

# Heathlands School

Inspection report for residential special school

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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 a key announced inspection to assess key standards of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. Judgements have been made under Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Positive Contribution, Enjoying and Achieving, Economic Wellbeing and Organisation and the overall quality rating confirms that this service provides outstanding outcomes for young people. The promotion of equality and diversity is 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 from the last inspection.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are focussed and committed to ensuring a good quality provision of healthcare for young people. They have a good understanding of the individual health needs of the young people in their care. Staff receive appropriate training and support that ensures their skills and experience are current. Young people are very well informed about different aspects of health promotion. The school has purchased bicycles and equipped a gym room as a way of encouraging the young people to enjoy different forms of exercise. The safe handling of medication is well managed. Two senior staff prepare and administer medication and are trained to do so. There are detailed protocols in place to meet the special health needs of some young people. Medication is accurately recorded, received and disposed of appropriately. The medication cupboard is secure. All staff are trained in first aid. Young people are fully involved in their health care and medical needs. Their health needs are identified and good health is promoted.

The school provides a very healthy, well balanced diet for the young people. The meals provided are well presented, healthy in content and much enjoyed by the young people. Young people are offered choice at each meal and different cultural foods are available. The well-equipped young people's kitchen and small dining room is a lovely space for young people to make themselves drinks and snacks as well as sit and relax with friends. The main dining room is where staff and young people sit together and enjoy relaxed and sociable mealtimes. The

interaction between the young people and the catering staff is very positive. Activities for young people include preparing and making foods with the cook and staff, all of whom are able to communicate with the young people in British Sign Language (BSL). Young people's suggestions are sought for menu planning. Menus are produced in photograph forms and displayed so the young people are well informed. The dining room has been refurbished and provides everyone with a pleasant and welcoming place to meet and eat. The kitchen and dining areas are spotless and the cook and his team deserve the positive feedback given by the environmental health officer.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people say that their privacy is respected. Staff are aware of the school's policies and their actions ensure that the policies are adhered to and the rights and privacy of the young people are protected. Young people are provided with appropriate equipment to enable them to make telephone calls and have access to their private mobile phones out of school hours. Information held about young people is stored securely and staff demonstrate a good awareness of the need to keep information confidential.

Young people are aware of how to make a complaint. Information about complaints is contained in the young person's guide to boarding and is linked into the school's complaints system. Young people know that they can also use the 'red comment box' provided for them in the reception area and there is good evidence of their comments being listened to and addressed. They say they feel able to talk to the staff and the independent listener should they have any concerns.

Child protection is taken very seriously by the school. Child protection procedures are clear and linked to the local authority. The Deputy Head and Head of Care are designated child protection officers. All staff receive training in child protection. Young people are protected by staff who are aware of how to respond to allegations and disclosures. Young people are kept safe by robust recruitment procedures that ensure all staff and workers that come into contact with young people have been thoroughly vetted. Recruitment procedures include input from the young people. Recruitment practices support the school's continued commitment to equal opportunities and positive role modelling for young people by the recruitment of both hearing and deaf staff.

The school has a written procedure for action when young people are absent without authority. There are no incidents of absconding from the school. The school has worked well in developing links with the local police service. This has led to the development of guidance for contacting the police that adds to the safety and protection provided for the young people. An excellent piece of work has been developed and introduced with the older boarders. They receive training and guidance called 'free walking' that teaches them safe practices and behaviours to keep them safe when off site. Once young people complete the training they are allowed to go into the local community without staff so build their independent living skills. It is a privilege and practice that the older boarders appreciate and use effectively. The school continues to develop practice and procedures that focus not only on the young people's safety but on developing their independence and participation in the community.

The school has good procedures and policies with regard to bullying. Young people say that they have been told about bullying issues on the internet and feel supported by staff and safe

in the school. Young people say that bullying happens rarely but if it does then staff deal it and they feel safe boarding at the school. Young people are able to communicate with staff and the independent listener as all are skilled in BSL. Staff have a good level of understanding of the needs of the young people and respond well when any are upset.

Staff are all trained in the management of challenging behaviour including the use of physical intervention. The training given to staff, uses an holistic approach to behaviour management which has ensured that there is no physical intervention carried out in this school currently. They effectively manage any difficult situations and disagreements between young people in a calm and professional manner. They view young people positively and there is a good atmosphere in the school. Young people feel the rules and sanctions used in the school are fair. Few sanctions are used though records do not evidence discussion with young people and monitoring of the effectiveness of some sanctions. The school's approach to working with the young people continues to emphasise their positive achievements and behaviours. The rewards system used in the boarding house for the younger children is much appreciated by them. Good staffing levels, staff competence and comprehensive risk assessments ensure the safety of the young people who board at the school.

The school has comprehensive risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds including fire and young people's activities. These assessments take into account the daily activities in and outside the school. They are detailed and completed by staff involved in the activity and address the needs, events and actions required to ensure that the young people are safe. From observation, it is evident that risk assessments are not just completed but used a practical working tool that ensures the safety of the young people throughout an activity. There are good systems and practices in place that ensure staff know the whereabouts of young people and educate them to take responsibility for their own safety. All staff are given fire safety training and regular fire drills take place with young people and staff attending. Fire safety equipment is checked regularly and a detailed record kept. Required checks and maintenance with regard to electrics, gas and water regulations are carried out and any shortfalls addressed. All visitors sign into the building and must show identification. Young people are protected by robust health and safety procedures. This is supported in a recent health and safety audit completed at the school by the local authority. Their report says, 'the school is a model of good practice and it was felt that the school has a very good health and safety culture.'

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

The links between the boarding and teaching teams are good and ensure that the young people are well supported. Boarding staff maintain good communication links with parents. Young people are provided with good facilities such as access to the school library and computers, to assist them in their studies after school. Young people are supported with their homework and advice and training is provided to staff to assist them in this task. The outstanding level of academic success enjoyed by the young people is a testament to the good standard of support, teaching and encouragement that the young people receive at this school. The school provides training in British Sign language (BSL) and deaf awareness to parents, siblings, extended family, professionals and the wider community. A new training unit attached to the school will increase, as well as develop new opportunities, of this aspect of work undertaken by the school. These are all examples of how the school demonstrates and meets its continued commitment to

developing deaf awareness, social inclusion and ensuring that the young people are provided with opportunities and support to meet their potential both socially and academically.

Young people are very positive about the support provided by the staff. From observation and comment, it is very evident that the young people have a good relationship with the staff and feel able to relax, play and talk with the staff. They are very much involved and clearly aware of what happens in their boarding house and what staff do to ensure that their needs are met. An example of this is the excellent piece of work, undertaken by senior boarding staff with input from young people, to produce evidence folders that refer to the outcomes from 'Every Child Matters' and how they are met in the boarding house. The folders contain evidence that supports the work to meet the needs of the young people. Examples include copies of cycling proficiency tests for young people under 'being healthy' ; visits from the local youth police officer under 'staying safe' and many photographs of the young people enjoying a varied activity programme under 'enjoying and achieving'. Not only does this demonstrate a commitment to meeting the outcomes of Every Child Matters but is excellent evidence of the staffs' professional, caring approach that is child-centred and focused on meeting the needs of the young people in their care.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are regularly consulted about matters affecting their daily lives at the school and as boarders. There are different systems in place for gathering their views and for them to express their opinions. For example, young people work with boarding staff to produce a boarding section in the school newsletter. They are also involved in the production of a video about life in the boarding house. Young people say that they feel able to express their opinions and participate in life in the school. All staff are trained in BSL and so are able to communicate well with the young people. Young people come across as confident and positive. They are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run.

Admissions to the school are well planned and clear policies and procedures are established and followed. Young people are given plenty of information about boarding. They are encouraged to have trial visits and overnight stays in the boarding house before they decide to become a weekly boarder. Comprehensive assessments, including an 'independence checklist' of young people individual skills is completed as part of the admission process. Support and guidance is provided for those young people preparing to leave the school. For example, a 'connexions corner' has been established to provide information and contacts about different colleges; secondary schools or employment opportunities and further training. Systems and practice enable young people to move into the school and leave in a sensitive, supportive and caring manner.

Each young person has an individual care plan. Appropriate educational documentation is held on individual case files. Young people are fully involved in their care planning, reviews and target setting with support from the residential staff team. Care plans identify the communication, social, personal, health, religious and cultural needs of each young person. Young people's deaf identity is clearly identified and seen as an important part of life in school. Staff are trained in mentoring and provide a good level of care and support to young people. The staff know the young people well and are very knowledgeable of their individual needs

and the implications this has for their care. Staff contribute to the young people's annual reviews and prepare weekly reports that inform review reports. Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly.

Care files contain clear information regarding contact arrangements for the boarders. Staff are very aware of individual contact arrangements. They contact parents during the school week as required. Parents feel well supported by the Head and staff in the boarding house. They say that they are well informed; made welcome whenever they visit and are happy with the care given to their children. Young people are provided with access to various communication systems to enable them to keep contact with family and friends. Many have their own mobile phones for use outside of school hours. Access to internet communication systems is available to young people with parental consent and security systems are in place to protect the young people. The young people only board during the school week and so maintain regular contact with their families and friends.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people live in a well designed, decorated and pleasant environment. The boarding house is bright, cheerful and welcoming. A wide range of facilities are provided that offer the young people a choice of activity or relaxation and include large plasma televisions, computer games, gym equipment, bikes, toys and various crafts. The choice is varied and the facilities are excellent.

Young people's art work and photographs are displayed. Young people are encouraged to bring in personal items and pictures to display in their rooms. The communal area are well maintained and the standard of cleanliness is outstanding. Several areas of the school and living accommodation have recently been refurbished and new facilities provided. This includes the refurbished kitchen and dining areas which provide a spacious and bright area for the young people to eat and chat to their friends. Other areas such as the gym and bedrooms have had changes to the décor and fittings that have made these spaces more inviting and pleasant for the young people to use. Boarders have access to all the school's facilities. The school is very well equipped to meet the needs of young people including the provision of specialist equipment to enable them to fully participate in communal living and to ensure their safety.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The emphasis and practice on achieving and developing social inclusion is excellent. The Head and her staff team are excellent role models for the young people in their care. The quality and detail of young people's plans also supports this commitment. Young people receive an individual service in the school which is designed to meet their personal needs. All staff have a good knowledge of the young people they are working with ensuring their needs are consistently met.

The school has a written Statement of purpose and function which sets out all the required areas of information about the service and facilities provided. The school's website provides an interesting and well informed place for parents, stakeholders and young people to access information about all aspects of school life and achievements. Young people are admitted to the school in accordance with the school's policies and procedures. They are given information, that is produced in child-friendly formats, about the way that the school and boarding facilities

operate and the services provided. The development of a video production about the boarding house is something that the staff and young people have been involved in and look forward to receiving when it has been edited.

Staff levels are good and ensure that the needs of the young people are met. Rotas allow time for staff to attend meetings and training sessions, receive supervision, undertake tasks as care workers and complete records. The Head of Care has worked well with his team to ensure they provide skilled, professional and caring support for the young people. Staff are provided with information and guidance to enable them to meet the needs of the young people and to follow the school's policies and procedures effectively. The staff team provide good role models for the young people in their care. From observation and comments from the young people, it is clear that the staff ensure that the experience of boarding is safe as well as fun.

The staff are well trained, especially with regard to their skills and abilities in communicating with the young people in BSL. Newly appointed staff are well supported and undertake an induction programme that leads onto further training including National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 and BSL. The commitment to training, including NVQ Level 3, is very good. There are other varied training opportunities for staff that include the required statutory courses and ensure that they have relevant skills and competencies for their work with the young people. Staff receive regular supervision that focuses on care practice and personal development needs. However, there is no formal annual appraisal system in place for boarding staff. Staff feel supported and state that the management team are available and approachable. Young people benefit from a well trained, competent staff team.

The school has an experienced and effective senior management team. The Head has delegated areas of responsibility to members of her leadership team and they carry out the monitoring of their areas in a thorough and well recorded way. The school has well developed monitoring and quality assurance processes that includes a detailed and effectively actioned school development plan. The school development plan identifies areas for the future development and detailed actions required to implement them. Each area for review and development is linked to 'Every Child Matters' headings. This document is regularly reviewed with the expectation that identified actions are addressed and reported upon to the leadership team and school governors each term. The governing body has designated boarding governors that visit the boarding facility regularly and unannounced. They are positive about their role and supportive of the care and education provided at the school. They produce written reports of their findings. The school's self evaluation form states, 'through self-evaluation the school constantly strives for further improvements to the benefit of pupils.' This statement is well evidenced by the detailed and considered approach made by the Head and her staff team to ensuring that the young people receive a outstanding level of care and education.

## **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 record of sanctions includes comment upon the effectiveness and any consequences of the sanction. Where sanctions are imposed, children are encouraged to write or otherwise have their views recorded. National Minimum Standard 10.9
- ensure that all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised annually by their line manager. National Minimum Standard 30.6