

Furrowfield School

1 Furrowfield School, Whitehill Drive, Gateshead NE10 9RZ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Furrowfield is a maintained day and residential special school for up to 71 children and young people who are aged between 11 and 16 years. They have social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. Many children and young people have additional needs, including autistic spectrum disorder and attachment difficulties. There are currently 15 children and young people receiving residential services.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 November 2019

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 **outstanding**

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: 12 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people make exceptional progress in the residential setting of this school. Many have very complex needs. After moving to the residential setting, children and young people do better academically and socially and they are safer. Family members report much-improved relationships. One parent said, 'I cannot say enough about the residential setting; I have my son back.'

Children and young people build strong, trusting relationships with the staff. They know that their carers want to make a difference for them. As a result, children and young people develop confidence in the staff team. This helps them to feel safe and to relax.

Children and young people make remarkable progress with their education. Their attendance is excellent, and their attainment improves. They have very few periods of detention or exclusion. Their improved behaviour allows them to take part in lessons in a way that is new for many. When children and young people leave school, many go on to college courses or apprenticeships. This is evidence of noteworthy progress from their beginnings.

Children respond extremely well to the expectations and routines within the residential setting. They are respectful to their carers, to visitors and to each other. Their manners are exemplary. The way they conduct themselves in the residential setting is commendable and is rightly celebrated. Children and young people know they are held in high regard by their carers and the wider staff team in the school. For many, this is the first time they have experienced such approval.

Children and young people enjoy a wide range of activities that are individualised according to their needs and interests. Children and young people are supported to challenge themselves, and they achieve considerable success as a result. Children and young people regularly take part in charity events. Recently, they used their pocket money to buy items for a local food bank. Such deeds help children and young people to feel valued, which is wonderful for their self-esteem.

Members of staff work closely with family members. This means that children and young people experience a more consistent approach between home and school. For many, this brings about sustained improvements, including during the school holidays. Parents describe this support as being extremely beneficial to the whole family. For some children and young people, staying in the residential setting means they avoid going into care. This is an exceptional outcome.

Members of staff establish individualised transitions for children and young people. Care plans focus on preparing them for the future. Members of staff help children and young people to develop strategies so that their return home is successful. This work is underpinned by support and advice for family members. Because of this approach, children and young people return to the care of their families when it is safe to do so. For most, the move back to their family is successful and long-term.

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

Children and young people feel safe and are safe in the residential setting. The staff team understands their vulnerabilities. Key workers create bespoke risk assessments to identify and manage potential issues. This is an improvement on the previous approach to the management of risk.

Members of staff talk to children and young people about the impact of risk-taking behaviours. Children and young people respond very well to this work, because of the trust they have in their carers. Children and young people do not engage in risk-taking behaviour in the residential setting. For many, their risks also significantly reduce in the community. This is evidence of exceptional progress from their starting points.

Members of staff use their excellent relationships with children and young people to model good behaviour. Positive behaviour support plans are individualised and specific. Members of staff use these plans to ensure a consistent approach to the management of behaviour. As a result, incidents rarely occur within the residential setting. Those children and young people whose behaviour was a barrier to success make substantial progress in all areas of their development.

Physical intervention is not used as a form of behaviour management in the residential setting. Members of staff will only restrain children and young people to ensure their safety. This gives children and young people a powerful message that they have autonomy over their actions. As a result, they develop improved self-awareness and learn to manage their own behaviour.

There are very few issues with bullying or discrimination between children and young people. Residential staff reinforce the school's ethos of respect for everyone's rights. Children and young people respond extremely well, including to each other when distressed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders are very ambitious for children and young people in the residential provision. They understand the level of progress that children and young people make. Leaders are committed to ensuring that this progress continues and encourage children and young people to develop high expectations for themselves. Because of this approach, children and young people begin to believe in their potential and achieve success.

Leaders are keen to innovate. They learn from current and new developments in practice. Leaders visit other settings to inform their knowledge. This has led to improvements within the residential setting, including increased support for parents and carers. Because of the forward-thinking approach of leaders, their practice is being disseminated to other schools.

Leaders employ a full-time, qualified mental health practitioner, who provides therapeutic support to children and young people and consultation to members of staff. This means that children and young people do not have to wait for services from the statutory sector. Staff gain invaluable insight into the best approach to take

with the most complex children and young people. Because of this input, children and young people make clear, sustained progress with their emotional health and well-being.

Members of staff value the training provided to them. Leaders ensure that time is available for residential staff to attend training along with teaching staff. Current learning includes the impact of trauma and attachment difficulties. Such opportunities help the staff team to look after children and young people who have increasingly complex needs. As a result, the care they provide is extremely skilled and effective.

Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. They use this knowledge to review and develop the service. The residential setting has become more flexible in this period. Care is increasingly individualised. Emergency provision can be provided, when this does not affect other children and young people. This means that children and young people with the most complex needs benefit from the high level of care within the residential setting.

The monitoring of the residential service is particularly good. There is a direct link between the development of the school and the role that members of staff play in ensuring ongoing improvements. Members of staff feel invested in the school. They know that they make a significant contribution to its success and that of the children and young people they care for. Members of staff are extremely committed to their roles and staff turnover is remarkably low.

The school is very well supported by its governing body. Many governors have relevant skills and experiences, which adds value to their role. Governors visit the school regularly. They know the children and young people well. Governors complete statutory responsibilities and hold the leadership team to account. As a result of children and young people speaking to governors, changes are made in the residential setting. This has included alterations to its decor and changes to menus in recent months.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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

Headteacher: Michelle Richards

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Jane Titley, social care inspector



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