

Farney Close School

Independent special school

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	938/6217
Unique Reference Number	126139
URN for registered childcare and social care	SC014513
Inspection number	330285
Inspection dates	01-02 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Richard Winter
Social care inspector	Liz Driver

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). The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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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.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.

This was a light touch education inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding students and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Farney Close is a weekly-boarding residential school, set in 33 acres of land and located near Bolney, West Sussex. The proprietor, Farney Close School Ltd, is a registered charity and a limited company. The school is registered for up to 72 boys and girls aged between 11 and 17 who experience severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are almost twice as many boys as girls in the school. At the time of the inspection there were 61 students on roll, of whom two were above school age. The students attend from 31 different local authorities and mostly come from London and the south and south east of England. The school has recently admitted Year 7 students but most are admitted during Year 8 or Year 9.

All students are resident at the school and all have a statement of special educational needs. Many students have additional needs such as autism, moderate learning difficulties and dyslexia. About a third of students have been youth offenders and most have received some mental health support. Students have often experienced emotional traumas prior to being admitted and, as a consequence of their behaviour, have been excluded from mainstream schools. About one fifth of students are in the care of their local authorities. No students require support to learn English as an additional language. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2006 and the residential provision by the Ofsted Children's Directorate in January 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Farney Close is a highly successful school which provides an outstanding quality of education and care which ensures that the vast majority of students make outstanding progress. This is due to clear and incisive leadership and management and the high quality of teaching and care from experienced staff. The school has continued to develop well following its last outstanding education report. The quality

of residential provision is excellent overall and education and care staff work well together for the benefit of students and are successful in improving their behaviour. Students, parents and carers rightly express a high level of satisfaction with the school. The three weaknesses highlighted by the last inspection have been addressed and the school now meets all the regulations for independent schools and all of the National Minimum Standards for residential special school provision.

Quality of education

The quality of education is outstanding and is highly effective in meeting the school's aims and the needs and abilities of its students. The curriculum is exceptionally good. It is broad and balanced, providing very good opportunities in both academic and non-academic areas. The school has improved its vocational provision since the last inspection and has good plans for additional vocational courses, where at present they cannot be provided on-site. The school makes good use of local colleges where appropriate. Highly experienced staff focus clearly on developing students' basic skills. Considerable specialist support and intervention is provided to assist behaviour and learning, such as speech and language therapy, art and drama therapy. This is very effective across the whole ability range. Where necessary, students receive specialist support for speech and language difficulties or specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. There are also regular assessments to gauge progress in reading and spelling that contribute to the planning of individual learning programmes. This information is shared and used effectively with all staff, including care staff. As a result, students make exceptional progress especially in English, mathematics and science and in the physical, creative and aesthetic subjects.

Schemes of work are set out clearly for each subject. These are continually monitored for effectiveness and improvements are made where necessary. At Key Stage 3, students are taught the full National Curriculum. At Key Stage 4, students follow the statutory curriculum and a range of subject options to GCSE and Entry Level Certificate. There is a variety of vocational courses and accredited awards such as Junior Sports Leadership. Currently, the two 17 year-old students on roll follow the Key Stage 4 course.

Students participate in a wide range of programmes to broaden their horizons both within the school and on trips and activities beyond the school day. This provides a very effective 24-hour curriculum that is carefully planned to meet all needs. Students show their growing understanding and confidence through developing and pursuing a wide variety of interests. Activities that help prepare students for independent living are planned and operated well by the residential staff.

The quality of teaching and assessment overall is outstanding. Teachers and all support staff know the students well and are very successful in supporting their academic and behavioural needs. All staff gain a thorough knowledge of students' abilities and their strengths and weaknesses and continuously monitor individual progress. The rate of progress that students make increases with the length of time that they have been at the school. Examination results in recent years show that students do exceptionally well when compared to similar schools, even though they

often join the school having experienced limited academic success previously. Students achieve well in the majority of lessons across the age range, although it is not always recorded clearly on subject lesson plans how resources will be used to meet individual needs. Evidence from students' work shows that progress is at least good and often outstanding. Written work is of a high quality with good examples of extended writing and art work that shows experimentation with a wide variety of media.

In lessons, teachers constantly check on students' understanding both formally and informally, making assessment thorough and continuous. Teachers successfully encourage students to assess their own work so that they gain a better understanding of how to improve. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and they vary activities in lessons well by using stimulating and interesting resources. This includes very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance the effectiveness and enjoyment of learning. Its use has greatly expanded since the last inspection. As a result, students often become engrossed in what they are doing and gradually learn how to improve their concentration. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and, through their confident and carefully measured approach, ensure that students understand what is expected of them. They are supported very ably by experienced teaching assistants and care staff. All staff work very well as a team.

The relationships between staff and students are positive and in general, the students behave well. If difficulties occur, staff use their experience and clearly defined procedures well to ensure that disruption to learning is kept to a minimum. Students appreciate the individual help and attention they get for both their academic and personal needs and they gradually learn to develop positive attitudes to learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Students' personal development is outstanding, with particular strengths in moral and social development. This is because the school has high expectations of their attitude towards adults and each other. There is constant reinforcement, not just through the personal, social and health education curriculum, but throughout the day, supported by excellent cooperation between education and residential staff. This results in at least satisfactory standards of behaviour being the norm. There is a general atmosphere of calm during the less structured parts of the school day when students get together, such as at breaks, meal times and in the boarding houses. When incidents of inappropriate behaviour do occur, staff act well together to diffuse potentially difficult situations quickly and effectively. At an appropriate time, the students concerned are involved in discussions to develop their self awareness about right and wrong. There is frequent and effective communication between school and home. Parents and placing authorities agree that self-confidence and esteem improves greatly. Attendance is good, as students mostly enjoy their work and other activities and become increasingly self-motivated over time.

Students take pride in their work and are willing to participate actively in lessons and extra-curricular activities. The school takes care to ensure that they find pastimes or courses that they can excel at and this is well coordinated between the school and the residential provision. Their growing confidence results in a large proportion of students going on to further their education when they leave. They are well prepared for life after school through the provision of extensive careers guidance, work experience and by following vocational courses. Most students participate in clubs and activities at the school and in the local community, including a wide variety of sporting commitments. Students attend special events such as the Brighton Festival and Army Day.

The school forum is effective in providing opportunities for students to participate in contributing to their community. They are involved in making decisions that help the smooth running of the school and in developing initiatives such as fund raising for various charities. The school premises, which are maintained to a very high standard, are respected by students. The school provides good opportunities to promote understanding of various cultures and beliefs through activities such as Black History Month and cooking of meals from various cuisines. Students of different ethnic heritage work and play well together and, as a result, are well prepared for life in a multicultural society.

Safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety

The school's provision for safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding because of the high standards of care that are maintained. All essential policies and records are in place and risk assessments are carried out across all aspects of school life. There are robust procedures for recruiting staff and safeguarding students that comply with the latest guidance. A single central register is in place recording that all the necessary checks have been conducted. This is of particular importance because many of the students are vulnerable. The school has excellent links with outside agencies and there are very well operated policies for child protection. All staff are trained regularly in child protection and physical intervention. There is a satisfactory level of fire safety and this is monitored through a fire safety audit carried out by external consultants and checks by the local fire brigade.

Levels of staff supervision are high, ensuring that students' health and safety is well maintained. Students agree that minor incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Appropriate records are kept of accidents and injuries. The number of staff who have first aid qualifications exceeds the National Minimum Standards. The school has a Healthy Schools award. Students gain a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle through various parts of the curriculum both during and beyond the school day.

The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

Farney Close provides outstanding residential provision. Young people are provided with an environment where they are able to develop as individuals and not only fulfil, but exceed, their potential. The organisation is excellent and they are cared for extremely well in all areas of their lives. No recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. The three recommendations made at the last inspection were revisited and found to have been fully addressed. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding, lying at the heart of all policies, practices and learning. Most recently, Black History Month has been celebrated throughout the school.

There is excellent provision for promoting health and well-being. Healthy eating is promoted and the food provided is varied and nutritious. Food is discussed at every school forum meeting, where young people confidently raise suggestions. Specific cultural and dietary needs are well met. Individual medical, physical and emotional needs are identified, assessed and met to a very high standard. Health needs that relate to ethnicity, race, sexuality, faith and belief are fully assessed. The school works very closely with external specialists. The administration of medication is very sound with robust systems in place to protect the young people. A competent senior member of staff is responsible for their health needs.

Comprehensive policies and procedures support staff practices in keeping young people safe from the risk of harm, neglect or abuse. Staff are experienced, displaying a sound understanding of key child protection matters. The school is active in seeking advice, guidance and training in all matters relating to safeguarding. Young people are further protected by excellent recruitment procedures. The governing body has a designated member who takes the lead for child protection matters. Since the last inspection the school has achieved first place for special schools in the 'safer place award' scheme coordinated by the West Sussex Strategic Community Safety Partnership.

Staff maintain respect for the privacy of young people at all times, and information is securely stored. A clear procedure is in place for young people, parents, carers and staff to voice their concern or complaint. All concerns and complaints are addressed appropriately. Since the last inspection no concerns or complaints have been received by Ofsted.

Bullying is not identified as a concern; staff remain vigilant to any issues as and when they arise. Ongoing work to highlight bullying issues is exemplary and involves young people themselves. The school's approach to behaviour management is outstanding. Detailed care planning includes challenging negative or risky behaviours of young people where they occur, providing clear guidance to staff in how to respond to each particular situation. The need for physical intervention is kept relatively low, with an emphasis on de-escalation in all instances. Staff are suitably trained and experienced to carry out restraints. The use of sanctions is minimal and appropriate.

Young people receive excellent support, guidance and encouragement from

experienced care staff who display a comprehensive understanding of their individual needs. They have their care and educational needs robustly assessed, planned for and reviewed jointly; where required this will be completed in line with 'Looked After Children' placement planning. Clear and obvious plans guide staff in responding to each young person's particular abilities, behaviours, attitudes, emotional issues and identities. Care staff support the educational needs of each young person in an extremely consistent and thoughtful manner. The school ethos focuses on the concept of working together, with both care and education staff contributing fully to the overall task.

Young people feel that they can express their feelings, views and wishes openly, both individually with care staff and in more formal arenas such as the school forum and house meetings. Information regarding independent advocacy support services is readily available. Young people are clearly encouraged and empowered to engage in and contribute to decisions made about themselves and the school in general. They are enabled to maintain appropriate contact with parents and carers, whilst close liaison between staff and parents and carers ensures that information is readily shared and considered. Young people live in well-designed and suitably furnished houses that are maintained to a high standard. They have ready access to a wide range of activities both on-site and off, and in the local community.

The school has a robust health and safety policy in place with risk assessments covering all aspects of living and working at the school. All fire fighting equipment is checked regularly with all staff and young people aware of evacuation procedures.

The school's statement of purpose gives a good description of the residential provision. Information available for parents and young people is appropriate and in suitable formats. There is a very stable, committed and experienced staff team who provide consistently high standards of care. The school is currently exceeding the required level of training and qualification for staff. Staff receive regular supervision and yearly appraisals.

The senior management team provides excellent leadership that is reflective of the high standard of practices seen throughout the school. All aspects of care provision are closely monitored on a regular basis, both internally and externally. The governors are actively involved in the day to day running of the school and fully support the management and staff team.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

The school meets the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools and associated regulations

What the school could do to improve further

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

- some lesson plans could be more informative in clearly identifying how teaching resources will meet individual needs.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs	✓			
How well students make progress in their learning	✓			

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of students			✓	

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students	✓			
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The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision	✓			
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School details

Name of school	Farney Close School		
DCSF number	938/6217		
Unique reference number	126139		
Type of school	Special for students with complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1946		
Age range of students	11 – 17		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 37	Girls: 24	Total: 61
Number of boarders	Boys: 37	Girls: 24	Total: 61
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 37	Girls: 24	Total: 61
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls: 7	Total: 10
Annual fees (boarders)	£53,718		
Address of school	Bolney Court Bolney Haywards Heath West Sussex RH17 5RD		
Telephone number	01444881811		
Fax number	01444881957		
Email address	head@farneyclose.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Barry Robinson		
Proprietor	Farney Close School Ltd.		
Reporting inspector	Richard Winter		
Dates of inspection	1–2 December 2008		