

Continuum School Farrow House

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	810/6003
Unique Reference Number	133429
Inspection number	321821
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Continuum School Farrow House, which is an independent day school for students aged 10-16 with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, is located in Beverley, East Riding. The school, which is part of Continuum Care and Education Limited, originally opened in 2001 but relocated to its current site in September 2006. There are 12 students on roll, although at the time of the inspection only nine were in school because those in Year 11 had left after finishing their Key Stage 4 courses. The school aims to establish a culture that promotes excellence, equality, positive regard and high achievement for all the young people who attend. All the students come from four local authorities, with five in care homes run by the Continuum group. The school was previously inspected in April 2005.

Evaluation of the school

The Continuum House Farrow School provides a satisfactory and developing quality of education for its students. The majority of students enjoy attending school, and through working in small class groups are developing better attitudes to learning. Staff are very responsive to the varying educational, behavioural, emotional and social needs of students. The curriculum provides a satisfactory balance between vocational and traditional subjects, which is encouraging better attendance and behaviour from the majority of the students. The school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection and meets almost all regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory overall and improving in the vocational areas. The school's curriculum policy satisfactorily outlines its approach to the range of National Curriculum subjects taught, and the vocational courses offered to the students. These vocational courses are providing satisfactory opportunities that meet the varying needs of the students, all of whom have learning difficulties and some of which are significant. Although there are policies for all subjects taught, a number were not written specifically for the school and some still contain the name of other Continuum Care schools. Furthermore, the content of these policies is

inconsistent to provide clear curricular guidance to teachers. The school's provision for literacy and numeracy is helping the vast majority of students to satisfactorily develop their skills in these two important areas. The provision of some off-site activities enhances the students' learning and their appreciation of areas of study beyond those that they receive in school. Good links are maintained with Connexions personal advisers to ensure that the students are developing their understanding of the world of work.

The quality and effectiveness of teaching and assessment are satisfactory, and occasionally good. Relationships between teachers and students are generally very good in lessons. The staff manage and organise the students very effectively, including those times when the behaviour of an individual becomes extremely disruptive, not only to them but also to others in the lesson. Teachers' planning is of variable quality across the school, with the lesson content varying in its usefulness as an aid to ensuring that the students make progress in line with their capabilities. At its best, teachers plan a range of learning activities that challenge and extend the students' learning, and which also aids the assessment of their progress in lessons. However, not all lessons are of this quality. Occasionally, there is insufficient information relating to what the teacher wants the students to learn, or what aspects of their behaviour or social skills they need to develop in order to overcome some of their learning difficulties. Some teachers plan their lessons in a way that takes insufficient account of the students' prior learning or their capabilities. On these occasions, the lessons do not challenge the abilities of the students sufficiently well. Assessment processes are most effective in accredited courses where there are specific requirements to assess and record the students' achievements. However, in non-accredited sessions, the overall quality of assessment for learning ranges from good in some lessons to inadequate in others.

Although the standards achieved by the students are below or well below those expected for their age, the progress that the vast majority make during their time at the school is at least satisfactory, and good for a small minority in some vocational subjects. These improvements are seen in attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The quality and effectiveness of the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students is satisfactory overall, with some good features. The students' moral, social and ethical characteristics are positively encouraged, especially through the end-of-lesson review, which assesses with the students the quality of their work, effort, behaviour and punctuality. All staff encourage the students to consider their personal behaviour and the impact that it has on them and others in the school; this system is well understood by the students. Students know what is expected of them, and the vast majority respond very positively to the consistent and calm approach that staff use to manage their behaviour, or to encourage them to complete a piece of work. At those times where

a student exhibits extremely challenging and disruptive behaviour, the staff make every reasonable effort to engage the student in purposeful dialogue that will calm the situation. As a result of this strategy, the students' behaviour is satisfactory overall, and significantly better than in their previous schools. The students really appreciate the very good adult support provided in all lessons and, as one student said, 'I get more help now than I ever did at my previous school'. However, the school's links with the care workers for looked after students is less well developed, and some opportunities are being missed to provide better all-round support for some of these students whose behaviour needs very careful management.

Students' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory overall, and is appropriately supported through the religious education, personal, social and health education, and citizenship curricula. The students have numerous opportunities to enhance their appreciation and understanding of community life, and public institutions and services through their curricular studies of human rights, democracy, crime, local and national government, and elections and voting. These learning experiences are helping the students to gain a better appreciation of themselves, relative to others in the local and national communities. The attendance of the majority of students is at least satisfactory or better, and is certainly significantly much improved when compared to their attendance at mainstream schools. This improved attendance is helping the students to develop their enjoyment of the many different activities provided for them at school. However, the persistent absence of a small minority is a cause for concern.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's measures to promote the welfare, health and safety of the students, including child protection, are good. All staff are very sensitive to the varying needs of the students, especially in encouraging them to improve those aspects of their emotional and social behaviour that have previously presented significant barriers to their achievement and personal development. The level of personal supervision is very effective both in lessons and in out-of-school activities. The procedures for safeguarding the students are well known and adhered to consistently by all staff, and are based on very thorough risk assessments. The range of policies relating to health and safety, bullying, discipline and first aid meet the needs of the students very well. Staff are clear about the range of sanctions that need to be applied in the event of any anti-social behaviour, and all incidents are recorded in detail and in line with requirements for schools.

The school's promotion of personal well-being, including curricular work in personal, social, and health education, is good. All reasonable efforts are being made to inform and challenge those students who partake of potential health risks; for example, smoking, alcohol and substance misuse, and other aspects of unhealthy living. There are good opportunities for all students to participate in regular exercise within the curriculum, including a range of sporting activities at a local leisure centre. The safety checks on fire fighting equipment comply fully with requirements.

The school is sensibly linking the requirement to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 to the school development plan. However, the identified actions in the current plan are based on carrying out an audit of provision rather than specific details of what actions will be taken over a three year period, which means that the school currently fails to comply with this aspect of the requirements for independent schools.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has good procedures for ensuring that all adults who work in the school are suitably checked for their ability to teach the students. The single central register meets all requirements.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are satisfactory overall. The school relocated to a unit on an industrial estate in 2006. There is a reasonably-sized multipurpose hall that is used as a social and recreational area, in addition to being a dining room at lunchtimes. There are eight classrooms, all of which are relatively small in size but are generally suitable for the small size of teaching group using them. There are specialist rooms for woodworking and information and communication technology; the latter of which houses five networked computers and one printer. There is a kitchen on site that is used by staff and for the preparation of food for the students. However, this facility does not meet the minimum requirements for the hygienic preparation of food for the students. The school building is in good condition, with a range of suitable wash areas and toilets appropriate to the age range of the students in the school. However, there are two major limitations to the current building. First, the current use of the headteacher's office as a first aid room is inadequate in a number of respects, not least in terms of there not being a washbasin and suitable facilities for any student who may need to lie down. Second, there is no outdoor space for the students to play safely. The only area of any size is a car park immediately outside the front entrance into the school, but the proximity to adjacent business units and access roads poses foreseeable safety risks for any type of supervised or free play. The school does make good use of a local sports centre for teaching some aspects of their physical education curriculum.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and others is satisfactory overall. The prospectus, which all parents receive, contains a range of useful and relevant information about the school's ethos, the type of curricula offered at Key Stages 3 and 4, accreditation opportunities, and how the school safeguards and meets the needs of any student with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities; this latter area also includes those with a statement of special educational need. However, there is a lack of clarity in the prospectus about the range of policies and other

information that are required to be made available to the parents, on request to the school. This relates specifically to the policies for the promotion of good behaviour and the sanctions adopted in the event of students misbehaving. Furthermore, there is no reference to the Key Stage 2 curriculum offered, despite the school being registered to take 10 year-old children. There is also no clear indication that parents, or prospective parents, may request the particulars of academic performance in the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures for handling complaints are clear and concise and meet all requirements for independent schools.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for students who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) regulation 1999 (paragraph 5(l))
- ensure that the kitchen, which is used for the preparation of food for the students, meets all health and hygiene requirements (paragraph 5(m))
- ensure there are suitable arrangements for providing outside space for the students to play safely (paragraph 5(t)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- ensure that parents are aware they can request
 - details of policies relating to the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of students misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h))
 - particulars of academic performance, including the results of any public examinations during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(i)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- update the range of subject policies to ensure greater consistency and relevance to the students at the school
- make better use of lesson planning to ensure that students of all abilities are suitably challenged in their work
- improve the regularity and use of assessment procedures as an aid to teachers' planning and students' progress
- implement its recently updated attendance policy and ensure that it follows up on persistent absence in a quick and effective way.

School details

Name of school	Continuum School Farrow House		
DCSF number	810/6003		
Unique reference number	133429		
Type of school	Secondary day special school for students with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	2001		
Age range of pupils	10-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 7	Girls: 5	Total: 12
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 7	Girls: 2	Total: 9
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 5	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 31,824-£36,552		
Address of school	20 Priory Road Industrial Estate Beverley East Riding of Yorkshire Hull HU17 0EW		
Telephone number	01482 307833		
Fax number	01482 307380		
Email address	sarah.pulford@farrowhouse.co.uk		
Headteacher	Ms S Pulford		
Proprietor	Mr Bob Hall		
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake HMI		
Dates of inspection	1–2 July 2008		