off site activities are more robust. A significant key personnel change has occurred, with the appointment of a new principal. He has only been in post for four weeks but demonstrates a commitment to improvement.

#### Recommendations

ensure that care and health plans contain comprehensive and robust up to date information (NMS 14 and NMS 17)

ensure staffing rotas have time scheduled so the care staff can complete all their duties without compromising the overall care of the boarders (NMS 31)

ensure 'as required' medication guidance is added to the medication policy and staff are consistent in following the school's guidelines for dispensing all medication (NMS 14)

## What the school should do to improve further

- Refine monitoring procedures to demonstrate more clearly the academic and personal progress made by different groups of pupils.
- Match academic planning and guidance for younger pupils more consistently to their individual needs.
- Implement the recommendations made in respect of the boarding provision.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. They make good progress towards achieving the targets in their individual education plans. Progress accelerates as boys move up the school, being particularly good for older pupils, because planning is very well matched to their individual needs and expectations are particularly high. Pupils are expected to take the national tests at the age of 14. In 2007, results showed that boarding pupils made more progress than day pupils. The school's results have improved considerably since the last inspection. Results in mathematics and science are higher than in English, reflecting the communication difficulties many pupils have. Pupils make good progress in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, together with improved attitudes to learning. As a result, they are well prepared for their last two years in the school when they are expected to take a range of accredited courses. In 2007, all the boys in Year 11 achieved at least one grade A\* to G in GCSE examinations and nearly two thirds of them gained five or more grade A\* to Gs. Their achievement was outstanding. Boys in Year 10 routinely take their GCSEs in art and design and design and technology a year early and in 2007, three quarters of them achieved pass grades.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Parents are very positive about the improvements in their sons' personal development whilst at the school. A typical comment from one parent was, 'my son was eager to be at school now'. Pupils' attendance improves after they are admitted to the school and attendance overall is broadly in line with national figures. Boys commented that they feel safe and very well supported by the pupil support team. There are good relationships between pupils and with adults and this helps pupils to have positive attitudes to their learning. They show good social skills during the school lunches. They are very positive about adopting healthy lifestyles and particularly enjoy participating in the range of physical activities provided. Their behaviour improves significantly as they progress through the school and is particularly impressive in Years 10 and 11. Pupils contribute well to the school community, for example through the school council and through improving the school environment. They are involved in a range of international contacts, often linked to the charities they support, but their contribution to the local community is more limited. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall but opportunities are limited for them to develop their understanding of the cultural diversity of the UK. Older students benefit from opportunities for work experience and, where appropriate, college placements. As a result of their improving attitudes, improving basic skills and their range of examination results and other externally accredited activities, pupils' development of the skills relevant to the world of work is outstanding.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils benefit from a broad base of good teaching from experienced staff. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and plan a good range of activities to meet their needs. Pupils' interests are engaged well, using practical subjects such as ceramics and by activities that enable the boys' competitive streaks to be exploited, for example in testing their times tables. Teachers prepare older pupils well for their GCSE examinations and as a result they make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Younger pupils' progress is slower because planning and work provided are not as precisely matched to individual needs. Classrooms are organised as high quality learning environments where pupils' work is valued and displayed well and this emphasis contributes positively to pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons. Staff work well in partnership with learning assistants and the Pupil Support Service to keep pupils on task and to extend their learning. Pupils' work is regularly marked and assessed and this helps maintain their enthusiasm.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils in all years enjoy access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. Older boys can take up to ten GCSE subjects, although there is limited choice in what they can take. Physical education, work-related learning and a comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme supplement these subjects. The curriculum provides a secure foundation for them all to go on to further study, training or into employment. Pupils in Key Stage 3 study all the National Curriculum subjects, including a modern foreign language, Spanish and they are well supported through their PSHE programme. Their needs are met well. Good individual support is provided to pupils through visiting specialists and from expertise amongst the staff team. The curriculum is enriched through a wide range of activities, including sporting opportunities, visits out of school and visitors into school. Pupils particularly enjoy the opportunities for competitive sports; they do well and their behaviour, whilst participating in such events, is commented on favourably by all involved.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

There is much that is outstanding in the support for individuals. Careers guidance for pupils is very good with the result that there is excellent progression for these pupils into employment, further education or training. The support that they receive to overcome their behavioural difficulties is excellent, so that by the time they leave the school they are well prepared to function in the outside world. There are good levels of care for both day and boarding pupils. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and fully meet statutory requirements. The school acknowledges that academic guidance is not of the same standard as the pastoral care and support and requires development. In particular, the guidance for older pupils supports their learning more effectively than the guidance for younger ones.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The school's leadership is focused firmly on raising standards and improving provision. The school has demonstrated a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses through the good improvement it has made since the last inspection. It recognises that, following these improvements, it had recently developed a view of its own effectiveness that was overgenerous. The newly appointed principal has a more realistic view of the school's current strengths and areas for development. Action has already been taken to improve the quality of leadership to enable senior leaders to have a greater impact on their areas of responsibility. The governing body is supportive of the approach of the new principal and is becoming more involved in the school's strategic planning and acting as a 'critical friend'. It has already been effective in securing improved teaching accommodation of a high quality and of being ready to wait until it considered that the right appointment for principal could be made. Leaders monitor the quality of provision such as teaching well. Monitoring procedures are effective in tracking individual pupils' progress. They are not as robust in demonstrating clearly the relative progress made by different groups. In this respect they are hampered by the lack of an effective ICT tracking system.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Furness School, Swanley, BR8 7RP

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently and for letting us join you in lessons and look at your work. We enjoyed talking with you and reading the questionnaires you completed. Most of you, including the boarders, are really positive about your school and what is provided for you.

We think that Furness is a good school. We were very impressed with your behaviour and the progress you make with your work. We think you are really well prepared to go on to college or into work. We think you understand well how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy, for example by enjoying the games activities offered to you. We think you study a good range of subjects, which meet your needs well. Teaching is good, as is the care and support you receive. We have asked the school to make some changes to the already good boarding provision. We think teachers could plan more to meet all your different needs in lessons.

Your school has improved a great deal since the last inspection because of the good leadership of senior leaders. We have asked the school leaders to check more carefully for any differences in performances by groups of pupils such as the day pupils and boarders.

Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Tim Feast Lead inspector

27 May 2008



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Yours sincerely

Tim Feast  
Lead inspector