

Hebden Green Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Paul Gillespie
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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

Hebden Green Community Special School is a local authority maintained 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 year 6. Different groups stay overnight between Monday and Thursday. Although the residential unit can accommodate up to 20 young people the maximum staying on any one night is 12.

The residential unit is staffed by care staff employed by the local authority and a team of qualified nurses employed by the primary care health trust.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This inspection was announced and took place over two days. Throughout the inspection period young people and staff were extensively consulted. Without exception all comments were positive and complimentary. Young people feel safe and well supported. Many feel that this school meets their needs exceptionally well.

The impression this school conveys is of a staff team, under strong leadership, working extremely well together in the best interests of the young people. The teaching, nursing and care staff support and complement each other and work effectively to enable young people to benefit, as much as possible, from their time at the school. The residential provision enhances opportunities for young people by building their confidence and developing social participation and communication. This, along with developing key skills, helps to prepare young people for adulthood.

During this inspection some areas for further improvement were identified and three recommendations are included in this report. Senior staff responded very positively to the inspection feedback, demonstrating a clear commitment to further improve outcomes for young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

Three recommendations were made at the last inspection carried out in March 2010. These recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed. Action has been taken to ensure that the procedures for the management and administration of controlled drugs are thorough and safe: the nursing team have reviewed all medication procedures to ensure higher standards of practice and safety. Greater attention has been given to ensure that health records remain secure and confidential. Following the provision of further training opportunities, 85% of care staff have now achieved

a National Vocational Qualification at level 3. The above actions confirm the schools' commitment to reviewing and improving standards to benefit young people in its care.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

All children and young people are encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle. Staff are very effective in helping young people to make informed choices and to develop increasing awareness and responsibility for their own health and well-being.

Children and young people attending this school have complex and diverse health and personal needs. They have access to high levels of on-site nursing and therapy services provided by the local primary care trust. Information from parents and health professionals enables clear and specific health care plans to be produced for each individual. Young people are also involved in developing their care plan in ways that are appropriate to their age and understanding.

Staff ensure young people have access to and information about a broad range of health resources. For example, the school can secure specialist medical services including psychological and psychiatric services. Very close links are maintained between health professionals, residential and teaching staff, promoting effective communication of young people's health and personal care needs. This is an outstanding feature of this school and ensures that young people's diverse needs are effectively identified and met.

The school nursing team also takes responsibility for the safe management of medication, ensuring young people and residential staff are well supported. The majority of medication is administered by qualified nurses, but care staff are also provided with pertinent training to administer emergency medication, should this be required when a nurse is not on duty between 6.00pm and 9.30pm.

The residential unit offers a balanced, varied and nutritious diet to young people. Healthy eating is promoted and young people are offered choice at all mealtimes. Young people's views about menu plans are sought on a regular basis and adjustments made. Care staff responsible for the preparing the evening meal are particularly responsive to young people's likes and dislikes. Older young people are actively supported to shop, prepare and cook meals. Mealtimes are positive, relaxed and social occasions, during which children and young people are given discrete encouragement and assistance.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The service has excellent policies and procedures in place to promote the safety and well-being of children and young people. Staff are thorough and competent in their

practices, providing a safe and nurturing experience for young people while at school and during overnight stays.

Staff respect young people's privacy. A good balance is maintained between promoting privacy and the need to ensure that young people who board receive adequate supervision. Staff are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and information is treated and stored appropriately.

There is an established and comprehensive complaint procedure in place. Information is on display and young people know how to make a complaint. The complaints process is highly developed and child-centred. Information is available in different formats. Staff are very open to listening to concerns and comments expressed by young people. Children and young people confirm that they feel confident in raising any concerns they might have with staff and that these will be treated seriously.

The school has very clear procedures for responding to child protection concerns and has very good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff respond in a professional way to any allegations or serious concerns raised. There is an holistic approach to the safety and well-being of young people as a result of the close working and effective communication of the schools multi-disciplinary team.

Young people say bullying is not an issue in the residential unit. However, staff act quickly in response to any information that bullying might be taking place. Young people are actively encouraged to maintain and develop acceptable behaviour both with their peers and staff. The whole school works together effectively to promote socially acceptable behaviour. The management of young people is based on the promotion of positive behaviour. Neither sanctions nor restraints have been needed to maintain good order in the school.

There are continual improvements made to the physical environment to improve comfort and safety for young people. There are risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds, young people's behaviours and activities. There is an effective system in place for ensuring all specialist equipment and electrical and gas appliances are regularly checked and serviced. Fire safety matters are also given good attention, although school records do not adequately record fire awareness sessions that take place among staff and young people in the residential unit.

The vetting of staff and visitors is comprehensive, ensuring that all staff are safe to work with children and young people. However staff files are poorly organised.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people are supported to develop skills and confidence in a range of educational, domestic and social situations. Staff are highly motivated and committed to enabling young people to reach their personal targets. The excellent

relationships that exist between young people and staff across the school and residential unit result in highly effective and individualised care.

The school's residential provision successfully complements and contributes to young people's personal achievements. Staff across the school and residential service work extremely well together in the best interests of every young person. Residential staff make significant contributions to each young person's educational progress by supporting teaching with practical experience, homework support and confidence building.

Young people are actively supported by staff to take part in a wide range of leisure activities, including sport and crafts. The school's new immersive learning space is extremely popular with young people and staff alike and provides many different enjoyable learning experiences. For example, on one of the evenings of the inspection, young people participated in a virtual trip to the seaside via train and aeroplane travel. Their individual hobbies and interests are encouraged and facilitated and this is effective in enabling young people to feel more confident about staying overnight away from home. One young person explained: 'I think resi (residential stay) is good. The dinners are nice. The Dr Who theme night was brilliant.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are very committed to providing children and young people with opportunities to make a positive contribution and feel valued. Young people are encouraged to be involved in decision making both about their daily lives and also in the development and running of the school, including the residential service. As well as the school council, all young people who board have the opportunity to attend a residential meeting each term.

Highly positive relationships exist between staff and young people. These are based on mutual respect and open communication. This is an outstanding feature of the service. This view was confirmed during extensive observations and through discussions with young people and staff. Residential staff are sensitive to the needs of young people at all times, particularly for those who are being introduced to overnight stays at the school.

Staff support parents well and work hard to maintain excellent communication. They have a thorough insight into the differing needs and wishes of both young people and their parents. Young people only stay one night each week, so home contact is not a significant issue, but it is facilitated when needed. As far as possible residential staff maintain home routines, such as bedtime routines, if requested by parents, while also offering young people opportunities they may not always have at home. One young person said: 'I like staying overnight each week so I can sleep over with my friends and do fun things with them after school'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The residential living areas provide a comfortable and safe environment. Arrangements are in place to support older young people in their preparations for leaving school. For example staff assist young people in acquiring an appropriate range of skills such as using taxis, budgeting, shopping, cooking and other domestic tasks.

All young people receive assistance and support to plan for their future when they will leave school. Most young people remain at school until they are nineteen years old and continue to access the residential resource to work more intensely on developing their skills. The school prides itself on ensuring that its young people are confident and well prepared for the next stage in their life. External agencies, social workers and families all work with the school and young person to plan and prepare for their transition.

The accommodation is well furnished and decorated. It is equipped to the highest standard, with a vast range of specialist equipment to meet diverse physical and health needs. The displaying of staff notices in some areas used by young people detracts from its overall homeliness. Although most young people share a bedroom this is seen positively by young people as being part of the sleep over experience. There are facilities for young people to play music, games or watch television and they can also access school facilities and the immersive learning centre.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The residential resource within this special school is an intrinsic part of what the school can offer its pupils. The head of the residential unit is very experienced and the staff team work exceptionally well together. Clear leadership is provided by both the head of care and headteacher who work closely to ensure that all the needs of each young person are met. The management ethos is open, inclusive and progressive. A particularly strong feature of the service is the use of specific teaching assistants who regularly work in the residential unit to cover shortfalls. This results in young people being supported by staff who are very familiar to them and who know how to meet their needs.

The school provides information to parents and other professionals about what it provides and the values and principles upon which its education and care is based. It does not provide a separate statement of purpose, but embodies this into the school prospectus. The children's guide provides information relevant to them in formats suitable to their varying communication needs.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff are very knowledgeable about the diverse needs and aspirations of the children and young people. The staff

team are positive role models and demonstrate exceptional commitment to providing young people with safe, nurturing and positive support. Staff work effectively with young people to establish good values such as respect and tolerance. Young people benefit from their residential experience as it improves their confidence, skills and participation. There is evidence that the service is committed to further improving equality and diversity in practice, to provide positive experiences and further enhance outcomes for young people.

Monitoring visits by the governing body are carried out every half term as part of the schools quality assurance systems. These reports are very brief and do not adequately demonstrate thorough compliance with national minimum standard 33.3.

Staffing levels are appropriate to meet the needs of young people, including those with extremely high levels of need. Staff confirm that they feel very well supported in their role within the service and enjoy being part of a highly motivated and enthusiastic team. Regular supervision, team meetings and annual appraisal are also in place. Ongoing training is provided and currently 85 per cent of the care staff team have achieved National Vocational Qualification at level 3, which is commendable.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure fire records clearly demonstrate that children and staff know the emergency evacuation procedures (NMS 26.5)
- ensure that staff recruitment records verify all elements required (NMS 27.2)
- ensure that monitoring reports completed half termly fully evidence all elements required. (NMS 33.3)