

Ferndearle

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Ferndearle was established in 2001 in a residential area of Folkestone in Kent. It is owned by Ferndearle Child Care Services. The school was registered in December 2007 and was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2009. There is residential provision, which was previously inspected by Ofsted in January and March 2012.

Following the recent acquisition of additional school premises, the school is now based on two sites about half a mile from each other. Its registered maximum number of pupils has recently been increased to 27 and it is now registered as a mixed school admitting pupils between the ages of 5 and 16 years. Currently there is one girl and four boys on roll aged between 12 and 15 years. The pupils are from a number of boroughs in the south east. All have statements of special educational needs and four are looked after pupils.

Ferndearle admits pupils who have difficulties with their learning as a result of emotional and behavioural problems associated with past traumatic experiences. It provides transition education for pupils who require education in a small environment while preparing them for re-entry into mainstream or special schools.

The school aims to '... strive to develop... many positive qualities to bring a sense of direction and purpose to young people's lives'.

Evaluation of the school

Ferndearle provides a good quality of education for its pupils; this is an improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and assessment is good and pupils make good progress in their learning. The curriculum is good. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, but behaviour is satisfactory. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety, including safeguarding arrangements, is satisfactory. All but one of the regulations for independent schools are met.

Quality of education

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

The curriculum is good. It provides a broad and balanced education and is based on the full range of National Curriculum subjects together with suitable courses in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and religious education. Each half term a theme is chosen as a focus that runs through the presentation of all the subjects. This is effective because of the way it provides coherence and supports pupils' understanding. However, there are a few instances where the curriculum is not quite adjusted sufficiently to meet the different, and often subtle, needs of pupils. For example, the range and type of literature used in literacy work could be better suited to each individual's needs.

Appropriate emphasis is placed on literacy and numeracy, and daily lessons and different tasks are provided to reflect pupils' different levels of ability. Information and communication technology (ICT) is threaded well through the curriculum. Personal, social and health education is taught as a discrete subject, with content appropriately linked to the termly theme. This is well adapted to meet the current concerns of pupils. Pupils gain useful guidance regarding choices for their future through visits from careers advisers, and links have been made with the local further education college to support transition. A range of suitable out-of-school visits support the termly thematic study and reward pupils for their efforts. The curriculum and the way it is implemented ensure that the requirements of the pupils' statements of special educational needs are fully implemented.

The quality of teaching is good and assessment is effectively used to support learning. Teachers show good subject knowledge in the development of good lesson plans, with tasks set to the level of individual pupils' abilities. Teachers and teaching assistants provide sensitive support for pupils who exhibit emotional distress, helping them to see the relevance of the tasks set. Teaching assistants are effectively guided to provide support where it is most needed and their individual skills are used to very good effect. For example, one teaching assistant demonstrated good coaching in a physical education lesson based on athletics, enabling pupils to build skills and to develop self-confidence. Pupils' books are well presented with consistent supportive marking that both encourages and points out strategies for improvement. Teachers make very good use of pupils' initiative. For example, a pupil who expressed strong views on a recent news item regarding housing benefit was challenged to compose and type a letter to explain her views to the Prime Minister. Good resources for information and communication technology are available in the classrooms, but some opportunities are missed for its use in presenting pupils' work.

Due to good teaching and very effective behaviour support, pupils make good progress. There are half-termly assessments of pupils' work and this information is recorded to enable teachers to suitably track pupils' progress and to respond to their needs. The school is still developing these assessment procedures and is establishing a suitable moderation process to ensure the accuracy of the assessments.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. Although some pupils say that they do not enjoy being at school their attendance is consistently high and punctuality is good. Pupils take good advantage of the support and encouragement offered by the staff and this helps them to experience success in their learning. As a result, they are willing to take on difficult tasks. They take pride in their achievements and they display improving self-confidence.

Pupils contribute well in regular school and house meetings, and they support their wider community through charitable fundraising, for example through running the Sport Relief mile. Multicultural awareness days, recently focused on Jamaica, provide pupils with opportunities to learn about, and appreciate, other cultures and to develop an attitude of understanding. Pupils learn about English services and institutions through the PSHE curriculum and through visits, for example, from the community police support officer.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall. Pupils take advantage of the supportive structure and the behaviour management strategies that the school uses to help them to make sense of their unsettled and volatile emotional lives. These include appropriate, individualised behaviour targets and a good rewards incentive scheme that relies on pupils self-assessing their own achievement of specific goals. These strategies have resulted in the number of instances of inappropriate behaviour reducing substantially over time. Although angry outbursts sometimes occur and these occasionally disrupt the learning environment in the school.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Although all the staff members at Ferndearle show a consistently high level of commitment to the well-being of the pupils, the quality of provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is satisfactory rather than good. This is because some of the policies and procedures have not been up dated to take account of the new arrangements for the school operating on two sites. Accurate fire risk assessments and records of drills and equipment checks are in place for both school sites. However, the records are in different formats. As a result, although the school's fire safety officer does undertake fire safety tasks satisfactorily, it is difficult for him to maintain an overview of the effectiveness of the school's procedures.

The child protection policy and procedures are well written and provide effective guidance for staff. The headteacher is the designated child protection officer and has been trained to the required advanced level. All other staff have received the required training in safeguarding as well as first-aid training and training in safe procedures for physical intervention.

Appropriate policies are in place for first aid and recruitment checks. The school has suitable procedures for planning trips and visits away from the school site and for assessing risk off-site. However, some of the forms associated with these procedures

are not fully completed for recent trips. Other risk assessments are undertaken and their results are recorded appropriately.

The policies to counter bullying have recently been updated to take account of current guidance and they suggest useful intervention techniques and prevention strategies. They also contain guidance on countering cyber bullying. The school's behaviour policy is clear and is suitably followed by staff, with all instances of inappropriate behaviour logged and cross-referenced to sanctions and other follow-up actions. Useful handover meetings between school and home staff take place before and after every school day and ensure that pupils receive a consistent response from all the adults working with them. Pupils are effectively supervised at all times.

The school has an admissions register and an attendance register, both of which meet requirements. A three-year accessibility plan has recently been prepared that enables the school to fulfil its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The required recruitment and vetting checks are made on staff and others. The results of checks are properly recorded in a well-maintained single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

Premises and accommodation at both of the school's sites are well maintained and decorated. They are of an adequate size for the number of pupils on roll and will allow for considerable expansion when the school is ready to increase its numbers. Classrooms are light, airy and well laid out and there are specialist facilities for ICT and food technology. A good-sized workshop is available at the new school site ready to be equipped for practical and vocational subjects. Suitable arrangements are available at both sites for pupils who are ill, and very good, appropriately secured, outside space is available for play and relaxation.

Provision of information

The school's well-presented new brochure, together with its website, provides all of the required information for parents, carers and others, as well as the information which is available on request. Annual reports of pupils' progress are suitably provided for parents and carers. Financial information about the school is provided for the local authorities that place pupils at the school.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a clearly stated complaints procedure that meets regulatory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 (‘the Regulations’), with the exception of the one listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure there are effective procedures for ensuring pupils’ health and safety on educational visits which have regard to Department for Education guidance (paragraph 12).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure that the curriculum is suitably adjusted to meet the needs of all pupils
- improve behaviour management strategies with the aim of reducing inappropriate behaviour in lessons
- introduce a common format for the recording of fire risk assessments.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils			✓	

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	2001		
Age range of pupils	5–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 1	Total: 5
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 4	Girls: 1	Total: 5
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls: 1	Total: 4
Annual fees (residential pupils)	£156,780		
Address of school	Heather Lodge Folkestone CT19 5HH		
Telephone number	01303 850182		
Email address	ferndearle@ferndearle.com		
Headteacher	Cathy Shuter		
Proprietor	Robin Dearle		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ferndearle, Folkestone CT19 5HH

Thank you for welcoming me when I visited your school recently. I greatly enjoyed meeting you, seeing you learn and talking to you.

Your school provides a good quality of education and you are making good progress with your learning. The quality of the provision the school makes for your welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. A regulation about health and safety on visits was not met, but all other government requirements are met. In order to help you make even better progress and to make sure you stay safe at all times, I have suggested that the school:

- adjusts the curriculum to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met
- helps you to improve your behaviour so that fewer lessons are disrupted
- introduces a common format for the recording of fire risk assessments
- always checks that risk assessments are properly completed when you go on school trips.

I was pleased to see the displays of your work in all the classrooms. You should be proud of the work you have done. I saw a lot of good work in your books and I liked the helpful comments your teachers and teaching assistants had written in them. Do not forget to read what they have said and to follow their suggestions. This will help you to improve your work and presentation.

I hope that you will continue to work hard in school and to prepare well for your future.

Yours sincerely

John Gush
Lead inspector