

Horton Lodge

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Jackie Callaghan
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Date of last inspection	31 October 2007

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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

Horton Lodge school is operated by Staffordshire County Council. The school is situated in Staffordshire Moorlands, approximately three miles outside the market town of Leek. The buildings are a mix of old and new, dating from 1890 to the present day and are set within ten acres of ground. The school offers education for boys and girls, aged between 2 and 11 years with physical disabilities. Many of the children have additional learning difficulties and some have additional visual, hearing and/or speech and language difficulties. The school's education system is based on 'Conductive Education' which aims to address all areas of a child's developmental needs. The school has qualified conductor teachers and works closely with the International Peto Institute in Budapest. The school also provides a 'learning centre' for parents on site and supports children from a range of different educational settings. The residential provision which is called Kiplings is sited on the ground floor, in a separate wing with an interconnecting corridor to a number of classrooms. The residential area comprises of a lounge, staff office, bedrooms, bathrooms and toilets. The bedrooms vary in size between single occupancy to a maximum of 4. There are currently 54 children who attend the school, 17 of these access the residential provision.

Summary

This was an announced inspection that focused on the key standards. The inspection concentrated on the medication systems, keeping the children safe and the school's behavioural management processes. The inspection also considered how the staff are supported, how the school is managed and the admission and leaving process for the children. No recommendations were raised as a result of this inspection. Children enjoy being at Horton Lodge and benefit from professional, effective and imaginative management. This coupled with a staff team who are skilled, knowledgeable and enthusiastic provides all children with stimulating and purposeful care.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the school was asked to develop their recording systems and improve the outside area between the school and the dining area. Records now contain a section to document comments made by children. This proactively enables children's ability to report injuries following an incident requiring physical intervention by staff. Plans are well underway to provide an undercover link between the school and the dining area. It is recognised that extensive and careful planning is needed to ensure that the school provides an environment that does not impinge on children's health and safety.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individual health and intimate care needs are clearly identified and assessed at an early stage. Thorough and excellent health plans detail individual needs including support for emotional needs. Health needs which may impact on future outcomes for the child are identified at the earliest opportunity and staff, in partnership with parents, actively seek out the services needed to address these. For example, involvement of specialist workers such as Speech and

Language Therapists. This means children receive dynamic care that actively promotes their wellbeing and health. Robust risk assessments are completed for manual handling and guidance is in place for staff to help ensure that this is done in a safe way. Medical consent is sought from parents and a signed form is retained on file ensuring that children can receive preventative and emergency medical treatment without delay. As a result, children receive care that actively protects their welfare. Children learn about the benefits of healthy living. They sit together at tables to enjoy healthy and nutritious meals such as roasted pepper stuffed with vegetables, rice and cheesy garlic bread. Food is excellent, freshly prepared and enthusiastically appreciated by the children. Whole school initiatives around healthy eating and looking after the environment take place regularly. The school has achieved the Eco Award and the children grow and eat their own vegetables, clearly giving them a sense of achievement. The benefits of children's participation in positive recreational experiences overwhelmingly contributes to their physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual growth.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Overall, the school has an excellent focus on safeguarding and protection issues with clear guidance that is communicated effectively to promote the wellbeing of children. Adults and children follow comprehensive guidelines for privacy that keeps everyone safe. The school has outstanding leadership that consistently promotes an environment where safety and children's welfare is paramount. There is an effective system in place to record any concerns made known by children. So helping children and staff to work together to ensure care is continually appropriate. The arrangements for protecting children who may be at risk from running off or away are well established. Although, there has never been the need for them to be implemented. Children reside in a stable and safe environment where their welfare is clearly paramount. Staff have a deep understanding of the needs of the children and how to safeguard them. The staff team receive regular child protection training as well as behaviour management training which supports their day-to-day practice. Children's safety is further promoted because staff are fully aware of the correct procedures to report any allegations or child protection issues. Children are protected from bullying by others. The provision is proactive in creating a culture within the school that does not tolerate bullying and provides support to vulnerable children. There have been no recorded incidents of bullying in the residential unit. Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. There is flexibility in the staffing ratios to support children, with all staff possessing an in-depth understanding of the communication deficits of the children and how they exhibit dissatisfaction. There is very evident warmth in the relationship between the staff and the children. This was echoed by a parent who commented that 'The all round care that Horton Lodge gives our child has been wonderful. He so looks forward to Kiplings, telling you that he wants to stay as he wakes on Monday mornings and he doesn't stay until Wednesday. The care is just exemplary'. Positive steps are taken to keep children, staff and visitors safe from fire and other hazards in the school. For example, records indicate that regular drills are undertaken and children are given the opportunity to participate. In addition, risk assessments on the environment are completed and updated on a regular basis. Staff within the school are all involved in these routines to ensure that health and safety is promoted by everyone. Children clearly enjoy playing in a child-orientated, accessible and completely stimulating environment that is welcoming and safe. There continues to be robust procedures for the selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers. Proactive monitoring of

visitors to the school takes place, so as to prevent children being exposed to unsuitable adults. This excellent practice truly safeguards their welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is well established support of children's educational achievement by the boarding provision at school. Effective communication between classroom staff, residential staff and therapists promotes consistency for children. The school provides wider support to parents and mainstream provisions that encourage attitudinal changes to reflect and enhance dignity, self-respect and full involvement within the community. Children are supported by a professional and well-informed team who ensure the school maintains a flexible approach to providing personal care. Staff are knowledgeable about the individual needs of the children with equipment and adaptations in place to support safe practice. All support to maintain hygiene needs and activities of daily living are implemented in a professional and sensitive manner taking into consideration the wishes and needs of the child. A parent commented that "My son is totally confident in all the staff therefore I am too". Staffing ratios are excellent. These high levels of support mean that children are safe, well cared for and well educated, yet still able to work towards functioning independently. Useful workshops are provided for parents on important issues so that the school and home are working collaboratively. Consequently, children get consistent messages that helps develop their confidence and self-esteem. Children are happy and settled in the staffs' care, moving freely and confidently in the cheerful environment. Staff encourage children's problem solving skills as they sit with them to design butterflies. Children then build and follow their own ideas as they choose the direction of the project. A parent states that 'The school does an excellent job of ensuring that the educational opportunities continue through for children who board, but in a way that they find enjoyable'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are respected as individuals. Staff build a clear picture of their likes and dislikes such as what they enjoy eating and playing with. On recognition of children's preferences, they work actively to encourage them to try new activities and experiences. This helps staff to individualise the environment to suit the children's needs and thus broaden their horizons. Children begin to learn about the wider world through sharing significant experiences. They play with resources such as music videos which reflect positive images and the school's play materials fully mirror the diverse world in which we live. This develops children's ability to appreciate each others' similarities and differences and to value the richness of the wider world. The school successfully promotes inclusion as they challenge and promote attitudinal change because they have a belief that individuals can co-exist regardless of abilities and disabilities within the wider community. These values underpin staff's professional development and threads through all the school's policies and procedures. Children are extremely well consulted about life in Kiplings. Their views and preferences are sought, including menu content, furnishings and activities. The school has two independent advocates. Both advocates have different backgrounds and experiences with disabilities. This enables the children to truly flourish as the advocates are able to offer a wide and varying degree of support, empathy and understanding. This increases children's welfare by ensuring exceptional safeguards are in place.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Children truly benefit from staying in Kiplings. Staff spend a large majority of their time sitting and playing with them, supporting their care and development. Resources and space are used effectively to maximise children's independence and to provide them with a secure environment in which they build and develop trust. The school successfully enables a proactive culture of acceptance where all children are valued equally, treated with respect and given equal opportunities within the environment. Children stay in a school that is well-decorated and maintained to a high standard. The head recognises the limitations of the building. However with staff she has innovatively enabled an environment that blends itself well to proficiently meet children's needs. Children's enjoyment of boarding is high because it is relevant to their needs and interests. The evening curriculum is exciting as children take part in really valuable activities both on and off site. They learn how to relate socially to others around them and how to cooperate with their peers and staff. Children develop their thinking skills well and are learning how to express themselves clearly using various aids and communication systems.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The dynamic management of the school significantly contributes to the care and support children receive. Staff know and understand the stated aims and objectives of the service that are consistent with the Statement of Purpose. The children have also produced a magnificent digital video disc (DVD), which accompanies the written guidance. The establishment's staffing policy is included in its Statement of Purpose and is broken down to reflect the minimum staffing expectations in the school. Children are kept safe and provided with exceptional care as they have excellent numbers of staff to look after them. Children are making outstanding progress because staffing in the school is robustly organised and effectively managed. New members of staff take part in a full induction process. As a result, they become sure of their job role and individual level of responsibility very quickly. Children are successfully supported by a staff team who are given extensive support from their managers and supervisors. Staff are provided with formal supervision meetings on a regular basis to ensure they are able to discuss the work they do with children. Meticulous team work is being effectively promoted by managers as a way of ensuring the school provides consistent care and support to children. One staff member stated that she 'Feels well-supported' and another commented that her manager 'Uses the team to the best effect'. All staff, including domestic and ancillary, receive a varied range of new and refresher training to ensure they are equipped with skills to support and meet the needs of children in their care. The overwhelming majority of staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. This forward thinking approach to training means that all staff recognise and accept that inequalities can be deeply embedded in society, and being committed to removing them, wherever possible. It means learning about differences and similarities in a spirited culture of trust and acceptance, working together to ensure the children receive a service that actively enhances their lives. The head of care and head teacher have both established a pattern of management monitoring records, through which they analyse the performance of the residential staff in meeting their requirements. Horton Lodge, as an organisation, has delegated the responsibility for its monthly review of welfare to an independent person. Records indicate that these visits take place with appropriate regularity, some are unannounced. The visits provide excellent additional safeguarding mechanisms for the children by looking at staff and

management practices. Children are exceptionally well supervised because of the effective leadership and management of the setting.

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.