

Hamilton Lodge School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Paul Taylor
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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

Hamilton Lodge School is a co-educational residential school which caters for pupils between the ages of five and eighteen years of age and who are profoundly deaf. The main form of communication used in the school is British Sign Language (BSL). Pupils board on a weekly basis and are expected to return home for weekends. The school is situated in a residential area of Brighton. The boarding units are adjacent to the main school site.

Summary

At this inspection all the key standards were assessed. The school provides high quality care which meets the individual needs of all the pupils who board. The variety of health needs are addressed in a detailed and carefully thought through process and the safety and well-being of pupils is promoted to an excellent standard.

The community ethos in the school enables pupils to have a sense of belonging and ensures that they do not feel isolated. Activities provided for the pupils combined with support from the staff team ensures that the pupils are able to be part of the community and to develop their skills and life experience in a positive and constructive manner. It is clear that the pupils' opinions are encouraged and valued and that this helps them develop their sense of belonging to their school community.

The school gives pupils an opportunity to experience education and school life as a positive part of their lives, previous educational placements for most pupils, being seen as negative and isolating. One pupil reported that 'this is the top school in the world.'

One recommendation was made as a result of this inspection. This relates to ensuring that the effectiveness of sanctions are more consistently recorded.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection one recommendation was made relating to ensuring that central records, such as incidents and restraints could be more accessible and easier to cross reference. This has been achieved. All key records are now very well organised.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Each pupil has a health plan in place which details information about medical history and current health needs. The school has clear guidance and training for staff to ensure they have experience and knowledge when assisting the pupils to take their medication. The school nurse offers oversight and expertise in the areas of medication, first aid and treatment. The systems in place are comprehensive. The nurse monitors administration and storage of medication thoroughly and conscientiously. All of the pupils have written consent for medical treatment. Medical appointments are available to the pupils with health care professionals. Specialist health advice and guidance is readily available from health professionals such as an audiologist, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, visual impairment service and educational psychologist.

Each pupil has a comprehensive package of care in place which addresses their health needs in a detailed and thorough manner.

The impact of these arrangements ensures that each pupil's emotional and physical well-being is promoted to an excellent standard.

The food offered to the pupils is varied and healthy. The catering staff are well aware of any specific dietary needs whether these are based on religious, cultural or medical grounds. The nurse and the catering manager meet to ensure that specific dietary needs are identified. The pupils are offered a choice of menus and some have the opportunity to prepare meals in their living areas, as part of the development of their life skills. The menu gives the pupils the opportunity to enjoy foods from a variety of different cultural backgrounds. They can voice their opinions about the food and their preferences in formal settings, such as the school council, and informally with tutors and care staff. The catering manager also meets with the headteacher twice every half term to discuss the quality of food and pupil preferences. The catering team are very well managed and organised and ensure that high a quality of food is provided to all the young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The privacy of pupils is respected by staff and any confidential matters are discussed in private. Staff always ensure that the pupils are aware that they wish to enter a room, for example by switching a light on a off, bearing in mind that the pupils are deaf and will not hear someone knocking on their door. All toilets and showers offer privacy. Confidential information relating to pupils is kept in appropriately secure facilities.

Pupils are able to make complaints on a formal and informal basis. Formal complaints are addressed promptly and records made of how they were resolved. They have numerous individuals to whom they can make representation such as care staff, teaching staff, independent visitor, governors and senior members of staff. It is clear that the pupils' views are valued and encouraged whether related to complaints or comments on how the school is being run.

Robust systems ensure that any child protection concerns are addressed rigorously and promptly. The member of staff responsible for monitoring child protection issues plays a key part in this process and ensures that all necessary agencies are informed promptly of any issues. All members of staff receive child protection training and are aware of what to do in the event that they have concerns about a pupil's welfare.

Clear messages are given to the pupils that bullying is not accepted. Emphasis is placed on close supervision and support of the pupils who are assessed as particularly needing it. The staff team know the pupils very well and are aware of dynamics and tensions when they arise. Caring for each other is a tenet strongly embedded in the ethos of the school and pupils will inform members of staff if they have concerns about another pupil or if they witness behaviour which could constitute bullying. An embedded positive culture ensures that bullying is not a problem for pupils in the school.

Staff closely monitor the movement of pupils throughout the day. The school has an appropriate 'absence without authority' policy which details the measures to be taken by staff in the event of a pupil going missing. All pupils are reminded of the importance of informing staff of their

movements and the potential dangers associated with the nearby road. The staff are very sensitive to the differing needs of pupils and which ones are particularly vulnerable if they are unsupervised in the community. A carefully prepared independent travel scheme enables pupils to develop their travel skills in the community. No pupils have gone missing since the last inspection.

The promotion of positive behaviour and the development of pupils social skills is planned for in a detailed and thorough manner. Clear individual support plans are developed using multi-disciplinary input from relevant members of staff such as care, teaching and medical. Each pupil's individual needs and idiosyncrasies are known and met in a cohesive and highly professional manner. Weekly multi-disciplinary meetings are held to review support plans for pupils who may need extra support at any given time.

Positive behaviour and achievements are celebrated and rewarded by the whole school community, for example, by receiving a certificate in a school assembly, having a letter sent home and being mentioned in the school's weekly newsletter.

If sanctions are imposed, a record is made of this and monitored by senior members of staff to ensure that the sanctions are relevant and fair. Effectiveness of sanctions is not consistently recorded.

Physical restraint is very rarely used. If an incident occurs whereby physical control has been used, a record is made of this and checked by senior members of staff.

Students, staff and visitors are safeguarded through detailed robust health and safety procedures. Fire safety procedures are stringent. This includes a range of fire drills and routine servicing of fire appliances and equipment. General health and safety risk assessments are kept up to date for ensuring the safety of staff and pupils at all times. Risk assessments are completed with regards to activities as well as individual behaviours or vulnerabilities shown by some pupils. Health and safety records are maintained to a high standard. This includes evidence of tests and checks for key procedures such as water safety, electrical appliances and records required under COSHH (control of substances hazardous to health). The organisation of safety records and the monitoring of them ensures that pupils' and staff safety are promoted to an excellent standard.

The recruitment of staff is robust and ensures that all necessary checks are carried out before they commence work. Members of staff who work on site under contract for a different organisation, such as catering staff, have their records checked by the school to ensure their veracity and relevance. The method of monitoring staff recruitment records is stringent and conscientious.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The culture of the school ensures pupils receive excellent support and guidance to enable them to engage fully in their education. Pupils who are resident at the school are seen as an integral part of its function; the majority of pupils currently reside there. Communication across the school is good with information passing readily between education and care staff. Since the last inspection attempts have been made to improve communication further including greater use of the staff intranet system.

The school provides pupils with a considerable number of opportunities to engage and participate in activities and pursuits. Activities are seen as a vibrant and important aspect of the school day with a good balance being found between learning, enjoyment and exercise. Pupils can choose a number of after school activities including football, arts and craft, swimming and interactive computer games. The school are an active member of the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme with pupils recently achieving silver awards. Emphasis is placed on encouraging pupils to be part of the local community and to integrate with their peers with many trips taking place in the surrounding area.

Pupils receive outstanding levels of individual support, guidance and care. Key working practices are a vital component of care with named staff focusing specifically on the needs of the pupils in their charge. Staff clearly understand the needs of pupils and as a result are able to respond swiftly when they are showing signs of stress, frustration or unhappiness. Coupled with their hearing impairment many pupils have additional needs which are addressed as part of a holistic approach. A wide range of expert advice and guidance is readily available which allows for the whole needs of each pupil to be considered and planned for.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

An excellent and inclusive approach ensures pupils are given considerable opportunities to express their views, opinions and wishes. A school council exists which, by nature of the numbers of pupils also staying at the school, ensures the views of all pupils are very well represented. Weekly council meetings are held with whole school issues discussed such as food, homework and the needs of wildlife living on the school grounds. It is clear the culture of the school promotes the empowerment of pupils. Pupils display a sense of pride and responsibility and feel a part of decisions made about them and the school in which they learn and live.

The needs of pupils are fully assessed and considered prior to the point of admission. The views of pupil are listened to while parents are actively engaged in the admission and care planning process. Integrated education plans take into account the needs of each pupil notably their social, emotional and behavioural issues and their need to develop their communication. Care plans clearly describe how such needs should be met providing staff with clear guidance as to how this is to be achieved. The approach by the school is clearly holistic with communication, learning and self-esteem a guiding principle of each placement. The dynamics of peer groups are addressed in detail to ensure the needs of each new pupil are acknowledged and met.

Pupils are able to keep good contact with family, carers and friends. Pupils who board stay during the week, with regular contact maintained between the school and parents and carers when necessary. Most pupils have their own mobile phones, while contact can be further maintained via internet access and minicom systems. Key workers have weekly contact with parents and carers with communication seen as fundamental to the care task. No pupil raised concerns regarding contact.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The members of staff responsible for the maintenance of the school premises work extremely hard to ensure that the quality of the premises is maintained to a high level. Monitoring systems

operated by senior members of staff ensure that the quality and cleanliness of the accommodation is regularly reviewed and assessed.

A major change to boarding arrangement has recently been achieved, with the male boarders swapping accommodation with the female boarders. Pupils were able to voice their preferences with regards to décor and this was achieved to a very high standard before the move was completed. Both male and female boarders have been very positive about the change in their accommodation.

The premises have been assessed by mobility officers, occupational therapists or specialists such as visual impairment officers to ensure that the specific needs of students are met.

The attention to detail in the maintenance of the site combined with pupils' views being seen as central to issues such as décor, has ensured that a very high standard of accommodation is provided.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has a prospectus and website which describes what it intends to deliver and the underlying ethos behind the running of the school. All the pupils have an information leaflet which describes what it is like to live in the school.

The school's staffing arrangements ensure the welfare of pupils is protected and promoted to an excellent standard. Staffing levels provide appropriate supervision both on- and off-site and to support pupils in relation to their assessed individual needs. Pupils benefit from the continuity of care provided by close working achieved between both teaching and a well established and stable care team.

Training for the staff team is regular. The primary thrust of the training is centred around mandatory areas such as first aid and child protection. There is a rolling programme for National Vocational Training (NVQ) at level 3 in caring for children and young people and over 80% of the staff team have achieved this qualification or an equivalent.

Staff receive on going support from senior members of staff on a formal and informal basis. Members of staff report that senior members of staff are approachable and operate an 'open door' policy and that the established team work very well together. The care team meet on a daily basis so that key information is shared. A weekly meeting with the whole staff team including teachers, ensures that any incidents of note are passed on so that the young people can receive the support and attention that they need.

Senior members of staff regularly monitor and endorse key records such as risk assessments, records of sanctions and restraints, minutes of meetings and any significant incidents and accidents. The senior management team is very experienced and includes key members of staff from different areas such as education, care and finance. They meet regularly to ensure that the school is operating in a cohesive manner and that any issues of note are shared promptly and effectively. The small size of the school means that key members of staff are able to quickly respond to any issues, such as individual pupils coming to note or struggling within the school.

The school has an active board of governors who meet regularly and also visit the school on a very regular basis. Visits undertaken by the chair of governors are the subject of detailed reports which include recommendations and suggestions for improvement.

Promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The individual needs of each young person are known, valued and promoted. Care planning is detailed and carefully thought through and reflects the individual needs of each pupil whether based on culture, belief or disability. The approach of the staff and ethos in the school ensures that young people are able to learn about differences in culture, beliefs and background and that differences are to be enjoyed and celebrated.

The systems operated in the school together with close communication achieved between key members of staff, ensure that the care of the young people is monitored and promoted to an excellent standard.

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 effectiveness and consequences of any sanction are recorded consistently. (breach of national minimum standard 10.14)