

Hamilton Lodge School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Paul Taylor
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Address	Hamilton Lodge School 7-9 Walpole Road BRIGHTON BN2 0LS
Telephone number	01273 682362
Email	admin@hamiltonlodeschool.co.uk
Registered person	Hamilton Lodge School
Head of care	Graham Sheppard
Head / Principal	Graham Sheppard
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Hamilton Lodge School is a co-educational residential school which caters for pupils between the ages of five and eighteen years of age and who are profoundly deaf. The main form of communication used in the school is British Sign Language (BSL). Pupils board on a weekly basis and are expected to return home for weekends. The school is situated in a residential area of Brighton. The boarding areas adjacent to the main school site.

Summary

The inspection of Hamilton Lodge School was undertaken over two days on 11 and 12 of December 2007. The inspector met with pupils in the boarding houses, members of staff, the management team, catering staff, school nurse and a school governor. A number of records were examined, questionnaires received from parents and observation of care was also involved in the inspection. Hamilton Lodge school provides high levels of support to the pupils. The school ensures that the inclusive atmosphere enables all pupils to be involved in active lives which avoid the isolation which many of them experience in the larger 'hearing' world. The school has a very settled atmosphere and this has been achieved by the careful planning of admissions, consistent care and boundaries provided by the staff and a well organised and experienced management team. The staff team across the school is very settled and this helps to underpin the consistency of care and approach provided to the pupils. Monitoring systems are very well organised and the auditing of records is consistently achieved to a high standard.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The quality of food is of a very high standard. Each pupils dietary needs are known to the catering staff and the catering team works closely with the school nurse, care staff and pupils to ensure that the food is healthy and popular with the pupils. Visits by the governor responsible for monitoring care, are mostly unannounced and happen on a regular basis. The visits are the subject of reports which reflect the quality of care and include the pupils' views. Admissions to the school are carefully planned by the Head Teacher and Head of Care and ensure that the needs of all the pupils can be met without disruption to the good order of the school.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

All the pupils health needs are identified and known to the school nurse who works in the school on a full time basis. Any information regarding specific health needs such as mobility issues or diabetes are notified to the members of staff who work in the boarding houses. Each pupil has a health plan and this records any specific information such as visits to health care professionals including audiologists, paediatricians, occupational therapists or speech and language therapists (SALT). The school has a GP who visits on a weekly basis. Pupils are able to asks for a same sex GP if they wish and this can be arranged by the local surgery. A physiotherapist visits the school on a fortnightly basis to provide support and advice to pupils and the staff. The school has an audiologist who works in the school twice a week. Opticians appointments and dental appointments are organised by parents when the pupils are at home unless treatment is required in an emergency. There is a medical centre on the school site and

this offers daily surgeries. Medical issues are shared with the care staff if pupils need support. Pupils are able to access emotional support and a listening ear from the school nurse if they need this. She shares any concerns for emotional wellbeing with key workers, teachers and members of the Pupil Support Meeting. The School Nurse also attends weekly meetings with the care staff. There is a sick bay situated in the medical centre and this has two pleasantly decorated rooms for sick pupils. Pupils tend to return home for the week if their illness is contagious or will last more than a couple of days. One pupil said 'The nurse is fantastic if you are ill.' There is a clear process and guidance in place for the staff to follow with regards to administering and recording medication. The School Nurse provides training on the process and staff do not administer medication until she has seen their practice and endorsed their competency. Medication is kept in locked steel cabinets which are situated in rooms which are also locked. Controlled drugs are kept within the locked cabinets in secured steel compartments. The storage of medication is very secure. Staff sign when they have administered any medication whether prescribed or not. Controlled drugs are double signed and are subject to a daily audit by members of the care team. The audit is then checked by the school nurse to ensure that the records tally. Records of drugs administered are accurate and there is written parental permission in place for pupils to have non prescribed medication, such as cough mixture should the need arise. There is a rolling program of first aid training in place. Thirty members of staff are due to attend planned first training in February 2007 in order to update their current certificates. Accidents and injuries are treated by the School Nurse who completes accident reports with recommendations added in some cases, especially if the accident is a Health and Safety issue. All accident reports are collated by the Executive Director and analysed to see if there are any patterns emerging which need to be addressed. The school has recently appointed a new catering manager. Feedback from pupils and members of staff about the standard of food was unanimously positive. The kitchen was recently awarded a Five Star Category by the Environmental Health Officer for the standard of hygiene and cleanliness in the kitchen. The catering manager and kitchen staff are aware of the different dietary needs of the pupils. They use British Sign Language to communicate with the pupils in order to ascertain their likes and dislikes. There are regular meetings between the School Nurse, a Senior Care Officer and Catering Manager with regards to pupils preferences and specific needs. Menus are varied and include different theme days so that the pupils can experience foods from other cultures such as Morocco, Mexico and India. Menus are presented to the pupils in a colour coded manner. For example the halal choice is written in blue, vegetarian option is in green and meat option is written in red. The pupils have different choices of food at meal times. Meal times are busy, social occasions and are well organised by the staff on duty. Pupils preferences are ascertained via direct contact between the catering staff and pupils, via feedback from weekly School Council meeting and via meetings between the catering manager, Senior Care Officer and School Nurse. Pupils are able to make snacks in the kitchens in their boarding houses and some of the older pupils can choose to eat breakfast in their house rather than going to the dining room. Fruit is made available to the pupils during the morning break.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are very aware of the need for pupils to have their privacy respected. Prior to entering rooms, the care staff were seen to flash lights on and off in order to alert the occupants to the fact someone was going to enter. It must be reiterated that that the pupils at the school are profoundly deaf and so they will not hear a knock on the door. Pupils are made aware of their right to view information about them when they are admitted to the school. Information is

kept securely stored in locked offices. Young people are aware of who they can complain to and the majority say that they would approach members of staff or their parents if they had a problem. The pupils have a number of avenues available to them if they wish to make a complaint. These include an independent visitor, Head Teacher, Head of Care, school governors, members of staff, Ofsted and parents. A record is kept of complaints made and this showed that young people are able to formally complain if they feel they need to. Complaints are responded to and resolved swiftly and a clear record kept of correspondence and meetings. All members of staff receive regular training in child protection. Support staff such as cleaners, maintenance staff and catering staff also receive the training. Members of staff are clear that they know what to do in the event that they have concerns about a pupil's wellbeing. The school as a child protection procedure and guidance which has been described as 'comprehensive' by the Local Child Safeguarding Board. Pupils report low levels of bullying experienced in the school. If bullying occurs there are clear consequences to the issue. There is a clear policy and guidance in place with regards to bullying. The small size of the school means that members of staff are aware of group dynamics, specific vulnerabilities of some pupils and the need for close supervision in certain circumstances. The school has reported any significant events to those agencies who need to be informed for example accidents to the Health and Safety Executive and any child protection concerns have been passed on to the appropriate safeguarding boards. Each pupil's vulnerability is known to the members of staff. There are clear protocols in place with regards to the action to take if a pupil goes missing. All pupils have their independence skills assessed before they are allowed to leave the school premises unsupervised. No pupils have gone missing from the school for over two years. The pupils are very aware of what the behavioural expectations are within the school. These are made clear in each pupil's 'Care Agreement' which informs them of their rights and responsibilities and what behaviours are expected. The pupils are clear about the consequences of poor behaviour and one said 'We don't like the sanctions, but they are fair.' Records are maintained of sanctions. On the whole these are well recorded but there are some details which are missed on occasion. All members of staff have received training in the form of physical intervention used by the school. Physical intervention is a very unusual and rare occurrence. Two incidents where members of staff have had to impose physical control on a pupil have occurred in one year. The reporting of these was generally clear but there were some details missing with regards to the time of the incidents and the exact location. Records are kept of rewards for positive behaviour. Rewards include letters home to parents, book tokens, late nights, being mentioned in school assemblies and being mentioned in the weekly school newsletter. Emphasis is placed on good behaviours and achievements' are celebrated by the whole community. The monitoring of safety in the school is of a very high standard. The staff team are aware that the pupils are vulnerable especially when out in the community and so a very rigorous risk assessment process for external activities is in place. Risk assessments are regularly updated and are the subject of an auditing process operated by the Executive Director which identifies when the assessments need to be reviewed. The same process is in operation for activities held within the school as well as environmental risk assessments. The risk assessments monitoring process is a strength of the school. Accidents are also subject to analysis to see if there are any issues or patterns which are occurring which need to be investigated. Visits by the fire brigade are recorded and any issues raised are addressed. The Executive Director is proactive in that he requests the fire brigade to visit the premises and impresses upon them the vulnerable nature of the pupils who live at the school. Fire equipments such as smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are regularly checked by external contractors. Fire drills are carried out on a regular basis. An audit is carried out which records which members of staff have been involved in fire drills every year. Drills are then planned to

occur when members of staff, who have missed previous drills, are on duty. Regular checks are carried out to ensure the safety of wiring and gas appliances including testing of portable electrical appliances such as kettles and televisions. The recruitment process operated by the school is very thorough. All pre employment checks such as CRB and references are in place on personnel files. There is evidence that the school telephones referees to ensure their veracity. The school operates an internal system which ensures that members of staff renew their CRB checks every three years. External contractors who are used regularly by the school, such as electricians and plumbers, are also subject to CRB checks. This practice is commendable. All visitors to the school have to report to the reception area and have to wear a badge whilst on the site. The vetting of visitors and employees is vigorous and thorough.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All pupils are the subject of Statements of Educational Need (SEN). The statements are reviewed on an annual basis and the object of each pupil's placement in the school is reflected in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEPs set targets for the pupils to achieve both in their academic life and their social life in the school. Each pupil has a care plan based in the boarding areas, which outlines what their targets are and how they can be achieved. Each pupil's progress is recorded in a monthly report and their overall progress is recorded in their IEP on a half termly basis. Examples of targets include the need to improve their sign language, being able to take part in group activities or managing to collect all their school equipment before going to school in the morning. The members of staff communicate on a daily basis with teaching staff to ensure that they are aware of how each school day has been for the pupils. Pupils are encouraged and assisted to complete homework. There is a strong emphasis on activities within the school. A weekly menu of activities is presented to the pupils and these are varied and interesting. Choices of activities include swimming, football, cooking, shopping, cinema, bowling, first aid, Duke of Edinburgh Award, computers and watching DVDs. Pupils report that 'there's always something to do.' The small size of the school means that the pupils' needs are known to the staff and that any issues can be quickly disseminated around the staff team. The school operates a Pupil Support Meeting which meets on a weekly basis and has a multi disciplinary membership including the School Nurse, SALT, Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), Senior Care Officer and Assistant Head Teacher (Support and Learning). Every pupil is discussed in this forum at different times during the year and those who require particular support at any particular time are also discussed. As a result of these meetings, strategies for support can be created and shared between the rest of the school. Further assistance and advice can be gained from an external specialist team who provide support to deaf children and their families. Members of this team visit the school every fortnight. Individual sessions are also available from the Assistant Head (Support and Learning) and the pupils can access these by being referred by the pupil support team, by parents or by self referral. The standard of support available to pupils is of a high standard, easily accessible and takes into account each pupil's specific communication need.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school council meets on a weekly basis with the Head Teacher. The minutes of the council are circulated to the staff via email and in the weekly school newsletter. Pupils can raise issues by informing their class representatives who then add these to the agenda. Examples of influence

that young people have in decision making in the school, include having their rooms decorated to colours of their choice, having fruit made available at break times and being involved in the recruitment process of a new Head Teacher. A strong emphasis is placed upon listening to the pupils views. This is because the pupils have often experienced educational and social isolation prior to their admission to the school, due to their profound deafness. Hamilton Lodge provides them with an inclusive community as everyone speaks the same language (British Sign Language) and knows the difficulties that they face in the 'hearing' world. Hamilton Lodge provides the pupils with an opportunity to have a voice in their lives and school community. The system of assessing admissions to the school is thorough. The Head Teacher and Head of Care visit each pupil's educational placement and family and meet the pupil prior to offering a trial visit. This is to ensure that the school can meet the pupil's needs and that the pupil can fit into the established school population. This has led to a settled school population where disruption and unruly behaviour is rare. Additionally the pupil is given a 'New Pupils Pack' which contains information about the school. Members of staff report 'This is the most settled it has been since I came here eight years ago' as well as 'Students needs are met, they're in the right place.' The atmosphere in the school is settled and incidents of poor behaviour and disruption are less than have been experienced in past years. All pupils are the subject of a SEN and these are reviewed on an annual basis. The SEN outlines the needs for support each pupil needs and from these an IEP is developed. The IEP contain targets for the pupils to achieve both in the educational and social settings. Strategies to facilitate this are identified in multi disciplinary meetings. Progress or lack of it is recorded on a half termly basis so that any specific needs can be further identified. Support with regards to disabilities is also identified. Specialist health professionals such as occupational therapists and physiotherapists provide advice and guidance to the pupil and staff. As all pupils have severe hearing loss, support via an audiologist is an integral part of the school and any hearing assessments are part of their annual reviews. The process of support in helping older pupils to move on to further education is very carefully thought out. The staff are acutely aware of the potential for pupils to become isolated once they have left the school and are in the wider 'hearing' community. Specialist colleges which offer placements to deaf students are known to the school and pupils have the opportunity to visit them with their parents in order to ascertain if they are appropriate. There are residential further education colleges available to those who may need a more intense level of support. During years 10 and 11 pupils have the opportunity to attend work experience placements, the length of these placements increase as the pupils confidence increases. Additionally the pupils are able to have placements in mainstream colleges as part of the process of integrating into the wider community and improving their independence skills. The member of staff responsible for the transition process for older pupils has access to a variety of external agencies such as Connexions and other colleges. This information, combined with a thorough knowledge of each pupils strengths and vulnerabilities, ensures that transition programs are carefully planned and high levels of support are available to the pupils during this potentially anxious time. Pupils return home to their parents or guardians at weekends. During the week they are able to contact parents via mobile telephones, minicomms, type talk and emails. Additionally members of staff can make telephone calls on behalf of the pupils and then interpret what is being said to them by using British Sign Language (BSL). Any restrictions on contact are contained in each pupils care plan which is kept in the boarding areas. Members of staff record any communication between them and parents. Feedback in questionnaires from parents is very positive with regards to contacts between them and the school. Relationships between the staff and pupils are warm, relaxed and affectionate. Interaction is good humoured and the staff work very hard to ensure that the pupils feel listened to and their views valued.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The school has an excellent system whereby there is a planned redecoration and refurbishment process in place. Additionally any repairs or maintenance issues are addressed promptly and very clear records are made of this. The school and boarding areas are well maintained and decorated. Pupils rooms are comfortable, well furnished and are decorated to their preference. Pupils are able to personalise their rooms with posters and pictures. Additionally a major refurbishment program in the last year has led to all classrooms to be placed on the ground floor. This has led to greater ease of accessibility for those pupils with mobility difficulties. A stair lift has also been installed so that all areas of the school are now accessible. The system in place for preparing pupils to move on from the school is very well thought out and planned. There is a dedicated member who has responsibility to prepare pupils for moving on from the school. The program starts in Year 10. Once pupils are in Year 11, the program is increased in line with their abilities. Potential placements are identified which will meet their needs and which will provide the support and assistance for them to develop their life skills and independence.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has a clear prospectus which is made available to all parents and placing authorities. Additionally there is a 'New Pupils Pack' given to parents and pupils prior to starting at the school. The pack contains information for the new pupil with regards to what they should expect at the school. The information is presented in an easily read format which is supported by pictures and illustrations. The information included in the brochure includes each pupil's right to have access to information kept about them and to whom they can complain if they wish. There is a large amount of information kept about each pupil in the school. Files are kept securely stored and are subject to regular auditing by senior members of staff and the independent visitor. The records are signed when they have been checked. Other records, such as staff recruitment and personnel files, are also stored securely. Records examined are organised and easy to follow. Some of the care plans kept in the boarding houses have information which is out of date stored together with up to date information. There is a very low turnover of staff in the school. This has led to a consistent team approach and a team who are very aware of the pupils needs. There are ample numbers of staff on duty to provide support to the pupils. 'There's always someone to talk to' was one comment made by a pupil. The school has a well organized induction process. This includes mandatory training in BSL to ensure that each member of staff can communicate with the pupils. Each member of staff has a yearly Performance Management Review and this identifies training needs and areas of performance which need to be developed. Examples of training attended include NVQ, first aid, health and safety, child protection, manual handling, food hygiene, bereavement counselling and physical restraint training. Ten members of the care staff out of a total compliment of thirteen, have achieved Level 3 NVQ in Caring for Children and Young People. There are clear lines of accountability within the staff team. Each Senior Care Officer is responsible for ensuring that 1:1 sessions are held with the care officers that they supervise. Records show that the supervision sessions are held on at least a half termly basis. The staff team is very settled and has the skills, training and experience to ensure that the pupils are supported in a sensitive and well organised manner. The Head of Care is very experienced and this experience is underpinned by her qualifications and commitment to ensuring that the school keeps abreast of developments, particularly related

to the care and support of young deaf people. The senior management team work closely together to ensure that all records are subject to regular vetting and analysis. The Executive Director, who has significant experience in financial management, ensures that up to date accounts are provided to the Charities Commission as well as Company House. The systems in place for monitoring maintenance issues, recruitment and health and safety recording and analysis are particularly efficient and well organised. Care records, IEPs and any particular needs for support for individual pupils are closely monitored by the Head of Care, key workers and members of the Pupil Support Meeting. An independent visitor visits the school on a half termly basis to monitor the performance and quality of care. This individual is very experienced in working with deaf young people. The reports made after these visits, use the headings from Every Child Matters, and are detailed and involve comments by the pupils. Additionally a school governor also visits the school, particularly the boarding area, often on an unannounced basis, to monitor the quality of care. The reports made by the independent visitor and governor contain very positive comments with regards to the state of the premises, quality of support and care and good atmosphere. The senior management team are very experienced and provide stability in leadership. The individuals who form the team are seen as approachable and competent by members of staff. The careful gate keeping of admissions is seen as a significant factor in maintaining a settled and positive atmosphere in the school.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the recording of sanctions and physical intervention include all the details required under Standard 10. (NMS 10)
- ensure that all the information kept in the care plans needs to be there. (NMS 19)

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.