

Holly House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Joanne Vyas
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Head of care	
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Date of last inspection	12 January 2009

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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 boys with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, aged seven to 14 years. 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 pupils 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 pupils to use for trips and activities.

The residential provision consists of two units, each with its 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. Pupils 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 pupils have tea in the residential unit and go home after the evenings activities. Five pupils were using the service, two of which stayed overnight, at the time of the visit and all participated in the inspection.

Summary

The inspector visited this school to complete an announced full inspection where all the key standards were inspected.

This is a good school with many outstanding features. The senior management team are passionate and committed to offering clear direction and leadership to ensure a high quality service for pupils. The staff team are qualified, caring, competent and well supported by each other and the senior management team. Staff are able to provide a high standard of care for pupils and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. Individual needs and aspirations are recognised and plans are in place to address them. The promotion of equality and diversity is good throughout the standards inspected. There are excellent working relationships on behalf of pupils across the school to ensure that the pupil's needs are fully addressed. Pupils are kept active with a good range of sports and activities. A pupil said: 'They look after me and we have fun.' Some minor weaknesses were found within medication procedures.

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 is extremely responsive to issues raised at inspection and has ensured that all recommendations made at the previous inspection have been fully addressed and issues raised at this inspection have already been put in the planning for improvement. At the previous inspection the school was asked to ensure that all complaints are fully documented, that hazardous substances are securely stored and that annual appraisal dates are recorded. The school now complies with all these recommendations.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff are focussed and committed to ensuring a good quality provision for health care for all pupils. As pupils generally reside at their home address, they are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians that are local to them. However, emergency treatment can be accessed at the local hospital. The school also has access to a nurse through the local authority and works closely with mental health services as well as therapists such as speech and language and music therapists. Each pupil has a brief health plan that addresses the needs of pupils.

The safe handling of medication is mostly well managed in this school. The school only use prescribed medication. Only staff who have received training in the safe handling of medication can administer medication. The medication cupboard is secure. Currently medication is not audited and therefore the school does not know how much medication is stored at the school. If any medication should go missing, the school wouldn't necessarily know. The school are looking to remedy this with immediate effect. Also administration procedures should be reviewed in line with best practice.

All accidents are recorded and first aid is given as appropriate. There is a high level of staff who are qualified in first aid and so there is always a member of staff on duty who is trained to give first aid.

Mealtimes are sociable occasions, where a variety of healthy food is served in ample quantities. Pupils all agree that they like the food, 'Yes, we have nice food.' They are given the opportunity to discuss and change menus as well as cook. None of the pupils currently have any special dietary needs or preferences. Theme nights are held throughout the year to celebrate events from different cultures. These include, Christmas, Easter, bonfire night, Halloween and Valentine's day. The school has recently been awarded the healthy school status from the local environmental health department.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils feel safe when boarding at this school. One said, 'Yes, my room is safe and there are people who listen to me when I am upset.' The safety and rights of both staff and pupils are protected. Any safeguarding issues are quickly referred to the appropriate external agencies and agreed action carried out. All staff have received training in safeguarding children which forms part of the school's internal core staff training programme. A more basic training has also been provided for taxi drivers and escorts who transport pupils to and from the school. Staff are competent in their knowledge of the school's safeguarding procedures.

The head teacher has completed a survey of pupils about how safe they feel at the school. Ninety-seven percent of pupils agreed or strongly agreed that they feel safe, respected and comfortable in the company of staff and professionals who visit the school. In the same survey one hundred percent of pupils strongly agreed that they know how to complain and ask for help. Some pupils have experienced incidents of bullying but staff are pro-active and responsive to all bullying behaviour. A bullying survey completed annually aids the school to reduce the incidence of bullying. The high staffing levels, vigilance and working practices adopted by the school also go some way to reducing opportunities for bullying to occur. For example, staff work with pupils to develop their understanding of the diversity of their community and the

importance of tolerance of others. The school has a written procedure for action when pupils are absent without authority. There are very few incidents of absconding from the school and these are dealt with appropriately.

Staff view pupils positively and there is a family atmosphere within the residential units. Emphasis is on reward, and sanctions are only given to help change behaviour rather than control it. The staff team provide strong positive role models. Staff are given training during their induction on physical intervention and this is updated at least annually. Staff said that they always try diffusion and distraction techniques first. Physical intervention is used as a last resort. Staff are aware of each pupil's positive handling plan which clearly states techniques that should be used for each individual before restraint becomes necessary. There is a minimal amount of physical intervention carried out in residence. Risk assessments are in place for all pupils, covering their activities and behaviour. Boundaries between staff and pupils are clear and relationships are excellent. Incidents involving physical intervention are fully recorded on to a data base which enables comprehensive scrutiny to ensure the safety of the pupils.

The privacy of pupils is respected by staff. The living arrangements provide space where they can relax and easily find privacy away from others if they wish. Sensitive information is held securely in the office.

Pupil's issues are not discussed openly.

Pupils are enabled by staff to make complaints. Opportunities exist during the pupil's key worker sessions and school and residential council meetings to make complaints. Pupils also have access to complaints forms and understand the complaints procedure. Complaints are taken seriously and resolved where possible. It is clear from observation and discussion that the school's management team is responsive to issues raised by the pupils and their parents and ensures measures put in place to resolve any issues are effectively communicated. All complaints are appropriately, fairly and sensitively responded to.

There are good recruitment procedures in place. Safety checks are completed and staff only commence employment when they have a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure and two satisfactory references. All visitors sign into the school and must show identification.

The school has comprehensive risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds including fire. All staff are given fire safety training during their induction and then annually. Fire drills are carried out on a regular basis and at different times of the day. Pupils know what to do if they hear the fire alarm. Fire safety equipment is checked regularly and a detailed record kept. Health and safety procedures are robust.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils have excellent relationships with staff. They are involved in lots of well planned and varied activities both in school and in the community which pupils thoroughly enjoy. Pupils help to evaluate the activities each term to see what went well, what didn't go so well and how it benefited them. The evaluated activities help to organise the next term's programme. All pupils are given a choice of activities they would like to do each week. As swimming has been so popular, staff have put it on twice a week to ensure everyone who wants to go, can

go. Staff provide transport home for pupils who would otherwise not be able to access the extended day provision.

Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for pupils. There is excellent communication between residential and teaching staff. They meet at the beginning and end of each day to provide feedback about each pupil. Time is set aside for homework after school where needed and staff help and support pupils with this. Each pupil has a key worker in education as well as one in residence. Key workers meet regularly to discuss the pupil's progress. Appropriate educational documentation is held on individual case files. There is a child-centred approach to care and education.

Individual support is detailed in each pupil's file and observations and discussions with staff showed that staff ensure each pupil's individual needs are fully addressed. This includes identifying any religious and cultural needs a pupil may have.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are able to provide a high standard of care for pupils and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. Pupil's files include a health care plan, a behaviour plan and targets which are linked directly to the objectives set out in the statement of special educational need (SEN). Targets are reviewed each term by pupils, their teaching and residential key workers.

Pupils attend residence for up to four nights a week so most spend the majority of their time at their family home. However, parents said the school communicates with them well, ensuring they are kept up-to-date with their child's progress. They also find the school supportive. Pupils are encouraged to contact their parents/carers each night they stay in residence. Staff contact parents at least weekly.

Admission to residence and leaving is sensitively and comprehensively planned. The school provides comprehensive information to parents and pupils before they board at the school. Pupils start by attending the extended school day activities before deciding when they would like to stay overnight. The decision to board is one made by each pupil. The school has a nurture centre which plays a significant role in introducing pupils back into school life and supporting them with transitions into mainstream school using a therapeutic approach.

Pupils are consulted on a daily basis about issues that affect them in their life at the school. This includes meals, activities and whether or not they want to stay for extended day activities or, indeed, overnight. Pupils have monthly key worker sessions where they discuss their targets which are centred around behaviour but may also include personal hygiene and daily living skills. There are also regular residential and school council meetings where pupils discuss a variety of topics such as respect, activities, health and safety.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Pupils board in a homely environment, with good quality furnishings. There is a fair amount of communal space. The pupils have good facilities. Their bedrooms can be personalised and they

can personalise spaces if they wish and examples of their work is evident throughout the school. The school is clean and tidy and well maintained. Pupils value their school and their surroundings.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The statement of purpose is a comprehensive document and is reviewed on an annual basis. The commitment to promoting equality and diversity is explicit in this information. There are good staffing levels. Both units are staffed at night by staff that sleep overnight. Rotas show there is a gender balance of staff wherever this is possible.

Staff training is well supported by the school. An annual programme covers mandatory training which all staff are expected to undertake. All staff have received equality and diversity training. The majority of residential staff have either National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level three or above. The staff team are qualified, caring, competent and well supported by each other and the senior management team.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. The quality and detail of pupil's plans also supports this commitment. Pupils receive an individual service in the school which is designed to meet their personal needs and aspirations. All staff have a good knowledge of the pupils they are working with ensuring their needs are consistently addressed.

The school ensures the quality of care through rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the service. Pupils are asked to complete annual surveys to capture their views of the school especially around bullying and feeling safe. Surveys are scrutinised and changes made to improve the service. All records are signed by senior managers. Records of attendance, absence without authority, sanctions and physical intervention are closely monitored. The annual development plan sets out the way in which the school wants to develop and how this will be achieved. The senior management team are passionate and committed to offering clear direction and leadership to ensure a high quality service for pupils.

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 policy and written guidance for administering and storing medication is implemented in practice. (NMS 14.17)