

Horton Lodge

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Horton Lodge is a maintained residential special school operated by Staffordshire County Council. The school is situated in the Staffordshire Moorlands, in the village of Rudyard 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 and associated learning difficulties. Some of the children have additional visual, hearing and/or speech and language difficulties. There are currently 61 pupils on roll, 31 boys and 30 girls.

The residential provision, which is called Kiplings, is in a separate wing of the school with an interconnecting corridor to a number of classrooms. It is for the sole use of residential children. Sixteen pupils currently access the residential facility, eight boys and eight girls. The residential provision was last inspected on 2 March 2011.

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 school provides a specific curriculum for pupils with physical disability and a clear focus on communication development.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- Horton Lodge School provides an outstanding service that promotes each individual child's strengths and abilities.
- The high standard of the provision and the professional staff team make an exceptional impact on the quality of children's lives. The residential experience clearly enables children to make excellent personal progress socially, emotionally, culturally and educationally.
- The safety and well-being of children is of paramount importance and there are clear detailed procedures for safeguarding their welfare and promoting their good health.
- Partnership work is outstanding with a holistic approach across the school site, excellent working relationships with parents and proactive links with external professionals and agencies.
- Children benefit from a school where education and care are delivered as a seamless service.
- The school offers an extensive choice of high quality activities and events that meet the needs of children and enables them to experience and acquire new knowledge, skills and interests.
- The school values the individual and diverse identities of children and this uniqueness is celebrated in a way that promotes awareness and understanding. Children's enriched care and educational experience is underpinned by the school's coherent philosophy, values and strong management team.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Children receive a specialist service that provides comprehensive intervention and support that is tailored to their age, ability and special needs. The ethos of the school means that children are supported to continue developing skills being learnt in education. This results in children making outstanding personal progress. A parent stated 'Horton Lodge School is quite exceptional, it provides furtherance of education needs whilst providing a warm and friendly place to stay. We are more than satisfied'.

Children develop their social skills because staff at Kiplings nurture a highly inclusive boarding community. The staff team promotes consideration and respect for others and this impacts positively on children's social abilities and experiences. Children establish meaningful relationships with staff and peers with whom they have fun and enjoy their residential stay. A parent stated 'My daughter has stayed a Kiplings several times. She enjoys every aspect of her stay and doesn't want to leave. This is an excellent facility for children'.

Children experience a wide and varied range of activities, hobbies and outings which promote new interests, inclusion and community involvement. There are facilities on site, including a swimming pool, gardens, outdoor toys and play equipment. All children also have access to a weekly programme of events that includes activities off site and on site. Some are community run, but held on site, and children can join if they are interested, for example dance club. Some are special courses being run by external professionals or groups especially for Kiplings, such as football and 'letting in the light' a media club. Others are run by staff with a lead interest, such as sport, art and cookery. These focused and sometimes challenging activities lead to excellent personal development of children in movement, communication and social skills.

Children's needs and views are central to all aspects of how the school operates and develops its practice. Children feel valued because staff ask for their opinions and views. Staff are skilled at facilitating group discussions using a range of resources, communication tools and topics. They are used to explore feelings and emotions, as well as more practical subjects such as mealtimes, activities and trips out. Decisions and ideas coming from discussions and consultation groups are acted upon and result in children developing a strong sense of their own value and self-worth.

Children successfully transition on to the next stage of life. They learn skills that develop mobility and personal care and help prepare them for moving on to senior school. Through their boarding experience they grow in independence and confidence.

Quality of residential provision and care

Children enjoy a specialist service that effectively supports them to succeed. They make outstanding personal progress based on their assessed abilities and needs. Each child is supported by a core team of professional staff. This holistic approach ensures there is specialist support with regard to education, care, communication, physical and emotional health, family support and transition.

All aspects of planning and practice are highly personalised to meet the individual needs of each child. They are well focused, detailed and rigorously implemented and have a highly beneficial impact on outcomes. Staff are skilled in their approach to the learning and the individual development needs of each child. They know each child exceptionally well and what their individual targets are. They have warm respectful relationships with children, who clearly feel secure and valued.

A key strength of this service is the professional staff team who have in-depth knowledge of all the children and their families. This, and their expertise in working with children with complex physical, learning and communication difficulties, ensures a consistent quality of care. Parents stated 'My child enjoys staying at Kiplings and always has a great time. I feel very happy leaving him knowing the staff can give him everything he needs' and 'The staff make our child feel at home and give them lots of love and attention'.

Children continue to be provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs by a team of experienced catering staff who are integral to the life of the school. Children are encouraged to eat a healthy diet. Vegetarian and culturally appropriate foods are available. Mealtimes are seen as social events that help children with differing communication difficulties improve their social interactions. The school's kitchen retains the top five star rating by the environmental health authority.

Residential pupils' safety

Children's safety is promoted at all times. Given the complex needs of the children, the school values and advocates the involvement and views of professionals and families with regard to the welfare and well-being of children. For example, the school has a long-established relationship with an independent children's advocate who visits the children weekly and advocates for individuals as well as giving feedback to the senior management team. Each child also has a key worker as well as a team of staff who have specialist knowledge of the child and ensure individual needs are met.

Children are being kept safe because staff have a clear understanding of what their key role and responsibilities are in terms of protection. All staff undertake child protection training, which is regularly updated. They are well informed and take

appropriate action to ensure children's welfare and ensure any issues are addressed. All safeguarding procedures are robust and regularly reviewed and developed to ensure the well-being of children remains at the centre of the school's practice.

Behavioural issues at Horton Lodge School are minor. Staff are skilled at managing very low level attention seeking behaviour, role modelling positive behaviour, promoting listening, taking turns, sharing and consideration of others. All behaviour is managed through exploration of issues using effective systems of communication.

While no formal complaints have been raised since the last inspection the school has processes in place to manage complaints and concerns quickly and to resolve complaints in a manner children and their families both understand and can agree with. Staff are fully aware of the complaints process and help children raise any particular issues.

The quality of relationships between staff and children is excellent and reinforces the very caring atmosphere that can be witnessed throughout the school. Staff receive effective training and information about countering bullying. They are very clear that any form of behaviour that causes distress to others, regardless of intent, is treated as a serious matter. Staff are provided with clear procedures to investigate any incidents and monitor outcomes.

Children's safety is promoted by an established health and safety policy, which ensures risks are identified and appropriate action is taken to manage and reduce them. Children and staff are involved in fire drills and there are regular checks on all fire and electrical equipment to ensure it is in good working order. All staff are appropriately trained in health and safety matters including first aid and fire awareness. The school has regularly updated risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds as well as individual children's safety. These assessments are taken into account in the daily activities of the school as well as Kiplings and any activities off site.

Children continue to be protected by the school's robust recruitment systems that ensures all staff employed complete the necessary recruitment checks and are deemed suitable to work before commencement of employment. A number of key staff have attended safer recruitment training, this demonstrates the school's continuing commitment to the further development of the staff vetting procedures.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The school was judged to be outstanding at the last inspection and no previous recommendations or actions were made. The school's ethos and underpinning philosophy is strong throughout, ensuring children are in a supportive and caring residential environment within which they are valued and safe but enabled to thrive and develop. There are clear records, policies and procedures and Statement of Principles and Practice. There is a strong leadership and management team who

provide staff with clear and consistent guidance and support. Children are central to all decisions and make clear progress within the service. Managers and staff provide strong and consistent role models for children.

A key strength of this service is the high ratio of professional staff skilled in meeting the complex needs of children. Kiplings is well led and managed and is organised to meet the needs of children first and foremost. Senior staff model outstanding practice and monitor the practice of others and use the information to drive forward continuous improvement. Outstanding investment is given to the development and training of these staff whose deployment and performance are effective. The staff team is professional and passionate about their work. They place the well-being of children at the centre of their practice and ensure children's achievements are celebrated.

This school has substantial strengths and a sustained record of delivering outstanding performance and managing improvement. There is accurate and insightful evaluation of performance. Where areas for improvement emerge the school recognises and manages them well. The local authority and senior management team provide effective monitoring and evaluation of relevant records, practice and events. This monitoring, parent and children consultation and regular communication ensures proper scrutiny and on going development of all aspects of the children's care. This quality monitoring contribute to reports to the board of governors and the service's overall development targets.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What should the school do to improve further?

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15/11/2011

To all the children at Kiplings

Inspection of Horton Lodge

I really enjoyed visiting you recently.

I thought Kiplings was 'outstanding' especially all the lovely staff that care for you.

They know you well and make sure you have lots of fun.

You are involved in making important decisions about things that affect you.

Kiplings is a lovely place to visit and you love coming to stay.

The staff make sure it is always safe for you.

Yours sincerely,

Dawn Taylor