

Heathlands School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Sue Michowicz
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Address	Heathlands School for Deaf Children Heathlands Drive ST. ALBANS Hertfordshire AL3 5AY
Telephone number	01727 754060
Email	admin.heathlands@thegrid.org.uk
Registered person	Hertfordshire County Council
Head of care	Mabel Geddie Davis
Head / Principal	Mabel Geddie Davis
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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

Heathlands School and its residential wing, Heath House, were purpose built in 1975, originally designed to accommodate primary age hearing-impaired children in need of Total Communication. The school has been extensively modernised and has excellent resources including a thriving nursery and specialist rooms for audiology, speech and language therapy and sign language training. Heath House is a two-storey building that offers single or shared study bedrooms spread over four wings. Bedroom groupings are segregated by age and gender. The facility is well served with communal areas and there is access to the main school library after school hours. Accommodation is offered predominantly to young people who live out of county making travelling to school difficult.

Summary

This was the first inspection of the school's boarding provision since the transfer of regulatory duties to Ofsted. The inspection was undertaken over three days with feedback given on the third day. Key National Minimum Standards were inspected under the headings of Every Child Matters - Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution, Economic Wellbeing and Organisation. There were no recommendations or actions made as a result of this inspection with the overall outcome judged as Outstanding.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations made at the last inspection. The school continues to be managed by a competent and professional senior management team which is supported by dedicated and suitably trained staff. Young people are complimentary of the support they receive and are happy in the environment. The school are building on their expertise; ensuring regular reviews of their systems takes place, which has contributed to their overall outcome of outstanding.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school implements systems that promote the health and welfare of its children; with policies and guidance in place to support staff practice. The school has good arrangements for meeting the first aid and medical needs of all young people with a suitably qualified and experienced member of staff who ensures all medication systems are maintained appropriately. Two senior members of staff are responsible for the safe administration of medication during boarding hours, both have an excellent understanding of the medical conditions affecting young people in their care and the prescribed medications used. Supporting documentation on the use of medications in school and early years establishments is held in the medication folder. Additional training has been delivered by a Diabetic Nurse in the use of Insulin, the designated staff are proficient in executing this duty and supporting the young people to safely administer this prescribed medication. Consent forms are signed and dated by parents for the use of prescribed and homely remedies. There is an abundance of information and fact sheets available to both staff and young people on any illness or social issue affecting young people. All staff undertake a one day course in first aid with a designated senior member of staff undertaking a full first

aid course to meet the needs of the school. First aid equipment is regularly monitored ensuring there is no out-of-date equipment held at the school. Within each young person's placement plan there is a health promotion plan which is supported by the school's health care policy. Young people receive health education on such things as giving up smoking, sexual health and healthy eating. There is a strong emphasis on communicating with young people to ensure any issues affecting their wellbeing are highlighted and addressed with additional support from other health professionals put in place as required. Young people are supported to maintain their own hygiene needs. There are no young people who require hands on support at this time, however, staff ensure they are available for advice and support as needed; maintaining a non-intrusive presence to ensure the safety and privacy of young people is maintained. Meals provided to young people are well balanced and nutritious, ensuring young people are provided with a varied and appealing menu. The cook usually prepares all meals from a central kitchen; meals are usually taken in the main dining room. However, at the time of inspection the school were undertaking a complete refurbishment of the central kitchen necessitating a move to the domestic kitchen in Heath House. The school have coped well with this interruption, maintaining a healthy, flexible menu for all young people. A tour of the new facility took place, work is near completion and is of a high standard; providing the school with a modern, purpose built kitchen which meets the needs of the whole school. The next phase of the planned improvements is for a complete refurbishment of the dining area, plans for this improvement were discussed, with the school focused on providing a pleasant and child-friendly dining area for the enjoyment of young people. Young people spoken with are complimentary of the new cook and the improvements in the meals provided. Some young people felt the usual variety they have been experiencing since the employment of the new cook has diminished whilst the cook is situated in Heath House. This is to be expected as the space available in Heath House has necessitated a flexible approach when planning meals for boarders. Meals sampled throughout the inspection were tasty, nutritiously balanced and appealing to young people. There was a good variety of hot dishes with a selection of salads and cold options provided. The school is continuously consulting with the young people during the refurbishment process, ensuring their views are heard and they are kept up-to-date with the progress of the new facility. The effect of this project on young people and staff has been well managed by the school ensuring the interruptions to boarding life is minimised.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are supported in a manner that is non-intrusive and respectful of their privacy and dignity, ensuring all information held about them remains confidential. All information held on behalf of a child is kept in lockable facilities. Care staff are sensitive to the needs of the young people, making sure any support offered is implemented in a non-intrusive manner. There is an emphasis on ensuring respect is shown to young people and in turn that young people show respect and understanding towards staff and their peers; this is done through positive role modelling, ensuring staff employed at the school have a clear understanding of the individual needs of the young people. The school has written protocols and supporting reporting systems for any sanctions or behavioural plans to deal with children who challenge, these are relevant to boarding and ensure all children are treated in a fair manner. There are no young people boarding at this time who require formal behaviour management plans. Young people spoken with believed the use of sanctions was limited and that they were treated fairly and consistently. Staff receive training on appropriate physical intervention techniques with supporting policies and risk assessments in place. Records of the use of sanctions are recorded

in the Heath House incidents and sanctions book. Young people are given the opportunity to record their comments in response to such incidents. All records are monitored by the Head of Care for patterns in behaviour. In addition these documents are regularly inspected by the Governors undertaking Regulation 33 visits. Children receive information on how to raise an issue of concern or a complaint with supporting policies and systems in place; which ensures children are able to make a complaint without fear of reprisal. Young people felt there was seldom any need to make a formal complaint as staff are always available to help sort out any problems. There have been no formal complaints received from young people since the last inspection, with any concerns raised successfully resolved. Suggestion boxes are situated throughout boarding, staff are receptive to the views of the young people and make appropriate changes where necessary. The complaints policy is also available in a child-friendly format to support young people to access the policy. Evidence of practice throughout the inspection was of an open and transparent team who are always available to listen to the young people, resolving day to day issues effectively. The head of school is always available to young people with an exceptional hands on approach to supporting young people to share their experiences and views on boarding life. Young people spoken with were complimentary of the support they are given and were open to discussing their issues with the inspector. Systems and training are in place, which aim to prevent the abuse of children. There is an emphasis on maintaining the safety of young people with staff trained to a high standard in child protection procedures and how to apply these to all aspects of school life. The boarding team are dedicated to providing a safe environment for the young people; ensuring any risks to young people are minimised through education and a proactive approach to maintaining safety. Use of the internet is monitored by staff ensuring young people are not able to access potentially harmful sites. Some young people felt they were too limited in their use of the internet, however, the school are acting appropriately ensuring they are vigilant in protecting young people from the known predatory risks of the internet. Young people reported feeling 'safe' whilst living in the boarding facility and were able to identify a number of staff who they felt comfortable to talk with. The school is clear on its role in any child protection case, maintaining the rights of young people at all times should an issue of concern be raised. This includes ensuring any outside agencies such as the police, social services and therapists engage the use of an independent sign language interpreter when meeting with young people. The school do not at any time provide staff to act as interpreters in these instances which supports confidentiality and minimises any conflicts of interest. This is an outstanding initiative which ensures young people are not discriminated against due to their disability. There is an open and supportive approach to addressing the potential for bullying of children; an anti-bullying policy is made available which supports practice within the school. Young people spoken with felt there was no bullying in boarding, that they generally all got on well, however, they do have the usual arguments and fallings out with each other. All young people felt staff would listen to them if they reported any bullying. The school is thorough in its reporting and follow up of unauthorised absences from the school. An absconding policy is in place, which is reflective of the recommended procedures should a child go missing from the school site; this includes when it would be necessary to contact the police and other significant persons. There have been no reports of absconding of young people since the last inspection which is a positive reflection of the care and support provided at the school. Recruitment procedures in place ensure staff are compelled to apply for legislative clearances that render them appropriate for the post applied for and in turn are suitable to care for and support children. All assessed files contained the relevant security checks such as Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosures and references with additional checks such as verbal checking of referencing taking place. Copies of CVs and qualifications are held on each file

with any gaps in employment verified prior to employment. Application forms and interview notes are maintained with all recruitment files held securely. The school are very much an equal opportunities employer, with both hearing and deaf staff employed; training in sign language is offered to staff who may not have these necessary skills at the time of employment. The recruitment systems are of an extremely high standard ensuring staff have the right qualities to work with the young people and are safe to do so. Systems are in place, which protect the health, safety and welfare of the children and staff whilst on the school premises. The school has outstanding systems in place with an effective and knowledgeable designated person who oversees the health and safety requirements of the school site. The school implements the Hertfordshire County Council policies and procedures for monitoring and maintaining the health, safety and welfare of young people and staff accessing the school. Staff are vigilant in monitoring any issues affecting young people. Termly safety checks are documented and any remedial action needed is identified and acted upon within sufficient timescales. There are clear procedures in place for securing the premises with a risk assessment for site security in place. All visitors report to the main reception during school hours with a signing in and out book accessible. Access to the boarding facility is through the use of key pads ensuring secure entry to the facility. Generic risk assessments are in place for all hazards with additional risk assessments which highlight any potentially hazardous activities both on and off site. All risk assessments are monitored and reviewed regularly. The boarding facility maintains outstanding fire protection procedures with several checking systems in place which ensure in the event of a fire, the safety of young people will be maintained. Procedures are clearly displayed alongside a pictorial child-friendly version. All staff have received fire awareness training with designated fire marshals in place. Young people are taught the evacuation procedures as part of their induction and regular unannounced drills are held including one during normal sleeping hours. Portable electrical appliances are checked annually. The premises is fitted with auditory and flashing light fire alarms which are tested weekly. Emergency lighting has been installed which has a self-test facility. The boarding team take the protection of young people from fire very seriously and are diligent in their practice, making sure all reporting systems are maintained and checks completed accurately. The procedures in place for the recording of who is in residence on any given night and how this is documented is above the standard. There are laminated cards on each corridor that are completed with the names of each young person and what room they are occupying. A copy of this information is also held in the surgery where night staff sit. All sleeping-in staff or staff who have accommodation attached to the boarding wings are responsible for the safe evacuation of young people in the event of an emergency. Staff are knowledgeable of the procedures and their responsibilities. Young people are able to explain the procedure clearly and it has become 'second nature' to evacuate quickly and safely when the alarms are activated.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school residential provision actively supports educational progress, which ensures children are supported to reach their full potential. There are effective and high quality systems between the educational and care staff; this includes care staff supporting educational requirements, for example, additional school work in the evenings and likewise educational staff support care staff with the taking on of additional duties in the evenings (homework duties). There are quiet areas provided for young people to undertake homework or other educational activities. Suitable study desks and chairs have been purchased to support young people to study in their own bedrooms and a refurbishment and redecoration of the primary homework/activity room has

taken place. A variety of planned activities are offered to children accessing both school facilities and external clubs, activities are meaningful and enjoyable, ensuring the children at the school are able to achieve their personal goals. The school offers a wide range of activities both in the school day and in the evenings. The employment of a positive deaf role model youth leader/activity organiser has been a positive step for the school, future plans to expand this role will be implemented once the 'ground work' has been completed. During the inspection the junior boarders were preparing for Chinese New Year, making decorations and finding information on each person's birth year. This was an activity greatly enjoyed by the boarders who welcomed the participation of staff and the inspector. The senior group were during this time competing in a football tournament, there was a great sense of excitement and anticipation for the results of this competition throughout the evenings activities creating a 'buzz' which was infectious. The young people returned triumphant with the first place trophy which was greatly enjoyed by boarders and staff; a complete account of the tournament was required by the junior boarders before the seniors could go and enjoy their celebratory pizza. There is a system of personal support workers (key workers), these duties include regular one-to-one sessions which are recorded. These meetings give young people the opportunity to discuss any issues they may have with school life, home life and difficulties achieving their personal goals; time is also set aside to discuss the achievements of the young people which supports their sense of worth.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

A variety of systems are in place which ensure children can make decisions that influence the way the school is run. The young people residing in boarding participate in regular boarding meetings where they can discuss issues of concern and their views openly. Young people reported feeling able to talk freely to senior members of staff. All staff have sign language skills and understand the need to communicate effectively with the young people. Some young people felt some of the routines diminished their independence to make choices, this was discussed with the head who has very clear reasons why the measures currently in place are necessary; all routines are adapted to meet the needs of the young people. Young people are open with their comments and do feel listened to by staff. A need for a deaf member of staff within the boarding team was highlighted by the young people, this is something the school has already identified within their own planning, a suitable candidate has been found and they are now awaiting completion of the recruitment systems for employment to commence. The school have implemented plans of care, which are in line with the statement of needs, ensuring the needs of children continue to be met. Each young person has an individual plan of care, all of the staff are aware of the needs of each young person and take an active role in enabling the young person to move forward. All plans are kept under review both formally and informally by the staff within the setting. Reviews of the statement of need and the placement plan are undertaken with the school ensuring all relevant therapists and professionals are involved. The plans contain excellent targets which are formulated with the young people to support their independence. Young people and their families are supported to maintain contact during boarding. Young people are able to contact their parents at times of their choosing with the exception of the school day. The use of mobile phones is a reoccurring theme throughout the discussions with pupils, at this time there is a necessary sanction on the use of mobile phones with cameras on the sleeping wings. Young people are required to leave such mobiles in the care of staff overnight, they are then returned in the morning. Staff have made it clear that mobiles that do not have a camera facility can be used at these times, however, very few of

the young people have taken advantage of this, thus their ongoing discontent with the system in place. This is an issue which is left in the capable hands of the school to monitor. Staff also maintain regular contact with families to ensure they are kept up-to-date with any significant events which supports an open dialogue and flow of information in both directions.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The school is ensuring the environment at Heathlands is maintained to a standard that protects the health, welfare and safety of its children. The boarding facility at the school provides a homely and well-maintained environment for children to enjoy safely. Good quality furnishings are provided for the use of the young people with communal areas decorated in a homely and welcoming manner. New furnishings, fabrics, carpets and bedding have been purchased to further enhance the facilities available to young people. The development of the central kitchen and dining area will further enhance the school's provision. A recent refurbishment of the school's homework and medical room has taken place. There is a rolling programme of decoration and refurbishment to bedrooms and common rooms. There is a wide range of resources available to young people with games, a large plasma screen TV, computers, fitness equipment, a pool table and games room all provided for the use of young people. There are large outdoor areas with equipment such as bikes for the recent road proficiency training provided by the school. The facilities provided for young children accommodated as boarders is of a high standard.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has a range of documents providing clear information related to the principles and practices adopted at the school. The school provides a Statement of Purpose for the residential setting which supports children, families and placing authorities when making a decision for admission. The Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually by governors and amended as appropriate. A young people's guide is also available which is of a high standard, this will soon be supported by a DVD on boarding life. The school provides adequate numbers of skilled and trained staff to maintain the safety of young people during boarding regimes. There is a strong emphasis on providing National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) training to all care staff with the expectation that all staff will begin this qualification within six months of their employment. The head of care is also working towards the assessors award which will further support training in this area. Training is also delivered through regular formal inset days. Staff are supported to attend any training opportunities that may enhance their working practice. The head of school ensures the day-to-day operation of the school meets the requirements of the Standards in relation to the care of children accommodated at the school. The care team are supported by a suitably qualified and experienced head of care who ensures the safe management of the care provision. Staff are supported to share their ideas for improvements with the school eager to maintain and build on their successes in an innovative and inspirational manner. The staff were open and transparent in their feedback throughout this inspection and are to be commended for the hard work and commitment they have in ensuring the needs of the young people are central to all they do. The outcomes of this report were of a highly motivated team who deliver care and educational support in a manner that supports young people to achieve their dreams and aspirations. The outcomes for young people were of a happy and relaxed group of young people who are supported to voice their ideas and concerns in a safe and supportive environment. The school has a monitoring and audit system which ensures all

procedures are in line with the standards and meet the needs of the young people. The school has produced an 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) plan which shows what has been planned and achievements in these areas; there are separate ECM plans for school life and boarding life. All staff receive a half termly supervision with the head of care which is increased to weekly meetings for new staff. The care team attend weekly staff meetings, minutes of which are sent to the head of school and the deputy head of school. Daily de-briefs take place to give staff the opportunity to discuss any issues of concern or share achievements. There is an annual appraisal system in place, staff interviewed believed there is a good emphasis on their professional development and are complimentary of how the school values them. All staff have clear job descriptions and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. There is ample evidence of good role modelling taking place between senior and junior staff with a productive and professional team developing to ensure the needs of young people are met. The leadership qualities of the senior management team are strong, ensuring a well-run boarding facility exists for young people to enjoy. The hands-on approach of the senior management team, which includes regular regulation 33 visits from two designated governors, ensures the day to day management of the boarding facility is monitored and staff are working in the best interest of the young people.

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):

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.