

Farney Close School

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

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special 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 boarders reside on a weekly basis and return home at weekends. At the time of this inspection, there were 47 residential pupils on roll.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 February 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 21 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Outcomes for boarders are positive: they make good progress in education and learn new social skills.
- Boarders form close and trusting relationships with the committed and dedicated staff.
- Boarders reduce their risk-taking behaviour, and incidents of physical restraint are reduced.
- Boarders benefit from the range of specialist services available, including therapists, and engage well with them.
- Boarders benefit from an efficient admissions and induction procedure and settle quickly into their new environment.
- Boarders benefit from an experienced care management team that monitors, evaluates and influences their behaviour effectively.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The reports by the independent visitor do not evaluate safeguarding effectively, and this is the second consecutive inspection at which this has been noted.
- There are minor shortfalls noted in risk-assessment practice, independent return to care interviews, the availability of independent advocacy, healthcare plans and the information contained on the school website. These shortfalls do not directly affect the quality of care offered to young people.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for residential special schools:

- 20.2 Most monitoring visits are unannounced. They include: an evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded

Recommendations

- The boarders' handbook should be available on the school's website.
- Risk assessments should include more specific information on the risk involved and the strategies for addressing it.
- Ensure that a clear protocol is put in place, giving staff guidance on the management of complex health conditions that affect young people.
- Staff are to consider a referral to an independent advocate, who will ensure that learners receive full advice and guidance regarding care-planning decisions.
- Managers should ensure that an offer of an independent return to care interview is made to young people after a period of being missing.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Bad weather limited this inspection. The school closed at four o'clock on the first day of the inspection, limiting the observation of practice and consultation with boarders. Inspectors were able to share lunch with boarders on one occasion and meet with a few boarders prior to them returning home.

Boarders make good progress educationally. Of the 19 boarders who completed their studies in Year 12, 17 moved to a planned college provision. Staff supported these moves with letters of support and continue to offer advice and guidance to former boarders. This inspection notes that 14 former boarders continued on courses commenced in September 2017. Boarding is integral to the improved attendance, engagement and attainment of boarders, who have often arrived at the school after previously difficult experiences and life histories.

Boarders engage with education in a variety of settings both within and external to the school. These include floristry and motor mechanics. Staff provide transport if required. Boarders learn to broaden their horizons, and two boarders are due to perform in a musical to raise money for clean water in a village in Africa. Young people from the village concerned are due to visit the school in the summer to share experiences with boarders.

Boarding staff work in close cooperation with academic staff to support boarders who are experiencing difficulties. Staff monitor boarders closely and are alive to issues such as homesickness. Staff offer good levels of support for homework and track academic progress effectively. Boarders benefit from the help and support of the specialist services located in the day school. The speech and language therapist supports boarders by introducing a programme of talking homework, to improve attainment. Engagement with the art therapist has allowed boarders to express themselves in new ways.

Boarders benefit from small houses, which are individualised to their age group and specific needs. Older boarders enjoy an environment in which they can develop independence skills, sharing cooking responsibilities each evening. Younger boarders learn basic cooking, cleaning and laundry skills. Small houses promote the family-style atmosphere in which boarders learn new social skills, such as patience, tolerance and acceptance of others. When friction occurs between peers, staff mediate effectively, and boarders learn to apologise and make amends.

Feedback from boarders is very positive. One boarder commented, 'I love it here. I want to stay. The staff really, really care about you.' This feedback is echoed by the placing professionals, and one described the progress achieved by a boarder as 'phenomenal'. One parent commented, 'I could not have wished for a better school, his anger outbursts have decreased enormously and he loves his school.'

Induction procedures are effective and benefit from the establishment of positive routines. Boarders enjoy a wide variety of activities. They are able to make use of the school's sporting facilities, including a basketball court and a lake for fishing. A local youth group provides subsidised activities, including scuba diving.

Boarders respond well to the points-based behavioural management scheme. This focuses them on the value and importance of consistently positive behaviour. Boarders learn to gain positive attention through their behaviours, and the consistent support and guidance of the staff team are reflected in the improved behaviours seen in boarding.

Staff actively seek the wishes and feelings of boarders. Boarders choose activities and have input into the weekly menu. Boarders participate in the school forum and learn new skills of teamwork and advocacy. Boarders understand their care plans and value the help and support offered by staff. When sanctions are imposed, staff ensure that these address the behaviour concerned. Staff address behavioural issues imaginatively, for example work to address sleep deprivation for boarders struggling with bedtime routines.

Boarders benefit from good access to healthcare. In general, staff understand the health needs of boarders. However, in one instance staff had not received appropriate guidance on how to support a complex health condition.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Safeguarding is strong. The head of care is also the designated safeguarding lead for the school, and has a good oversight of practice and procedures. Managers refer relevant concerns to the designated officer at the host local authority. This ensures compliance with statutory procedures and the sharing of information with key professionals.

The school adopts a strong response to key areas of risk. Boarders do not have access to mobile phones. This eliminates conflict over access to social media, and focuses boarders on their academic studies and building relationships with their peers and staff.

Boarders report feeling safe and report that staff swiftly address any bullying concerns. Staff use good training, observational skills and knowledge of boarders to safeguard effectively. One social worker commented, 'Care staff are kind but clear about what is acceptable, and encourage young people to take responsibility for their behaviours.'

All staff understand the threshold for physical intervention. Staff use restraint as the last option, when all other attempts at de-escalation have failed. Staff use humour and clear, consistent verbal prompts. It was noted that there were only two incidents of physical restraint in the boarding house in the month of the inspection, as opposed to nine incidents in the day school. Following a restraint, managers support

staff and boarders to explore the incident to assess trigger behaviours and consider alternative approaches from both sides.

Multi-agency work is strong. Local police recently visited the school to remind boarders of the dangers of using the internet. Good partnership work with the host youth offending service has offered specialist counselling services as an alternative to the use of a criminal order.

Boarders in the care of the local authority or subject to other interventions such as a child protection or child in need plan receive the help and support of a specialist support worker. She monitors progress effectively and challenges any issues of drift or delay in care planning. At present, independent advocacy is not available, although this would ensure further access to specialist challenge to care planning decisions.

Risk assessments are generally of good quality. They identify the vulnerability and have a clear safety plan to reduce the risk, such as allocation to a sole bedroom. However, risk assessments require more information on issues such as self-harm to guide staff more effectively. Despite this, staff speak of young people with a knowledge and understanding of the issues. They focus on key times of risk, such as bedtime, to ensure that they support boarders effectively.

Boarders benefit from individualised behaviour management plans. Plans identify triggers, key behaviours and strategies for intervention. Plans propose creative solutions, such as the use of egg timers and stress balls, to support boarders when they are struggling.

Incidents of 'missing' behaviour are very limited. The procedures do not currently prompt staff to request an independent return to care interview from placing authorities where appropriate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The school has experienced considerable change in the senior management team. A new headteacher and deputy joined the team in September 2017. Effective transitional plans have ensured that there is no impact on the care received by boarders. The former headteacher acted as a mentor to the incoming headteacher between September and December 2017, and continues to support the leadership team.

The management of boarding remains stable. The head of care is a qualified social worker with over 35 years of experience. She enjoys an extremely positive working relationship with the deputy head of care. He is highly experienced, with over 20 years of experience of working in boarding. Managers understand the boarding experience and the challenges that it can pose to boarders, their families and also themselves. They speak of the achievements and progress of boarders with obvious pride and pleasure.

The independent visitor does not support service improvement effectively. Despite the concerns expressed by the last inspection, the reports continue to lack sufficient evaluation of safeguarding.

Despite this, service improvement is ongoing. Training is now open to non-care staff. For example, catering staff are encouraged to complete learning modules in 'children and mental health'. Managers have initiated an effective review of behavioural management techniques, which has resulted in an 8% reduction in the use of restraint. The senior management team evaluates restraints effectively and the learning is fed into behavioural management plans.

Staff morale is strong and results in a settled team with minimal staff turnover. There is no use of agency staff, ensuring consistency for boarders. Only one staff member has left since the last inspection. The staff team has benefited from the safe recruitment of two new permanent staff members. Staff were positive about training, supervision and performance appraisal, and one described the team as a 'big working family'. Staff practice with confidence and speak knowledgably of key areas of risk, such as child sexual exploitation and the radicalisation of young people. Staff are highly motivated and actively seek out their own individual learning opportunities in areas such as specialist counselling.

Management recording of complaints and concerns is effective. Each complaint receives a written response from managers and the lessons are incorporated into updated policies and procedures. A computer system alerts the safeguarding lead to any safeguarding concerns, and the protective action is prompt. Managers communicate well among themselves, and the observations are fed into risk assessments and care plans.

Managers have acted on the concerns expressed during this inspection. The statement of purpose and medication recording format now accurately reflect the service offered to boarders.

The school's website requires updating. Parents report that, although they understand what the school offers their children, key documentation such as the boarders' guide is not available on the website.

Case files indicate a high level of management oversight and audit. Managers have close knowledge of the individual needs affecting each boarder and their particular behavioural plans. This informs good decisions on issues such as the allocation of rooms on admission.

Managers ensure that the boarding house is safe and well maintained. Repairs are prompt, and all necessary health and safety risk assessments are adhered to.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC014513

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Henrik Winther

Type of school: residential special school

Telephone number: 01444 881811

Email address: head@farneyclose.co.uk

Inspector(s)

Barnaby Dowell, social care inspector (lead)

Lee Kirwin, social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018