

# Furrowfield School

Furrowfield School, Whitehill Drive, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear NE10 9RZ  
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Furrowfield is a day and residential special school for up to 73 children and young people who are aged between 11 years and 16 years and who have social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. There are currently 12 children and young people receiving residential services.

**Inspection dates:** 7 to 9 November 2017

**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:** 7 February 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- The children and young people receive good-quality care and support that meet their needs. Relationships with the staff are caring and nurturing. All the children and young people are achieving and progressing as a direct result of their residential experiences.
- The children and young people are consulted and their views and wishes are taken into account and acted on. Transitional arrangements are very good. A wide range of meaningful activities gives the children and young people positive experiences.
- The children and young people are safe and they reside in a safe environment.

Staffing levels are good, and behaviour is managed positively. Risk management is effective and safeguarding arrangements are thorough.

- Leadership and management are strong. The head of care and the staff team have high aspirations for the children and young people. Partnership working, with other agencies and professionals, enhances the quality of care. The support given to parents is commendable.
- The skilled staff team is valued and supported, and staff are committed to improving the children's and young people's lives and their outcomes. Promoting positive equality and diversity, for the children and young people, is paramount.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Improve the quality of the written residential, and healthcare, plans, in a format that is appropriate to the age and the understanding of the children and young people.
- Set out, in measureable outcomes, how the children and young people are developing and progressing in line with their individual needs.
- Introduce systems to monitor and measure how the residential unit continues to operationally improve and develop.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that the children's and young people's written residential plans are individualised to their specific needs and that they are written in a format that is appropriate to the children's and young people's age and their understanding.
- Ensure that the children's and young people's written healthcare plans identify their health needs and how these will be met. In addition, ensure that the plans include details of any medication that has been prescribed, how the medication is administered, and any known side-effects and contra-indications.
- Introduce a system that documents and demonstrates the children's and young people's progress and their achievements from their starting point, and between inspection visits.
- Record, as part of the monitoring of the residential unit, details of any progress and developments made between inspection visits to demonstrate how leaders and managers are improving the operation of the residential unit, and how the improvements are positively affecting the children and young people.

## Inspection judgements

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

The children and young people receive effective care that meets their needs. The staff have a good knowledge of each child's and young person's needs that enables them to offer high levels of personalised support. All the children and young people have progressed from their starting point, and they continue to thrive as a direct result of their residential experience.

A parent said: 'My son loves to go to the residential, he does lots of activities and he has made new friends. He has done so much since he has been going there, and he is a lot calmer and a lot happier.'

The children and young people feel that they are consulted and that the staff listen to what they say. They all have an allocated key worker and they see them as someone who they can 'talk to about anything'. There are regular meetings where the children and young people are given the opportunity to talk about how the residential unit is run, and how they feel the unit can be a better place. This fully includes the children and young people in decision-making, and promotes their rights and their equality and diversity.

A young person said: 'My key worker is mint. He is a good laugh, and I think he is the best member of staff here. I can talk to him about anything, and I know he listens to me.'

The children's and young people's general health needs are met. They have access to a wide range of support services to meet their emotional and psychological needs. The staff provide high levels of consistency and stability, which increase the children's and young people's feelings of emotional security. Specialist staff, such as psychologists and mental health nurses, provide expert therapeutic interventions that place a strong emphasis on helping the children and young people to achieve positive mental health and good well-being.

A visiting mental health specialist nurse said: 'I find the staff very accommodating, helpful, and friendly. They are always willing to support the young people. If they have any concerns, they get in touch with me, and they are very good at information-sharing. In my experience, the young people have very good outcomes and the staff stick by them and do everything they can for them.'

Educational outcomes are very good. School attendance and academic achievements have increased for all the children and young people. The residential staff work in the school as teaching assistants, which increases consistency across the two provisions. The staff are also able to support the children and young people with any homework or additional schoolwork, which encourages educational improvements.

A parent said: 'My child used to run away from his last school but he never runs

away from this school. Before, he could not sit still for two minutes and now he can sit during his lessons, and he has even learned how to play the guitar.'

Meaningful activities support the children and young people to develop their social skills and teach them the many benefits of participating in new experiences. All the children and young people say that the best thing about the residential unit is the activities. The staff carefully plan the activity timetable to include the children and young people in specific activities to meet their needs. This increases the children's and young people's self-confidence and their self-esteem.

Transitional arrangements for the children and young people coming to stay at the residential unit, and those who are leaving, are very well planned. The staff are attentive to the individual needs of the children and young people, and they strive to offer high levels of support during what can be a difficult experience. For younger children, coming to stay at the unit is often the first time that they have been away from their parents for a significant time. In these instances, the children are gradually introduced to the unit and to the other children and young people. Similar arrangements are in place for the young people who are coming to the end of their residential experience to help them to adjust to living at home on a full-time basis.

A parent said: 'I was a very apprehensive parent as my child started at the school. They mentioned residential, and I did not feel that this was an option for my son or for me. I was very emotional when my son stayed at the unit, but the staff were supportive. I feel now that I have an excellent parent partnership with the staff, and I know my son loves to go there.'

The children's and young people's case files are onerous, and they are overfilled with unnecessary documentation. This makes it difficult for the children and young people to understand what is written about them and what their plans mean. The residential, and healthcare, plans are not written in a child-friendly format and they do not record the children's and young people's ongoing progress and development.

Many of the plans are made up of pre-printed documents that do not set out the children's and young people's individual needs, including their specific healthcare needs and information about their prescribed medication. Consequently, the children and young people are unable to be fully involved with their residential planning.

In addition, there are no recorded, measurable outcomes for the children and young people to see, to enable them to understand the good progress that they make, and to appreciate and understand their remarkable achievements.

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

The children and young people are kept safe during their residential stays. Good staffing levels ensure that the children and young people are safely observed and supervised at all times. Good corporate, and local, risk management reduces known risks to the children and young people, and the staff take a reasonable approach to

managing appropriate risks, taking into account the age and the understanding of the children and young people.

A young person said: 'I think we are safe here, yes we are safe. The staff look after us and they make sure that we are okay.'

A parent said: 'I have no concerns or worries whatsoever. I know my child is safe, and I know the staff will look after him.'

There have been no children or young people go missing, and no children or young people are at risk from exploitation or radicalisation. All the staff receive regular child protection training and they know what to do if they have any worries or concerns about a child's or a young person's safety and welfare. The school's designated safeguarding officers have a very good oversight of safety concerns within the school and the residential unit. These measures keep the children and young people safe.

Behaviour is managed positively and restraints are very rarely used and are only considered as a last resort. The staff are very good role models for the children and young people and they are experienced in practising conflict resolution to help the children to understand how their behaviours may affect others. This helps the children and young people to develop empathy skills, and to understand that their actions, and negative behaviours, will have consequences.

A young person said: 'The staff talk to us about behaviour, and they tell us that we should behave ourselves. Sometimes we get sanctions, but these are fair, [and] we do not get them very often. If we are good, we get rewards, and we get trips out and stuff.'

The staff are highly skilled at putting appropriate boundaries in place to help and support the children and young people who, through no fault of their own, experience behavioural difficulties. Any friction between the children and young people is quickly identified and the staff calmly intervene to de-escalate potentially harmful behaviours. This establishes a relaxed environment where the children and young people can enjoy their residential experiences.

Health and safety and fire safety are effectively managed to provide the children and young people with a safe environment. Staff recruitment is thorough. There are good systems in place to ensure that all safety checks are carried out on new starters, and that employment checks are regularly updated for those staff who have been employed at the school for some time. All visitors are checked and vetted, and they sign the school's visitor's book. This allows for leaders and managers to monitor all visitors who have access to the children and young people.

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

The school has progressed by meeting three action points that were identified at the last inspection. The head of cares' revised monitoring report better considers how analysis and evaluation improve the quality of the report. The staff now receive regular supervision and reflective practice, which encourages the staff to think about how they deliver holistic childcare practice and how this practice can be developed. The children and young people now have identified targets to help them achieve good outcomes. This focuses on their needs and their aspirations, and increases their likelihood of achieving their potential.

Other areas of development, since the last inspection, include a review of staffing arrangements in the residential unit. These changes have improved efficiency and there are now more staff available, during busy periods, to give support to the children and young people. Leaders and managers are making positive links with other residential special schools to share good practice, and to encourage staff peer support. This innovative way of working strengthens inter-school working partnerships and generates overall improvement and development.

The staff receive the training and development they need to effectively care for and support the children and young people. The head teacher and the head of care actively support staff who wish to develop their knowledge and skills for the betterment of the childcare services that they provide. The school also provides a range of in-house training and development opportunities, which further enhances the staff's skills and knowledge. This approach to investing in the staff results in their feeling valued and appreciated.

A member of staff said: 'This is a great place to work. We are a good staff team and we all support each other. The young people come first; that is why we are here. The managers are good; they are supportive and you can talk to them about anything.'

Another staff member commented: 'I work here because I love it, and there is no other place I would rather work.'

Monitoring of the residential unit is good. The head of care and the staff monitor the day-to-day running of the residential unit and the outcomes and the progress of the children and young people. However, they do not keep a record of this progress and improved outcomes to analyse how positive developments affect the children and young people over a prolonged period.

The governor responsible for overseeing the residential unit regularly visits to audit the services provided, and to talk to the children and young people. His written reports are positive, and they show that the residential services are meaningful and effective.

There is good information available to the children and young people, their parents and carers, social workers and other placing authorities on how it is to stay at the

residential unit. This helps all those involved in securing a residential placement to make an informed decision about what is best for their children and young people.

Inter-agency partnership working is a strength of the school and the residential unit. Managers and the staff fully understand and appreciate the importance of the children and young people being able to access the services and support that they need. Leaders and managers are strong advocates for the children and young people, and are happy to challenge other agencies when they feel that the children and young people need extra help or support. This promotes the young people's rights and their equality.

Providing support for parents and families is a strength. The staff have very good relationships with parents, and they work together to support the children and young people. All the feedback from parents gathered during this inspection is extremely complimentary about the staff team and the services that their children and young people receive.

There are four new recommendations arising from this inspection.

## **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:** SC054500

**Head teacher/teacher in charge:** Mrs Michelle Richards

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Debbie White, social care inspector (lead)



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