

# Falconer School

Falconer Road, Bushey WD23 3AT

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

This maintained residential special school for boys who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties provides education for both day and boarding pupils. The residential unit is School House, which provides flexible boarding for up to 10 boys between Monday and Friday; evening-only support is available for a small number of pupils. The last inspection was conducted in February 2017.

**Inspection dates:** 19 to 21 February 2018

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of previous inspection:** 21 February 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- The children make excellent progress from their starting points.
- A variety of enrichment activities are available every evening to support the children to develop appropriate communication skills and build their self-esteem and confidence.
- Families are happy with the excellent communication from the staff and parents and carers are consistently happy with the high-quality care that their children receive.
- The staff quickly recognise the children's vulnerability and additional needs. The staff do their very best to meet the needs of all of the children.
- The children are very happy at the residential provision. They enthusiastically recommend it to other children.
- The core work of the staff is to help the children to maintain and improve relationships with their family members. The impact of this is hugely significant on the children and their families.
- Children remember their time at the residential provision and recognise how it helps them to make positive changes in their lives.
- The staff spend significant time building trusting relationships with the children, helping the children to manage their feelings and behaviours.
- Parents identify a huge change in their home life. All of the parents spoken with described the outstanding impact of the residential provision and how it has made a significant difference to their child and their family life experiences. Parents are clearly able to identify positive behavioural changes in their child.
- Safeguarding is a strength of the residential provision. Concerns are quickly escalated and addressed.
- The children consistently do well in the points and rewards system in the residential provision. This reflects how calm and settled the environment is.
- Excellent supervision and continual firm relationship building keep children safe.
- The manager is proactive at following up any matters of concern. The support for the children is unequivocal. Exceptional professional curiosity means that the manager actively and continuously seeks and identifies services for families and their children. This reduces risks and provides ongoing support.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The independent visitor's reports are not shared with the manager consistently and within the expected timeframe, and some of them contain only minimal information.

- Although the headteacher and the manager meet on a frequent basis, there are no formal supervision notes.
- Some of the furnishings need updating due to age and wear and tear.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that all supervision sessions are recorded in line with the school's policies.
- Ensure that worn furnishings are replaced as soon as possible.
- Ensure that all of the independent visitor's reports are timely and comprehensive.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

The children make excellent progress from their starting points. Children are settled and happy in the residential provision. All of the parents spoken with described the outstanding impact of the residential provision and how it has made a significant difference to their child and their family life experiences. Parents are clearly able to identify positive behavioural changes in their child.

All of the staff use an approach that is based on nurture, helping the children to develop their sense of identity and self. Children who present with extremely challenging behaviours and have previously been excluded from education and suffered from social isolation are empowered to express themselves and be themselves. The approach that the staff use is highly successful in reducing violent behaviours, promoting academic achievement and helping the children to build a positive future for themselves.

The staff quickly recognise the children's vulnerability and additional needs. They do their very best to meet those needs, making sure that the children have every opportunity to make progress and be happy. Many of the children have low self-confidence when they arrive. This is recognised by the staff as an area in which to help the children improve. The high level of consistent nurturing care and attention means that the children make excellent progress and reach and exceed their targets constantly.

Children said that they like staying in the residential provision and that they get on with all of the staff. They are able to talk to the staff about their worries or concerns and said that they are able to open up to them. The children have access to an independent listener who visits on a regular basis. The children enthusiastically recommend the residential provision to other children, recognising the fantastic progress that they are making. One child said, 'It is like a family here, it is great.' Another child said, 'I prefer being here rather than being at home. It has helped me to de-stress, and I really like coming here.'

A variety of enrichment activities are available every evening. These include football, trips to the cinema, swimming trips, board games and cooking with the staff. These activities encourage social skills and working together. The physical activities enable the children to use their energy in a positive way and help to develop camaraderie and friendships. The staff are completely involved in the activities, guiding and supporting the children and acting as exceptional role models. Consequently, the children learn appropriate ways to communicate while building their self-esteem and confidence.

Families are happy with the excellent communication from the staff and the high level of care that their children receive. One parent said, 'They [the staff] are all

fantastic. I could not ask for better people to have [look after] my son. They got him straight away. The work and effort that they have put in to helping him, it has been a game changer for us as a family.' Helping the children to maintain and improve their relationships with their family members is integral to the role of the staff team. The impact of this is hugely significant, and several of the older boys have been able to move on to college and live at home.

Transitions are well managed, with overnights in the residential provision gradually reduced and lots of support provided to the parents and the children. The manager continues to keep in touch and track the children's progress when they leave. He intervenes alongside other agencies to get the children back into education if there are issues.

During the inspection, one child returned to the residential provision to visit and to stay for dinner. He talked positively about the impact on his life when staying at the residential provision and said how it had supported him through a difficult time in his life. This residential provision has a long-standing impact on the lives of the children as they move into independence. A previously accommodated child wrote a touching and eloquent letter to the manager when he left the school in July 2017, describing the manager as a parental figure and thanking him for helping. The child described staying at the residential provision as 'the best feeling ever, like a storm just passed over and the sun has finally come out'. Children remember their time in the residential provision and recognise how it helps them to make positive changes in their life.

The staff are innovative in the way that they help the children to progress with their independence skills. The staff successfully use a tool called 'Passport, Ready for the World'. This records the tasks that the children work towards and complete. The staff work through this in the key-working sessions with the children. The children look forward to these sessions and talked about these excitedly during the inspection. The staff take the time to get to know the children, finding out about the activities that they enjoy and excel at. One child is now pursuing horticulture as his career, after landscaping an area of the school with the support of the staff. He was able to design, plan and develop this project with intensive support from the staff. The staff spend significant time building trusting relationships with the children, which helps the children to manage their feelings and behaviours.

The children make progress in their education and attainment towards their targets. Their attendance in education improves and reading and spelling progresses. For some children, there is a marked improvement in behaviour at school and at home. Children who have left the residential provision have attained qualifications and now attend college. One child has moved up an academic year group due to the significant progress that he is making.

The children are supported to read and to pursue their interests, such as music, as much as possible. A child-centred approach is very much evident in every aspect of

the residential care. The manager works closely with other specialist services as part of a holistic approach for each child.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

The staff and the manager are skilled at ensuring that safeguarding protocols are followed. This means that the children are protected from harm and are safe. The children talked about feeling safe in the residential provision. One child said, 'I feel that this is a safe place. It is very safe; personal space is respected.' Protection of children is a clear priority at the school, there are clear and effective systems in place. The designated safeguarding lead is well supported by their deputy. Designated staff are responsive to any concerns or issues and ensure that their actions are well considered, responsive and proportionate. Safeguarding is a strength of the residential provision. It is clear that concerns are quickly escalated and addressed.

There is highly effective communication with the local authority. The manager is proactive at making well-considered decisions if a child is assessed to be at risk. His responses are timely and child-centred. A social worker said, 'I am really impressed as to how this situation was managed. Without swift action and forward planning by the provision, the outcome may have been very different. They [the staff] supported the child, family and us throughout the whole process.' This demonstrates that in challenging situations the child remains the focus and is prioritised.

The staff are skilled at using de-escalation and distraction techniques with the children. There have been no physical interventions for several years. The children, who have very different needs and personalities, all get on very well with each other and are tolerant. The children are clear that the staff help them to address differences with each other and provide support as needed. This empowers the children to find their own solutions when possible. The children said that the staff keep them safe. On occasions, the children choose to access the residential provision when they need space from the school environment.

The staff do not use sanctions. A school points system is used in the residential provision to good effect. The children know how this works and feel that it is effective. The children consistently gain high levels of points during their residential time, which reflects how calm and settled the environment is.

Children rarely go missing from the residential provision. Since the last inspection, two children left the school site on one occasion and were followed by the staff. The police were contacted and the children were returned safely. The staff implemented the clear protocols to ensure that children were safe. Excellent supervision and firm relationship building with the children also helps to keep them safe. They are kept busy with a number of activities that are risk assessed, and this ensures that there is little opportunity or wish for them to leave the residential provision.

The children's placement plans are clear and comprehensive. The children are involved in formulating these plans. Behaviour management plans and risk assessments are included in the placement plans. This ensures that the staff have an up-to-date guide to support them in caring for the children on a daily basis. When a specific risk is identified, the manager works well with other specialist agencies, taking on board advice and information to support the child's care and keep them safe.

Parents are assured that their children are safe and well cared for. The manager is proactive at following up any matters of concern, and his support for the children is unequivocal. His professional curiosity means that he actively and continuously seeks and identifies services for families and their children. This reduces risks and provides ongoing support.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The staff are well supported by the manager. He knows the service well and has been in post for several years. He is suitably qualified and experienced and has a good relationship with the headteacher and the governors. The governors are well apprised of the development and progress of the residential provision. There are regular meetings in which information is shared, as well as regular governors' visits to see the children, manager and the staff. The manager has high aspirations for the residential provision that cascade to the staff team. The manager was described by staff and parents as effective and committed to the staff and the children. He is consistent in his development of the provision to meet the changing needs of the children.

Since the last inspection, previous staff members have left and there has been a period of change. This has had a minimal impact on the children, as they are beginning to form positive new relationships with the staff, who are committed to providing the children with good experiences. The new staff have comprehensive inductions and are accessing suitable training. They are enrolled on the level 3 diploma. The manager supports and guides the staff, ensuring that they are supervised regularly.

The manager has a good knowledge of the plans for the children. He liaises with other professionals and family members regularly. He undertakes self-evaluation, reflecting on the progress and development of the provision, and this is shared with the senior leadership team.

There has been one complaint since the last inspection in relation to the residential provision. The investigation process is thorough and is followed in line with the school guidance. The process is transparent and is looked at independently at each stage.



The independent visitor's reports are not shared with the manager consistently and within the expected timeframe, and some of them contain minimal information. The impact of this is reduced, as a new link governor has now been identified and taken over this role and is committed to providing thorough and timely reports.

Although the headteacher and the manager meet on a frequent basis, there are no formal supervision notes available for the manager. This does not provide evidence that a suitable framework is used to review and monitor professional development consistently.

The residential provision is generally of a good standard. Although it is an old building, the fabric of the environment is clean, tidy and bright. Some of the dining chairs and carpets need replacing due to wear and tear, as they are several years old. These items do not reflect the high standard of the rest of the provision.

## **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 differences 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:** SC056408

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr Jonathan Kemp

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 020 8950 2505

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## **Inspector(s)**

Debbie Young, social care inspector (lead)  
Rosie Davie, social care inspector



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