

Horton Lodge

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Katarina Djordjevic
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	1 October 2008

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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 57 children who attend the school, 16 of these access the residential provision.

Summary

This was a key announced inspection. The purpose of this inspection was to meet the statutory requirement of one announced inspection visit each year. All key standards were inspected and standards 9, 11, 13, 24, 29 were also inspected. All outcomes are judged as outstanding with the exception of achieving economic well being which is judged as good. No recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection.

This is an outstanding service where the empowerment of children is at the forefront of the care and education provided. Staff are passionate and dedicated to the work that they do. They work tirelessly to ensure children have the maximum opportunities to progress and develop the necessary skills to become as independent as possible. Every effort is made to enable children to achieve their full potential in a safe and nurturing environment where learning in all areas is fun and enjoyed by children. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding throughout the standards inspected. Children are happy and feel safe at the school. Parents have total confidence in the staff team in looking after their children and fully appreciate the obvious commitment of the staff team in improving not only their child's life but the whole family's. In response to what the school does well, one parent commented. 'Excellent balance of security and wellbeing with challenge, learning, exploration and interaction with others - whilst independence is encouraged'.

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 made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children live with their parents and carers, who have overall responsibility for their child's health needs. In partnership with parents and other professionals, staff are totally committed to promoting a healthy lifestyle ensuring the health needs of children are met. The school has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures which include intimate and personal care guidance for staff working with the children. Staff are highly competent in implementing policies and procedures and also receive a wide range of training in a number of health related areas. This helps to promote the health and wellbeing of children. Parents are very confident that staff are competent in meeting the needs of their children and confirm that staff work closely with them. One parent commented, 'I have total trust and knowledge they know what to do in emergencies'.

Children's individual health and intimate care needs are clearly identified and assessed at an early stage. Comprehensive health plans and protocols are in place which are produced in consultation with parents and other relevant health professionals, for example, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists. This collaborative working ensures children's needs are met and identifies health needs which may impact on future outcomes for the child. Care provided actively promotes children's welfare and staff work sensitively and respectfully with children in line with their identified needs. Detailed risk assessments are in place for each child which helps them to grow and develop whilst at the same time being protected from the risk of harm or injury.

Children's health needs are met and protected by highly effective medication policies, procedures and practice guidance which are implemented extremely well. Staff receive training in the administration of medication and are also provided with training for specific medical needs, for example, the management of epilepsy. Robust and meticulous monitoring systems are in place which helps to promote the health and wellbeing of children.

The provision of meals and the promotion of healthy eating is excellent. The school continues to develop initiatives around healthy eating and looking after the environment where children take an active role. For example, children continue to grow and eat their own vegetables which they enjoy and feel a sense of achievement. Children enjoy healthy meals which are varied, nutritional and based on likes, dislikes and specific dietary needs. Parents are consulted about children's likes and dislikes and they receive a copy of the following week's menu each week to ensure dietary needs are met. Children are able to make real and informed choices about food and drink due to the determined efforts of staff and the use of a range of communication methods. Meal times are a relaxed occasion where children learn to develop self-help skills in a fun and supportive environment. Children use aids and equipment based on their individual needs which helps to promote their independence skills. Staff provide various opportunities for children to try different cultural foods.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school provides a safe, secure and nurturing environment as a result of robust safeguarding policies and procedures which are consistently implemented by a committed and tenacious staff team. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities and accountability in safeguarding children. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of children's needs which helps to promote children's welfare and protects them from the risk of harm and abuse.

Children's privacy and dignity is fully respected and promoted. Clear policies and procedures regarding the provision of intimate care are sensitively and consistently implemented, with the emphasis on staff providing a supportive and enabling role rather than 'doing for' the child. This helps children to feel safe and develop their independence skills and confidence.

There is a clear complaints procedure which is also produced in different formats for children to use. Staff receive training in the complaints procedure. Where children are unable to verbally communicate, staff are highly skilled in recognising and interpreting changes in a child's behaviour. In addition to this, innovative and effective communication systems enable children with diverse communication needs to raise any concerns they may. Appropriate records are kept to record complaints received, actions taken and the outcome. No complaints have been received since the last inspection.

Staff receive training in child protection and demonstrate a good knowledge of policies and procedures. The school takes steps to ensure that children who are absent from the school without consent are protected in line with written policy and guidance.

The school's embedded culture of respect for each other helps create a happy environment where children learn about difference and how their actions and behaviours may impact on others. This helps to reinforce the school's anti-bullying policy. High staffing ratios ensure further protection from the risk of any form of bullying. Children are supported to develop socially acceptable behaviour through the encouragement of good behaviour and constructive responses from staff to inappropriate behaviour. Staff present as positive role models and work hard to ensure children understand how their behaviour may impact on others. This helps to prepare children for their future lives and be fully included in the wider community. Restraint and sanctions are very rarely used which is testament to the skills and commitment of the staff team. Appropriate records are kept as required.

The management of health and safety is excellent which clearly supports the school's commitment to providing a safe and secure environment for children and staff. This is attributed to clear and effective policies and procedures; the provision of a range of health and safety training for staff; detailed risk assessments which are regularly reviewed; regular servicing and maintenance of equipment and installations and robust and effective monitoring systems. Regular fire safety tests including drills are carried out as required.

Children are protected from the risk of harm or abuse by comprehensive, robust policies, procedures and guidance for vetting staff, volunteers and visitors which well exceed the minimum requirements set out in legislation. The recruitment of the right individual for the job is always seen as much more important than filling a vacancy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential provision is an extension of the 24 hour curriculum where children are enabled to further develop their skills and experiences in order to enjoy and achieve their full potential. This is achieved by the different disciplines within the school including education, care, nursing and therapy staff providing a seamless and consistent service. Each child has targets which compliment the targets set in their statement of special education needs and individual education plan. Children's achievements, no matter how big or small, are enthusiastically celebrated. Communication between all disciplines in the school and with parents is excellent which ensures

children's learning and educational needs are met. Staff at the school continue to provide wider support to parents and mainstream provisions. This encourages attitudinal changes, promotes acceptance of diversity of children with disabilities and inclusion within the community. A parent commented, 'The social part of the service is just as important as the education side, it is making our daughter much more confident and mature'.

Children are provided with a range of opportunities to engage in purposeful activities within school and the local community. This helps children to have fun as well as learn and build up their skills and self-confidence. In addition to having fun, as part of their development children learn how to relate socially to others around them and how to develop positive and respectful relationships. Activities take into account their race, culture, language and communication needs, religion, interests, abilities and disabilities. Children also actively engage in activities which helps them develop an awareness of different cultures and celebrate different religious festivals. Appropriate risk assessments are in place and are reviewed when necessary.

Exceptional relationships exist between children and staff. This results from a culture of mutual respect and belief that children should be given every opportunity and support to achieve their full potential in life. Staff are highly motivated in ensuring that each child's needs are appropriately identified and that the right support is given to children. Staff work tenaciously to help children develop and access different methods of communication to enable them to make day to day choices and contribute to their future lives. Two independent advocates visit the school regularly which gives the children the opportunity to raise any concerns they may have. The diverse backgrounds and experiences of the advocates ensure children are given a wide range of support and further enhances the safeguards for children at the school. The school takes the role of the advocates very seriously and see this as part of the quality assurance systems within the school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Empowerment of children is at the forefront of the school's philosophy. To this aim staff work tirelessly to provide every opportunity to enable children to make choices and decisions about their day to day life wherever possible. A range of communication methods based on individual needs are used and staff are continuously exploring different methods of communication to ensure all children have equality of opportunity to exercise their rights. Children's views and preferences are regularly sought, including menu content, furnishings and activities. This helps children feel valued and increases their self-esteem.

Children experience well planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes. Placements at the school are decided by the area resource panel which comprises of a multi-disciplinary team based on a holistic assessment of need. The school works closely with the child, their parents and carers and other relevant professionals to ensure the admission process is a positive experience for children. The school works closely with all future schools to ensure a smooth transition period for the child.

Each child has a detailed placement plan and other relevant care records such as behaviour plans and risk assessments. These records fully inform staff about the child's needs and how to meet them. Records are reviewed as and when needed. Children are supported to have contact with family and friends which is given a high priority by staff to ensure children feel settled at the school. Staff fully recognise the importance of regular communication with

families which helps to ensure children receive an excellent level of care and support. One parent commented, 'I know I can ring anytime as the relationship with the staff is excellent'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The head teacher recognises the limitations of the building and there is an ongoing refurbishment programme to improve all facilities in the school. Every effort is made by staff to make the best of the building to provide a comfortable and pleasant environment for children to stay in. As a result, children stay in a school that is well-decorated and maintained to a good standard. Children are enabled to be proactive in choosing décor, furnishings and equipment which truly reflects their individual personalities and interests. For example, an excellent piece of work has been undertaken since the last inspection to enable children to choose the décor for their rooms. As a result children are delighted with the bedrooms they stay in which helps them feel safe, settled and helps to reduce feelings of homesickness. There are sufficient and appropriately adapted bathrooms and toilets which take into account the children's needs for privacy, dignity and safety.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

This is an exceptional school where children receive a high level of care and education based on their individual assessed needs. The school's management team are absolutely committed to ensuring that children are supported to develop and reach their full potential and become accepted and valued members of society. The dynamic and inspirational management team provide clear direction and leadership which results in a highly-motivated and innovative staff team. As a result, children are able to learn, develop, have fun and feel safe and secure. Care and education provided is in line with the school's statement of purpose.

Children are happy at the school and parents are very happy with the education and care provided. Parents are full of praise and truly grateful for the commitment and determination shown by staff in enabling their children to make progress and enjoy life as much as possible.

The school has a clear statement of purpose which accurately describes what the school sets out to do for children and how they will meet the needs of the children. The children's guide gives all required information to children and their families on the services available.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The underlying ethos and practice at the school is based on the belief that children, regardless of abilities and disabilities, can co-exist within the wider community and have valuable contributions to make to society. Staff present as positive role models treating all people with respect and welcome difference. Staff are committed to promoting inclusion which requires them to challenge and promote attitudinal change. Children are provided with various opportunities to experience and learn about other people's differences in terms of race, religion, culture, sex, age and disabilities. The work undertaken by staff in promoting equality and diversity for children with disabilities has been recognised nationally. The school has been featured in the Government Equalities Office publication, 'Diverse Britain 2008. The Changing Face of a Nation' as an example of best practice in 'Health and Community Care'.

Children are looked after by staff who fully understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. Staffing levels, based on the needs of children, provide appropriate levels of supervision for children to ensure they are safe and that their needs are met. Photographs of staff on duty are displayed in Kiplings to inform children who will be working with them.

The school is highly committed to staff training and development. Professional development is seen as key to improving the range of skills and knowledge of individual staff members as well as the whole staff team which ultimately benefits the children. All staff, including domestic and ancillary, are provided with a range of training to ensure staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children. The majority of care staff have the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. There is a thorough induction programme for new staff which helps protect and safeguard children. New staff are fully supported by established team members. One staff member commented that they never felt like a 'newcomer' and that it did not matter how many times they asked questions. New staff spend time shadowing experienced staff. They are not allowed to work alone with children including providing personal care until they have successfully completed their probationary period. Staff receive regular supervision and attend regular team meetings. Staff feel valued and listened to as they are regularly consulted about changes in policies and procedures and in the development and review of the school's development plan.

The school has a clear but fluid vision. The dynamism of the whole staff team ensures that they are constantly striving to improve the quality of services provided to children and their families. The quality assurance systems are thorough and exceptionally effective in monitoring standards and identifying areas for improvements. The wide range of methods used to monitor practices and systems enable the management team to obtain an accurate picture of the quality of care and education provided. Monthly visits are also undertaken by a representative from the local authority and reports produced. These visits are robust and compliment the internal monitoring systems to ensure children receive a high standard of care and education in a safe and secure environment.

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

There are no recommendations.