

Farney Close School

Bolney Court, Bolney, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 5RD

Inspection dates

3–5 December 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not systematically monitored the quality of provision across the school and so have not prevented its decline. They have been pulled into operational activities and have not fulfilled strategic leadership requirements.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is weak. Consequently, their plans for school improvement are not effective.
- Pupils' attendance has declined.
- Governors do not have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have not held leaders to account or ensured that they fulfil their strategic roles.
- Governors have not ensured that leaders meet the independent school standards consistently. Many were addressed during the inspection.
- Leaders do not undertake routine evaluation of risk assessments.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are happy here. Many feel that their lives are improved due to the good care and support they receive from the dedicated staff.
- Staff know pupils well. They provide good personalised care and learning for pupils.
- Good-quality teaching means that pupils learn well and make good progress, both with their academic learning and personal development.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is carefully matched to each pupil's needs. It supports pupils' learning and development well.
- Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education supports pupils well and helps to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Sixth-form students benefit from personalised provision. They make good progress overall.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership, management and governance, by:
 - developing leaders' strategic understanding of the quality of education and care
 - ensuring that the self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate
 - tightening the link between self-evaluation and school improvement plans
 - establishing systematic processes to monitor the school's effectiveness, so that leaders know what difference their actions make to improving the quality of provision for pupils
 - establishing the intended impact of actions and new strategies before embarking on them, to ensure that their effectiveness can be measured
 - ensuring that effective systems are in place to enable governors to hold leaders to account for the impact of their work
 - monitoring and improving pupils' attendance.
- Develop and establish secure systems that routinely monitor and evaluate the quality of care provided, particularly the arrangements for the management and oversight of fire safety and the health and safety of the residential areas.
- Ensure that all records of behaviour management, risk assessments and plans are monitored and evaluated with recorded evidence that considers their effectiveness.
- Improve recruitment systems to evidence the verification of a candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their role.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
The effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision	Requires improvement
How well children and young people are helped and protected in the residential provision	Good

- Turbulence in leadership staffing over the past year has weakened the effectiveness of leadership and management. Established staff have stepped up to take on unexpectedly vacant leadership roles, but they have not been given the time, training or support to do this effectively. Consequently, the overall quality of care and education has declined to good.
- Leaders recognise this slippage, but their actions to address it have not been speedy enough because, instead, they are routinely called on to support at an operational level in and around the school.
- Leaders are committed to the school and its pupils. They express high ambition to deliver the school's vision of supporting pupils to be 'the best version of themselves'. However, leaders spend too much of their time on these operational activities. They have not worked at a strategic level to produce a precise self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Consequently, their plans for school improvement are confused and lack a sense of urgency.
- Leaders and managers lack clarity, knowledge and understanding of the weaknesses in the residential provision. The head of care and other senior staff have taken on additional roles, but have been ineffective in their oversight and management of the residential houses.
- Leaders have not systematically analysed pupils' absence and so have not effectively addressed the decline in pupils' attendance.
- Leaders have undertaken lesson observations and work scrutiny to build their knowledge of the quality of teaching across the school. They make good use of external advisers, commissioned by the governing body, to help them act on their findings from lesson observations. A useful programme of professional development has been constructed, but it is too early to see its impact on improving the quality of teaching. Leaders have not used their learning from work scrutiny to inform school improvement actions.
- Leaders ensure that staff are trained when new teaching resources are adopted. However, leaders have not identified the intended impact of those resources or thought about how to monitor their effectiveness.
- Staff are highly motivated and share leaders' ambition for pupils. They are positive about the difference their work makes for pupils and their families. Staff feel that leaders support them well.
- The curriculum remains strong. Leaders have ensured that it provides pupils with a broad and balanced range of learning that will enable them to succeed in their next steps and life in modern Britain. Leaders are acutely aware that pupils need parity with their peers

when they return to mainstream education or move on to their next steps after Farney Close. They ensure that accreditation for learning is secured whenever possible.

- Careers education, information, advice and guidance are strong. Pupils benefit from ongoing work with an independent careers adviser, as well as with their care and education staff. Leaders ensure that pupils' aims and ambitions, including those identified in their education, health and care plans, are met through the curriculum and by the support offered through the residential provision.
- Leaders also ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is supported well. Care and education staff work effectively together to provide activities that support pupils' SMSC development and promote British values well. The programme of PSHE education is particularly successful and leaders ensure that it is continually updated to respond to local, national and international events.
- Extra-curricular activities widen the breadth of pupils' experience still further. Leaders make the most of the beautiful setting to support pupils' wider learning. They offer a wide range of activities and experiences. This aspect of leaders' work is strong, and staff continually develop the variety of enrichment opportunities.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the school and the way it supports them and their children. Those who spoke to inspectors or responded via Parent View explained how it had 'transformed' their and their children's lives. Many pupils spoke to inspectors about the difference the school and staff made. Pupils expressed hope and ambition for the future that they felt they had lost before joining Farney Close.
- At the start of the inspection, some of the independent school standards were not met. For example, many of the standards relating to the provision of information were unmet. Leaders acted quickly to rectify this, and, by the end of the inspection, the vast majority of the standards were met. The remaining unmet standard does not pose a significant risk to pupils' welfare, and leaders know how they will address it now. However, this indicates that governors, acting as the proprietor, have not ensured that leaders consistently meet these standards.

Governance

- Governors are also directors and trustees of Farney Close Ltd, the proprietor. The governing body has also undergone change over the last year. In October of this year, a new chair was elected. New governors have joined, bringing a wider range of skills and experience.
- Governors have not scrutinised the work of leaders carefully enough. They recognised leadership issues as they emerged last year and brought in external support for the new headteacher, but this was not successful.
- In appointing established members of staff to acting leadership roles in September 2018, governors succeeded in calming staff worries. However, they did not provide enough support or challenge to ensure that those taking on the roles could be successful.
- Following the leadership turbulence, governors have not set clear deadlines or expectations for leaders and so have not held them closely to account. Governors have not ensured that the independent school standards are met consistently.

- Governors recognise the need to improve their practice. They have sought external advice and recently adopted a new committee structure, but it is too soon to see the impact of this change.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding policy meets current requirements and is published on the school's website. It sets out clear guidance, and leaders ensure that staff have read and understood it. Staff also receive regular safeguarding updates and training.
- Staff know pupils well and understand their potential vulnerabilities. Staff use their training well to respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns. They document concerns well and report any issues through the correct procedures. Safeguarding leads keep clear records of the actions taken and the outcomes.
- Leaders have ensured that risk assessments are completed for each pupil. However, these are not always updated quickly enough after an incident. Staff use their safeguarding training to take appropriate action. For example, they act quickly and fittingly when a pupil absconds, even though required actions are not spelled out clearly enough in some documentation.
- The systems in place for the management of fire safety and health and safety matters were disorganised at the start of the inspection. Leaders acted quickly to rectify matters, but they have yet to fully establish organised systems and processes to ensure and enable regular oversight and scrutiny of risk management for fire safety and health and safety.
- Recruitment processes follow guidelines, with the exception of the requirement to routinely check candidates' mental and physical fitness to carry out work responsibilities. Leaders understand the need to ensure that this is part of their standard recruitment process.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff skilfully develop strong relationships with pupils, winning their trust through consistent and calm approaches to activities. Pupils understand the clear boundaries and respond well to the high expectations that staff display.
- Teachers make good use of the 'pupil passport' information provided by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) about pupils' individual learning needs. They use this, along with their assessment of pupils' prior learning, to plan activities that engage pupils and develop their knowledge and understanding.
- Staff from all parts of the school work well together to build pupils' self-esteem. They carefully plan activities so that pupils can experience success and learn the rewards of effort. This joint approach helps pupils to make good progress in their academic and personal learning.

- Staff have strong subject knowledge, and pupils respect them as experts in their field. This knowledge allows staff to address pupils' misconceptions quickly and thus support their learning effectively.
- Reading is promoted as fundamental throughout the school. Pupils benefit from specialist reading support alongside morning 'progress units' and reading development that is threaded through each subject. This work is effective, and pupils develop positive attitudes to reading during their time at Farney Close.
- Pupils particularly enjoy their practical and vocational learning experiences. They demonstrate pride in their work, and many pupils are able to explain their learning and successes in a clear and articulate manner.
- Residential and care staff support the education team to provide consistency in pupils' learning to moderate their behaviour. A handful of care staff feel that they 'do the behaviour management' for teachers in class, but inspectors observed teaching staff using a range of strategies to successfully de-escalate pupils' behaviour when required.
- The deputy headteacher has identified the current assessment system as being in need of review, but has not yet fully planned this work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Residential staff provide pupils with practical advice, information and guidance that help them to make positive choices to keep themselves safe. This is supported by a comprehensive PSHE education programme that develops pupils' understanding of potential risks and how to recognise and deal with them.
- Staff also successfully develop pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence, so that pupils' emotional well-being is strengthened. Pupils are supported well to identify personal goals and ambitions and are then helped to achieve them. Many pupils who spoke to inspectors described the positive change in their lives since joining Farney Close. Several highlighted their knowledge that staff believe that they can succeed. One pupil said that staff give pupils 'a chance that no one else would give'.
- Pupils said that staff work well to make sure that any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. School records show that leaders act quickly and effectively and that incidents of bullying have reduced over time. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to make sure that pupils are supported in and out of school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- For most pupils, behaviour over time improves as they become attuned to the expectations, systems, rewards and incentives available. Personalised plans are put into place to help pupils manage their own behaviour at times of need. Leaders ensure that when physical intervention is used, it is used appropriately.

- Pupils' behaviour is managed effectively. Systems are used in a calm and effective manner, so that disruption to learning is minimised.
- Pupils were polite and welcoming to inspectors, saying 'hello' and holding doors open. They took pride in explaining their work and discussing the progress they had made.
- Pupils' attendance has started to decline. Pupils stay in the residential provision from Monday to Friday and there is an emerging trend of pupils being absent from school for whole weeks at a time. Leaders recognise that this is an alarming issue that will hinder pupils' progress and that swift action is required.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils arrive with low starting points and, often, years of missed schooling. They make strong progress with their academic and personal, social, behavioural and emotional learning during their time at Farney Close.
- GCSE results from 2018 show that these pupils made good progress as well as attaining well. All pupils in this year group attained a GCSE or entry-level qualification in English and mathematics. Most also attained science qualifications. They took and achieved other academic and vocational qualifications as best met their interests and needs.
- Current pupils make strong progress over time. School records show that many arrive with very low reading ages. They are supported exceptionally well to make rapid progress. The development of reading skills also allows pupils to succeed with the rest of their studies.
- Current pupils make good progress in a wide range of academic and vocational subjects.
- Pupils also make strong progress with their personal, social and emotional development. The strong PSHE education and SMSC development programmes help them to develop empathy and a greater awareness of the wider world.
- Most pupils make strong progress with their behaviour. School records show that incidents reduce over time.
- The well-constructed curriculum, good quality of teaching and strong level of care mean that pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Sixth form provision

Good

- Students in the sixth form make good progress from their starting points due to the personalised programmes of study and the well-considered package of care provided. Each student is supported very well to continue their academic, personal, social, emotional and behavioural learning.
- Leaders work closely with students and their families to identify appropriate college courses. Students are supported well to complete these courses successfully. Leaders work closely with colleges to ensure that students have the correct level of support. This is evaluated frequently, so that students grow in their independence over their time in the sixth form.

- Students' programmes of study also include work-related learning and work experience alongside careers education, information, advice and guidance. Once again, the development of this aspect of students' learning is carefully and successfully managed so that students make strong progress with their independence as well as their learning about the world of work.
- Staff in the residential provision also support students' learning about life skills, covering aspects such as financial management, cooking and laundry. This helps to prepare them well for their next steps.
- Success and retention rates are strong, and almost all students complete the courses they begin.
- Residential staff support students well to develop personally, including with their behaviour. This work is effective, and students make good progress with their behaviour.
- Leaders have a sound understanding of how each student is progressing at college and at the residential provision. However, as with the rest of the school, they have not evaluated the effectiveness of their work and so cannot identify the strengths and areas for development.
- Staff know pupils well and respond effectively to any issue or setback. In practice, staff action is strong, but the paperwork does not always indicate the actions required. This is because leaders have not systematically reviewed risk assessments after incidents, and so have not routinely made any adjustments to plans that might be required.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision **Good**

- Residential pupils make good progress. They develop good personal and social interaction skills, including in their relationships with staff. Pupils enjoy the time they spend in the residential provision.
- Staff offer pupils access to a range of activities and experiences. Staff are currently developing the variety of enrichment opportunities they offer.
- Staff have developed their knowledge and support practices to fully address pupils' mental and emotional well-being.
- Staff are trained in the school's preferred behaviour management approach. On occasion, they may need to use physical intervention to manage behaviour. They record the detail about the incident, which gives them an opportunity to review, reflect and explore their thoughts and views. Senior leaders do not routinely review and evaluate the effectiveness of staff management of incidents.
- The newly appointed independent visitor attends the school regularly and provides a useful additional layer of scrutiny and oversight.

School details

Unique reference number	126139
Social care unique reference number	SC014513
DfE registration number	938/6217
Inspection number	10054076

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.

The inspection of residential provision 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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	9 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	45
Proprietor	Farney Close Ltd
Chair	Sue Deane
Headteacher	Sara Hack
Annual fees (day pupils)	£70,000
Annual fees (boarders)	£70,000
Telephone number	01444 881811
Website	www.farneyclose.co.uk
Email address	head@farneyclose.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–5 November 2015

Information about this school

- Farney Close School is smaller than the average independent residential special school. It is registered for up to 72 pupils aged from nine to 18. In March 2018, the registration was extended to include pupils aged nine and 10, but the school has not yet taken any pupils in this age range. There are currently 46 pupils on roll aged from 11 to 18.
- In September 2017, a new headteacher took over leadership of the school following the retirement of the previous, long-serving incumbent. He resigned after a year in post. In September 2018, the head of care stepped up to take on the role of acting headteacher. At the time of inspection, there were a number of staff fulfilling temporary leadership positions due to this situation and the absence, for health reasons, of the acting head of care.
- The governing body has also experienced turbulence. Several new members have joined recently. The chair of the governing body took up post in October 2018.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan for their severe social, emotional and mental health needs. For many, this exhibits as behavioural difficulties. Almost all of the pupils board from Monday to Friday in the residential accommodation on site.
- The school's aims are that, 'all children and young people should have the opportunity to receive an education that supports each of them to become the best version of themselves.'
- Pupils complete a 'trial term' at the school to check that Farney Close is the correct provision for them. For the vast majority of pupils, this is successful. The school works with the placing local authority, pupils and parents to secure appropriate alternative provision if the school turns out not to be the best fit for a pupil. A small number of pupils who are currently unable to attend school receive individual tuition off site.
- Students at the sixth form attend Crawley College to study from a wide range of accredited academic and/or vocational courses and to continue their English and mathematics studies, if required. Farney Close provides careers and life skills learning to support this.
- The last integrated inspection of the school and residential provision was carried out in November 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty’s Inspectors visited a wide range of classes and lessons over the course of the inspection. Some of these visits were carried out in conjunction with the deputy headteacher.
- During these visits, inspectors observed learning, looked at pupils’ work, and spoke with pupils. They also spoke with pupils during breakfast and breaktimes and considered the school’s surveys of pupils’ thoughts about Farney Close.
- The lead inspector also scrutinised a sample of pupils’ work across a range of subjects.
- The Social Care Regulatory Inspectors visited the residential homes and examined the quality of accommodation and facilities provided for pupils. They spent time with pupils during the day, including at mealtimes and during evening activities. They spoke with a wide range of pupils during inspection activities. They also met formally with a group of pupils.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders of the school and residential provision, groups of staff and four governors. Inspectors considered the 39 responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on the telephone and took into account the five responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire. They also considered the school’s own survey and records of communications with parents and carers.
- Documentation and records relating to the independent school standards and the national minimum standards for residential special schools were scrutinised by inspectors. They also studied leaders’ self-evaluations and school improvement plans. Records relating to safeguarding and staff recruitment were also examined.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty’s Inspector

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Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person–
 - 18(2)(c)(ii) the person’s medical fitness.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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