

Horton Lodge

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Martha Nethaway
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Date of last inspection	15/10/2009

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 grounds. 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 61 children who attend the school, 25 of these access the residential provision.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was a full announced inspection that concentrated on the key national minimum standards. The overall judgement in this report is based on the standards inspected within the relevant Every Child Matters outcome groups.

The overall quality rating for this setting remains at outstanding. This school provides an excellent, safe and caring environment where children are making really strong progress. Children are benefiting from the outstanding focus on a highly collaborative and holistic approach. The residential, teaching and different professional therapies work together highly effectively because of close liaison about and benefits of the different therapeutic approaches. The dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of staff underpins the strong ethos and culture of the school. This provides a highly consistent quality of care, support and education. All aspects of a child's development are carefully considered throughout the day because children learn through experience and activity. Their physical, academic, personal and social development are all brought together in an integral programme which both stimulates and motivates children.

There are no recommendations being set as a result of this inspection visit.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations set at the inspection visit.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy good physical, emotional, and mental health. All children are living at home and their parents meet the health needs of their child. The school collaborates with parents to ensure that a consistent approach with managing health care needs is achieved. Children benefit because of staff promotion of physical activity across the evening and morning routines. Staff are highly professional and are patient, willing and warm at all times.

Children live in a healthy environment, staff identify and promote the health and intimate care needs of each child. The school actively promotes the health care of each child and meets any health needs. All children have in place a care plan that clearly assesses each child's ability and the areas they require staff support, help and guidance. Staff have access to a full range of policies and procedures that promote children's health care and well-being. Children further benefit from accessing the excellent level of professional resources at the school, such as physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, an educational psychologist and advisory teachers.

Children's health needs are met and their welfare is safeguarded by the school's policies and procedures for administering medicines and providing treatment. The school nurse co-ordinates everyday care and medication across the school and works closely with the residential provision. The school nurse also co-ordinates and links with the school doctor so that on-going medical matters can be monitored effectively. Children also have regular access to an audiologist, orthoptist and a dentist who supply regular support and monitor all health related matters. The safe management of medication is highly effective because of the excellent systems in place. Staff are highly accomplished because of the continual monitoring and reviewing taking place by the school nurse. This helps to minimise risks to children.

Children enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that take account of their health, racial and cultural requirements. Hot meals are cooked on the premises by a dedicated catering team and menus are sent to the child's home. Since the last inspection, the school has been awarded the national healthy schools programme for the 'enhanced healthy schools award' which delivers measurable improvement in the health and well-being of children. The school's healthy eating programme includes a range of fresh fruits for the children on a daily basis. Throughout the day children are encouraged to drink water. Mealtimes are occasions where children are encouraged to be as independent as possible. Some children are able to eat on their own whereas other children need some assistance from staff. Each child has a mealtime checklist that

outlines the specific details of the mealtime routine. Staff are excellent at providing children with opportunities to develop key skills such as a greater awareness of position and posture and hand eye-co-ordination so that children are in the best position for eating. Staff are able to provide highly effective support to children who have dysphagia which is related to swallowing difficulties. For example, staff will assist children who are unable to support their own heads. Children benefit because they also have access to special plates, bowls, cups and adapted cutlery and dining room furniture to meet their needs. This access to equipment and utensils enhances the child's sense of self-reliance and independence.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The system in place to promote the safety and welfare of children is outstanding. The school has in place highly effective policies and procedures that promote excellent care and support. These directly address areas related to staff recruitment, counteracting bullying, unauthorised absence, complaints, behaviour management and health and safety. Staff offer a dynamic approach so that children's needs can be met successfully. All children take part in a variety of physical programmes so they increase their learning opportunities.

Staff are respectful of a child needs. This is demonstrated through their work because they preserve a child's dignity and respect with a high level of privacy, choice and control appropriate to the child's age and situation. Staff make sure that practice in personalised care is always highly consistent.

The school provides a comprehensive complaints policy, known to and understood by staff, parents and children. The school regularly reviews the accessibility of the complaints process. For example, a recent newsletter highlighted to parents and significant stakeholders further information about the complaints process at the school. The school openly welcomes feedback about the quality of care provided in the residential provision. The school regularly receives feedback which is very complementary about the high quality of the care in the residential provision.

Staff have a great awareness of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This is underpinned by a clear programme of continual training in child protection and safeguarding. The lead staff members for child protection have received appropriate training for this role. All staff demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from allegations of misconduct by closely following the school's codes of good practice.

Children are protected from bullying. They develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate. One member of staff commented, 'The school completed an anti-bullying week, learning and thinking about their own feelings and being kind to our friends.' The school communicates effectively, a child-friendly and accessible anti-bullying ethos.

Children are provided with excellent levels of supervision and their whereabouts are always known to staff. There are no occasions where a child would go missing from the school.

Relationships between staff and the children are positive and polite. Staff are highly adept at recognising children's efforts of good and thoughtful behaviours. Staff ensure that rewards play an important part in helping children achieve appropriate behaviours. This is demonstrated through the successful learning and behavioural environment. For example, children are provided with a structured environment which visually communicates sequences and events and assists with empowering children to manage their own behaviours. As a consequence, children experience consistent staff approaches and have predictable routines for everything that they do. Staff are highly successful at teaching children skills in a variety of settings. There are no occasions where staff have to use physical interventions or sanctions to manage children's behaviour.

The residential provision provide excellent physical safety and security for children. Staff clearly understand that their involvement is an important part of managing health and safety within the residential environment. There is a comprehensive health and safety procedure and effective implementation of risk assessments. Risk assessments are reviewed as circumstances change. The school ensures that there is a systematic review of health and safety matters based on information obtained through monitoring and auditing by the quality assurance programme. As a result, senior management take the lead by providing visible and active support and commitment.

Children's protection and safety is promoted through clear and thorough systems of recruitment and selection. Detailed records are maintained of the selection process which ensures that all staff appointed have undergone rigorous checks and are suitable to work in the school.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children attend and enjoy school. Children benefit from the inspired focus given to the 24-hour curriculum. The extended curriculum provides a range of purposeful activities which are integral to the child's individual education plan. Children get the most out of life and enjoy recreation. There are a number of differentiated activities to meet the child's individual needs. These include a range of clubs such as, sensory, sports, cookery, pet care, hydrotherapy swimming, art and crafts. This demonstrates that children are being provided with opportunities to extend their personal interests and experiences and to have the social opportunity to interact with the wider peer group in a range of inclusive settings and situations.

The school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school. The broad and balanced curriculum is differentiated to meet the needs of every child. The curriculum is achieved through 'Conductive Education' which delivers

support for the child's physical and academic needs. Children receive exemplary support when they need it. The setting of children's targets emphasize every step to success and these are incorporated to work across the school and residential provision.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. No child is assumed unable to communicate their views. Consultation happens in a range of ways and this is demonstrated by how children are able to successfully use different communication aids such as, symbols, photographs and electronic communication aids. For example, children actively participate in the residential forum meetings and the school council. The 'voice' of the child is represented because of the consultation embedded in the school's culture. Staff work endlessly to communicate this to children. As a result of listening to children the school has made improvements, for example, purchasing new equipment and changing the menus by adding new dishes suggested by children.

Children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes. The school has in place comprehensive admissions criteria. Placements at the school are decided by a panel. Staff work with the child, their parents and carers and other relevant professionals to ensure the smooth admission process. The school works closely with all future schools in the next step of the child's education.

Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school. The new care plans are comprehensive and reflect the work that is taking place in the residential and school environment. One staff member commented, 'The care plans are a consistent approach to the child's learning.'

In accordance with their wishes, children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while living away from home. Children have access to a speaker phone at all times and parents can contact their child during the evening if they prefer. Staff complete home and school diaries so that the child's welfare and progress is being communicated effectively in relation to day to day progress and activities of their child. Parents are also encouraged to attend open evenings, sports events, concerts and fairs. Sign language classes are held regularly throughout the year

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Children live in well designed and pleasant premises, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs and to contribute to their development. Since the last inspection, the residential provision has had a significant building and improvement programme. Throughout this programme children were consulted and made choices

about the colour schemes, equipment and soft furnishings. All of the five bedrooms have been redecorated, the communal areas have been refurbished and a new conservatory dining area has been built. All the bathrooms have been newly refurbished and extended to have overhead tracking hoists to assist with children's transfers from wheelchairs. Children can bathe and take care of their personal needs with privacy and dignity. Daily life in the school provides opportunities for learning and practicing independent living skills so children are ready for leaving the school. The school is well resourced and children are able to access an indoor heated swimming pool. Children are also able to use the food technology area, and the gym and sensory garden during the evenings times. Across the year children also visit restaurants, go bowling and ice skating.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Leadership and management at the school is outstanding. The leadership management team lead effectively and have a clear vision of the direction of the provision ensuring that children are always at the centre of change and development. Senior management ensure effective delegation of roles within the staff teams. The school is able to meet its aims of providing a high quality, broad and balanced curriculum individualised to meet the needs of the child. One parent commented, 'An excellent facility.'

Children benefit from meticulous communication between boarding staff and educational staff. Effective links over matters such as, children's physical health needs ensures that their holistic needs are well supported and met. Staff are committed to providing high quality care.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. All children are encouraged to achieve their full potential, whatever their ability. The school meets its aim of all children in school having social inclusion opportunities and joint activities with mainstream schools which are an important part of school life.

Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding. Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare. The senior management team spend time, work and effort to develop a cohesive residential team. There is a great deal of thought, care and attention given to ensuring that all team members give their best across the 24-hour curriculum. This demonstrates that the whole-team effort is maximised. One parent summed this up, 'Residential provides an excellent opportunity for our child. Continuity between school and residential is brilliant.'

Children receive the care and services they need from competent staff. The school has a high ratio of qualified and trained staff to meet the needs of the children. Children and staff enjoy the stability of an efficiently run school. Senior managers are

adept at making an accurate and honest assessment of the key strengths and areas for improvement in the school.

The school is ably supported by an effective governing body who take an active interest in the outcomes for children. The governing body is supportive and dedicated to the school.