

Hebden Green Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Jeffrey Banham
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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

Hebden Green Community Special School is a Cheshire County Council maintained special school for children with physical disabilities and associated medical and sensory needs. It educates children aged between two and 19 years. The residential provision caters only for those from 11 years of age. Different groups stay overnight each week day evening. Although the residential unit can accommodate up to 19 young people the maximum staying on any one night is 12.

The residential unit is staffed by care associates employed by Cheshire County Council and a team of qualified nurses employed by the primary care health trust.

Hebden Green is situated in Winsford, Cheshire, on a small campus of health, educational and residential provision.

Summary

Hebden Green continues to provide high standards of care to young people. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to establishing the needs of young people and promoting their development in order to enable all young people to fulfil their potential. Care and education practices are well integrated and staff provide consistent education, care and support to each young person according to their individual needs. All aspects of the school's operation are monitored and evaluated to ensure young people are well cared for at all times. Staff are trained and effectively supported to provide support to young people who clearly enjoy and respond to the experience that the school offers. Parents trust the school to keep their children safe and to offer them opportunities to enjoy and benefit from the company of their peers.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has taken full account of all the recommendations made at the last inspection and introduced new or revised policies and practices where necessary. Young people, their parents and staff have been given clear information about the policy describing when it may be necessary to search a young person's possessions. The information is contained in the Pupil Guide.

Training for residential care staff on safe and appropriate physical intervention techniques has been provided and more training is planned. Young people's information now contains details about the legal basis of any restrictions of contact between significant adults and young people.

Monitoring visits on behalf of the governing body now take place each half term and a written report is produced.

In addition the school has consulted with young people to introduce a new system for administering medication at meal times so that young people can choose when they are given their medication.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people's health and intimate care needs are identified and assessed at an early stage. Information from parents and other health professionals enables clear and specific health care plans to be produced. These detail how health care issues are to be dealt with. Young people are involved in ways that are appropriate to their age and understanding in compiling the plan and seeking the appropriate advice and treatment.

Staff actively promote young people to take an interest in looking after their health and promote healthy ways of living. Staff make sure that young people have access to and information about health and social issues and support them in using that advice. The school has effective arrangements to secure specialist medical services including psychological and psychiatric advice, treatment and care to children needing these services. The school nursing team provides an effective health care resource and operates a highly developed and reliable medication policy to ensure young people and residential staff have support on hand at all times and that medication is properly managed and administered.

The food provided for the young people shows that staff have a very good understanding of what makes up a healthy balanced diet. Young people see meal times as enjoyable social occasions and accept good standards of behaviour as being normal.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

A significant feature of the service is the extent to which parents trust the school to keep their children safe. One parent said "As a parent of a disabled child I realise how vulnerable they are and as a result I can be a bit over-zealous. However in this area in particular can I say that Hebden Green are wonderful. Personal safety is paramount at Hebden. It is the one place I know I do not need to worry about my child." This comment is typical of the sentiments of parents with children at the school.

The school systems and procedures show a very high regard for the privacy of young people and for maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality about all aspects of young people's lives and care. Young people are very confident that their concerns will be addressed and that they understand the procedure for making any complaint or raising any concern.

The school has very clear procedures for responding to child protection concerns and has very good links with the local safeguarding board. The anti bullying policy and plan for young people missing from the school are clear and robust. Training for staff is regularly updated and young people and their parents confirm that staff give a high priority to keeping young people safe. Young people are actively encouraged to maintain and develop acceptable behaviour to staff and their peers. The management of young people is based on the promotion of positive behaviour. The use of sanctions and restraints is virtually non-existent. The support young people provide for one another, according to their needs and abilities, is a significant feature of the school ethos. Training for staff in safe and appropriate physical intervention techniques is being provided.

The school has robust and effective systems for ensuring the health and safety of young people, staff and visitors. The policies and procedures cover activities both in and outside of the school.

The vetting of staff and visitors is comprehensive and thorough and ensures that all staff are safe to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school's residential provision and activities successfully promote and contribute to young people's educational achievement. There is close liaison between care and education staff and this is fully recognised as supporting individual educational progress. Residential staff give active practical and emotional support to all young people irrespective of their level of abilities and needs.

Young people are actively encouraged to take part in leisure activities both inside the school and in the wider community. The after school sports club, for example, provides young people to enjoy physical activity at a level suitable to their individual abilities and so develop their self esteem. Young people's own interests and hobbies are enthusiastically promoted and encouraged. Young people are given every opportunity to develop social skills and are encouraged to achieve to the best of their abilities and develop their feelings of self worth by committed staff.

The school has explicitly identified how to support individual young people's needs. Staff are fully open to addressing a wide range of possible needs including race, disability, language and the need to protect oneself from exploitation. Young people are clearly very comfortable with staff and demonstrate high levels of trust in them, and enjoyment with them, when in the residential accommodation.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's opinions, and those of their families, are central to the work of the school. Consulting with young people, discussing decisions affecting their welfare and involving them how the school is run is fully integrated into all the practices of the school. Staff demonstrate that they place great value on the views and opinions of young people who themselves confirm that this is the case. The school's quality assurance system is based on the experiences of young people. Their families clearly demonstrate a confidence in the extent and quality of the ways in which the school communicates with and involves them in all aspects of their children's care.

There is a very evident warmth in the relationship between staff and young people. Young people are clearly valued by staff and recognise and value the work that staff do on their behalf. Those young people who are very dependent on staff for all of their care needs are demonstrably relaxed and comfortable in their care.

Each young person has a placement plan that sets out their needs and how they will be met. Parents and carers are central to the drawing up of the plan and are involved at all stages of its implementation. Contact with families is encouraged at all times. Parents are able to meet with school and care staff at any time and visit their children whilst they are in the school. Parents are very comfortable in visiting the school and feel valued and welcomed by all staff.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are given every opportunity and considerable support to take pride in their appearance and develop a sense of self-esteem and self worth. Developing each young person's

potential and promoting self care skills is central to the care practices. The school staff work together as a team to ensure a consistent co-ordinated approach to recognising each young person's needs and maximising their potential. Parents and carers are central to the development of skills and work with the school staff at all times.

The accommodation is well furnished and decorated and equipped to the highest standard. Although most young people share a bedroom it is only for the one night and is clearly part of the positive experience enjoyed by young people when they stay at the school. The school has facilities for young people to play their music, play games with others or watch DVD's. Young people appreciate the opportunity to "chill out." Care staff are sensitive to the needs of young people at all times, particularly for those who are in the initial stages of the overnight stays at the school.

Young people clearly and demonstrably look forward to their stays at the school as part of an enjoyable and socialising experience.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school provides information to parents and other professionals about what it provides and the values and principles upon which its care and education is based. The children's guide has been updated with the participation of young people and provides information relevant to them in formats suitable to their varying communication needs. The system and organisation of young people's records is based on the maintaining of confidentiality of information. This results in files on young people having no clear sense of purpose or ownership. Information can be out of date and not always relevant to the roles of residential staff working with young people. Residential staff, for example, are not aware of the legal status of one young person who is "looked after" by a local authority. However managers demonstrate a continued commitment to reviewing all aspects of the school's operation and respond positively to observations on the practice of file organisation.

The number of staff on duty is always enough to meet the needs of young people, including those with extremely high levels of need. Staff are well supported and supervised and there are high levels of training, regularly updated, to ensure they have the specialist skills and knowledge to carry out their role. When vacancies occur staff from school are used to ensure consistency of care from people who are known and trusted by young people.

The school places a high value on the importance of monitoring and evaluating its practices through every level of its operation. The management team is committed to constant improvement and innovation and involves all members of staff, young people and parents as a standard part of its functioning.

Monitoring visits by the governing body have been carried out every half term as part of the schools response to maintaining quality assurance systems.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Parents feel very positive about the service they and their children receive. This is exemplified by one parent who commented "Hebden Green residential school is by far one of the best, if not the best school we have in Cheshire."

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):

- review the content and structure of young people's files so that they provide residential staff with an effective working tool that can be seen by the young person (NMS 18)