

Holly House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Mick Walklin
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Date of last inspection	3 July 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

Holly House is a residential special school run by Derbyshire County Council catering for children of both sexes with emotional and behavioural difficulties, aged seven to 14 years. The school currently provides education and accommodation for boys only. The aim of Holly House is to meet the special educational, emotional and behavioural needs of its pupils and enable pupils to return to mainstream school wherever possible. The school is situated in a suburb of Chesterfield and young people attending the school live across the county. Transport to the school is provided by the local authority. The school has its own mini-buses for young people to use for trips and activities.

The residential provision consists of two units, each with their own kitchen/dining facilities, lounge and bathing facilities. There are four single bedrooms and six double bedrooms used as single accommodation.

The residential provision operates Mondays to Fridays in term-time only. Young people access the residential provision on a voluntary basis and can choose to stay between one and four nights a week. There is also the option to stay for extended day activities where young people have tea in the residential unit and go home after the evenings activities. Five young people were using the service at the time of the visit and all participated in the inspection.

Summary

At this announced full inspection all standards were inspected.

This is a good service in most respects with some outstanding features. The school's residential provision actively supports young people's educational progress. It enhances the opportunities available to them by providing an extended curriculum. This allows good progress both academically, socially and emotionally. Young people have excellent opportunities to engage in activities that they would not usually be able to experience and they receive excellent individual support. The welfare of young people is promoted and there are good procedures to protect young people from bullying and abuse. The school excels in promoting acceptable behaviour by the use of praise and rewards, together with fair, consistent boundaries and ground rules. A healthy lifestyle is promoted and addressed effectively as part of the school curriculum. There are warm and nurturing relationships between staff and young people with clear personal, professional boundaries in place. Where possible, young people are integrated back into mainstream education as early as possible. Staff will provide support during this process to enable a smooth transition. Staff are well trained and supported and the promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are happy with the standard of the accommodation with one young person commenting, 'You get treated good and you get looked after and there is lots to do'.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has made good progress in meeting the recommendations from the last inspection. These related to the storage and administration of some medication, reviewing the information

contained in the complaints procedure, improving the recording of behaviour control methods and improving the vetting and supervision of staff. Steps have been taken to address all these issues.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people stay in a healthy environment and their health and care needs are clearly identified. A healthy lifestyle is promoted and addressed effectively as part of the school curriculum. Young people lead an active lifestyle, taking part in a variety of outdoor pursuits and sports. Young people have access to the school nursing service and retain links with their own doctors during their stay. Staff receive first aid training and local accident and emergency services are used for medical emergencies. A social worker commented that staff have dealt with first aid issues appropriately. Improvements have been made to medication storage and administration and there are robust procedures for booking medications in and out of the school, including verifying prescription information with parents and carers. The school nurse provides training and advice for staff to ensure that medication procedures are safe.

Young people are provided with healthy and nutritious meals that meet their dietary requirements. Meals are freshly prepared with menus audited by a nutritionist. Water dispensers are situated throughout the school and fruit is freely available. Unhealthy snacks and drinks are either limited or not available. Main meals contain a vegetarian option with fresh vegetables, a fruit selection and yoghurts. Young people's views on the quality of food served are recorded and comments include, 'The food is always good. Fruit is always there'. Meals are social occasions where good manners are promoted and reinforced.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. Bedrooms are treated as private space with staff requesting permission to enter when necessary. Although young people are independent in areas of personal care, staff provide discrete support and ensure that young people maintain their own privacy and dignity. There are clear guidelines for appropriate physical contact in order to respond to a child in a positive, caring manner as a parent would. Young people's records are securely stored and staff are aware of their responsibility for maintaining confidentiality. Surveillance cameras are situated throughout the school both internally and externally. These provide a deterrent for bullying, protection against allegations and evidence in terms of criminal damage and site security. However, none are situated in areas that would intrude on young people's privacy.

Young people are fully aware of how to complain and have confidence in staff to address any issues raised. Information is prominently displayed throughout the school which now contains the contact details for Ofsted. Two complaints were received last year, both of which were resolved. However, one was not recorded in sufficient detail to provide an accurate account of the young person's issues.

The welfare of young people is promoted and there are good procedures to protect young people from bullying and abuse. Young people have a good awareness of what constitutes bullying with posters displayed throughout the school. An annual bullying survey is conducted with young people on an annual basis. They do not identify bullying as a problem in the

residential area although staff challenge play fighting and name calling promptly, with sanctions being imposed if the problem persists. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures with allegations being reported to the appropriate authorities. Young people attend the residential provision on a voluntary basis in agreement with parents, carers and the local authority. There have been no instances of unauthorised absences but robust procedures are in place should this occur. There are systems in place to ensure that significant events are notified to the appropriate authorities.

Unacceptable behaviour is quickly and skilfully managed by staff who act as good role models for young people. A points system used throughout the school enables young people to gain rewards for achieving behavioural goals. A social worker commented, 'Behaviour is managed extremely well with the support of other agencies when needed'. Young people have 'Positive Handling Plans' providing staff with clear management guidelines. Incident records are of a good quality with young people's views being sought following the imposition of sanctions or physical interventions. The low use of these provides evidence of effective behaviour management strategies using positive approaches.

Young people stay in an environment that provides physical safety and security. Robust systems and checks are in place to ensure that the environment is safe. However, some potentially hazardous cleaning materials were found to be accessible to young people in the residential area. Staff and visitors are fully vetted and visitors are monitored whilst on the premises. Criminal Records Bureau disclosures have now been obtained for all ancillary staff. Physical measures such as surveillance cameras and locked doors ensure that the building is safe at night. Young people have a good knowledge of fire evacuation procedures and fire assembly points.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school's residential provision actively supports young people's educational progress. It enhances the opportunities available to young people by providing an extended curriculum. This allows good progress both academically, socially and emotionally by means of improved attendance and engagement in classes. Teaching and residential staff work in close liaison with some staff working across both settings. Young people have excellent opportunities to engage in activities that they would not usually be able to experience. Outdoor and adventure pursuits are actively encouraged with staff being enabled to complete training and qualifications towards this. Excellent risk assessments enable young people to participate in risky activities safely, and staff have a strong commitment to raising young people's hazard perception and awareness. Detailed activity plans identify activity objectives, social objectives and cross-curricular themes that link with other subjects.

Young people receive excellent levels of individual support. They value the support from key workers by means of regular individual sessions. Young people's self-esteem and confidence is promoted across all aspects of school life. Senior staff operate an 'open door' policy to ensure that they are accessible to young people. Good communication between the school and the residential area ensures that young people can be effectively supported in times of crisis. Staff understand the importance of being good role models and they have an excellent understanding of the complex needs of young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are well supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. They are consulted about evening activities and menus during daily after-school meetings. School council and residential council meetings are held periodically. Changes made in consultation with young people include the purchase of sports and leisure equipment, access to the games room during breaks and the introduction of a breakfast club.

Staff maintain safe and consistent boundaries to promote acceptable behaviour with consideration for others and good manners taking a high priority. Young people describe staff as 'nice' and 'helpful'. New admissions to the residential area are sensitively handled to ensure that young people's needs and wishes are taken into account. The local authority has clear criteria for access to residential area. New and existing pupils are prepared for the academic and social demands of the main school by attending 'The Pod'. This is situated in a separate building from the main school and aims to provide a homely, warm, secure environment in which young people can be nurtured.

Care plans contain good information about young people's support needs which are reviewed every six weeks. Young people have access to the files and are encouraged to personalise the covers. They are encouraged to contribute to their annual reviews so that their views and wishes can be taken into account. They also complete 'It's OK To Be Me' books which are a self-assessment outlining achievements and goals. A social worker commented, 'Staff are excellent at keeping me updated. They are excellent at communicating by phone or in person. Members of the school staff always endeavour to attend any meetings we invite them to'. Young people are supported to maintain contact with parents and carers. They have access to a telephone each evening to make calls if they wish. Key workers maintain regular contact with parents and carers to ensure good communication.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people bring their own clothing and personal requisites with them when staying in the residential area. Toiletries are purchased by the school. Lockable drawers are provided for young people to store valuables. A school uniform consisting of a polo shirt and fleece is worn and young people are encouraged to change out of their uniform at the end of the school day.

Young people move from the school at the age of 14. Where possible, they are integrated back into mainstream education as early as possible. Staff will provide support during this process to enable a smooth transition. They use an inclusion checklist which assesses the skills young people need to return to mainstream education successfully. Young people also complete a self-assessment of their progress. Advice and guidance on future career paths provided by the school and Connexions where appropriate. The extended curriculum offered by the school and residential area helps develop independent living skills and confidence. A social worker praised the support offered to a young person which has enabled them to use public transport independently to and from school and to manage payment of fares.

Young people stay in accommodation of a satisfactory standard which is decorated and furnished in a homely manner. Young people are happy with the standard of the accommodation with

one commenting, 'I love the residence and that is it'. They have access to the extensive school facilities outside of the school day.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All staff receive equality and diversity training. Pupils cover equality and diversity as part of the curriculum and it is a theme that runs through all aspects of school life. Whole school assemblies promote cultural and moral values. Where young people have specific cultural or religious needs, the school will consult with parents and relevant agencies to meet those needs. Pupils are made aware of other cultures and religions through the school curriculum. The School Disability and Equality Scheme 2007-2010 identifies targets, actions and performance indicators. Priorities include the positive portrayal of disabled people and ensuring that the rights of disabled pupils are not compromised. The school is committed to enabling young people to return to mainstream education at the earliest opportunity to ensure that they are not stigmatised.

Young people and their parents or carers have access to good information about the school and residential area which describes the facilities available. The school website provides a virtual tour of the facilities. Young people's needs, development and progress is well recorded. The school keeps clear and accurate records of both the staff group and young people. Progress is assessed on an ongoing basis and also at the annual review. National curriculum levels are assessed on an individual basis in bar chart format. Individual education plan targets are assessed on a weekly basis with percentage scores providing evidence of achievement. A reading, comprehension and spelling tracker is also used each term to assess literacy progress. School reports provide good information about young people's development.

The residential area is adequately staffed with staffing levels reflecting the care needs of young people. No residential staff have left in the past 12 months providing continuity and stability of care. Staff are well trained and supported. New staff receive training and induction to prepare them for their role. The school has a strong commitment to staff training with staff receiving regular updates during school inset days to build on the strength of expertise within the staff team. All residential staff have obtained a National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 or above. Residential staff receive formal supervision at the intervals recommended but the dates of annual appraisals are not recorded on supervision records. There are clear lines of accountability and communication is described as good. The head is proud of the school's achievements with the school being awarded Specialist Status in 2005. The management team effectively monitor the operation of the school and the welfare of 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):

- ensure that complaints are fully documented (NMS 4)
- ensure that hazardous substances are securely stored (NMS 26)
- ensure that staff annual appraisal dates are recorded (NMS 30).