

Holly House School

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

Holly House School is a maintained residential community special school for children with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. The school provides education for 40 pupils aged seven to 14 years with statements of special educational needs.

The school is located in Chesterfield, Derbyshire. The residential unit is located in an annex to the main school and is on two floors. Each floor is self-contained and provides accommodation for up to 10 pupils each night from Monday to Thursday during term time. Pupils access the service on a voluntary basis and follow a variety of placement arrangements according to their needs.

The residential provision was last inspected in March 2011.

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

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The school meets all of the national minimum standards for residential special schools. There are a number of significant strengths in the provision, not least the organisation of activities and behaviour management. Some matters for improvement are identified, but have no direct impact on outcomes for boarders. At the last Ofsted inspection, the service was judged good overall with outstanding features. At this inspection the service is judged good overall with outcomes for young people judged outstanding.
- Residential pupils are able to access a range of activities, extend their friendships and build confidence. They develop new skills to help them return to mainstream education and to cope positively in their local communities, families and future lives.
- Residential pupils value and benefit from positive and trusting relationships with staff in a structured yet relaxed environment. There is close liaison between care staff, teaching staff and parents. Residential pupils benefit from this consistent approach to their education, care and social development.
- The experience of using the residential service clearly enhances pupils' personal, social, cultural and educational development. Relationships at all levels are good
- The safety of residential pupils is given high priority with good working relationships with key agencies to address concerns and promote safety. Pupils develop good awareness for promoting their own safety and making positive choices. Staff are proactive in challenging any concerns about bullying and pupils say they feel safe.
- The residential facilities are well organised with a highly motivated staff team,

effective management and good monitoring processes. Residential pupils, parents and other interested parties are extremely positive about the service.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Residential pupils' outcomes are outstanding. They thrive and develop good self-esteem because they value the positive, interactive and meaningful relationships with staff. Residential pupils develop a concern for others and this is integral to inducting and welcoming new pupils to the residential service. They look forward to using the service; have made new friends and are very proud of their new skills and positive behaviour achieved. Residential pupils say they can better manage their anger, they have improved manners and feel very confident about and proud of all the activities they have the opportunity to try and excel. Residential pupils develop a strong sense of their own safety and well-being.

The residential pupils develop a range of well-rounded interests. They learn to take responsibility for chores and play significant roles in organising and supporting each other in a variety of activities. Some favourite activities include fishing, climbing, street dancing, circuit training, exploring in the woods and camping trips. Residential pupils grow in confidence, have a clear sense of responsibility, develop independence and look forward to achieving their potential. They feel prepared for, and look forward to returning to mainstream education and are proud of their achievements while at this school.

Residential pupils benefit because there are significant improvements in their physical, emotional and psychological health. The nurturing environment, meaningful relationships and participation in challenging activities impacts positively on their health. They are active in keeping themselves fit and eating healthy meals. Residential pupils make positive dietary changes; these include more variety, healthy foods and a better awareness of what is good for them. They also learn to cook and are better educated about their health, including information about growing up, having good personal hygiene and an awareness of sexual health.

Residential pupils and their families value the service because they are effectively supported in the transition to the main school and to using the residential service. All pupils are treated as individuals, as are their families. They are treated with respect and sensitivity; staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic and diverse backgrounds of the families and local communities using this service. Parents and pupils feel involved and consulted, for example about when they choose to use the service, about writing their care plans and in meetings to discuss progress. Residential pupils value and thrive on the strong emphasis on positive behaviour, effort and progress.

Parents identify significant and exceptional progress for children using the residential service. Comments include, 'it's fantastic' and, 'absolutely loves the residential unit'.

They identify progress in children's motivation to attend and do well in education, their confidence, improved behaviour and respect for others. Parents are particularly pleased that children have developed self-esteem and skills to enable them to behave in, enjoy and contribute to society. There is strong evidence that young people move on to successful futures. They are keen to return to school assemblies to talk about their experiences and they identify Holly House as a significant contributory factor in their progress.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision and care is good. There are clear and effective induction procedures to ensure residential pupils and their families are reassured and informed about the good quality of care available at this service. Residential pupils are looked after and develop because of close liaison between care and educational staff, with the integral involvement of parents. However, information about the independent person that residential pupils may contact is not clearly identified in the literature provided.

Key working relationships, regular house meetings and the school council provide an opportunity for residential pupils to contribute their ideas and views to the running and improvement of the service. Residential pupils are particularly pleased with the personalised bedding, new towels and a change in dining room chairs provided in response to a request at a recent meeting. Residential pupils particularly benefit from the excellent organisation of activities. These are arranged in consultation with pupils, include their interests and focus on how confidence and skills can be developed in fun yet challenging ways. The choice of activities is child and outcome led; activities are consistently evaluated to look at how these impact on residential pupils and support them to make progress. Progress is consistently celebrated, reinforced and communicated, resulting in high levels of self-esteem and a sense of achievement.

Care planning is comprehensive. This part of the care framework provides effective strategies to care for the residential pupils who choose to access the service on a voluntary basis, some for longer periods than others and with varying patterns of attendance. Plans focus on clear routines to meet targets such as good hygiene, getting up for school, appropriate sleep patterns, mealtimes, manners and positive behaviour. Routines and expectations are clear and practical and therefore easily replicated at home. Care plans are regularly reviewed, with input from residential pupils, parents and the educational tutor.

The arrangements in place to promote and monitor health are very good, with extensive staff training and effective monitoring systems. There is effective assessment of individual needs resulting in detailed and practical health care plans. Residential staff are proactive and very positive in promoting good health, including the encouragement of good diet, exercise and personal hygiene. Staff liaise with a variety of agencies to support pupils with physical, mental and emotional health

needs. Residential pupils are protected with safe and effective medication procedures, including staff training and awareness of how some medication impacts on young people's behaviour. Catering arrangements in the home are well managed. Residential pupils like the food and discuss their preferences in house meetings. Food is of good quality, plentiful and residential pupils say there is a good amount of choice. Special diets are well catered for and there is a good multicultural and vegetarian perspective throughout the menus.

The residential accommodation is of a good standard, safe and well-maintained. While the accommodation is part of the school, staff endeavour to make sure the environment is homely, warm and comfortable. The pupils using the residential service are clearly central to staff practice. Staff have a good understanding of residential pupils' individual needs and promote a very individualised approach to their care. Staff are very good at identifying what has been achieved, compared to when they first accessed the school and the residential service. Staff awareness of equality and diversity issues positively impacts on the residential pupils, their families, future plans and expectations. Parents' comments about the staff include, 'do an amazing job' and, 'nothing but praise'; they find the service is 'nurturing' and 'significantly impacts' on their children.

Residential pupils' safety

The safety of residential pupils is good. There are clear elements of outstanding practice in terms of behaviour management at this service. Residential pupils feel safe and are confident staff will protect them from harm as they are always available and easy to talk to about concerns. Parents and social workers also express a high level of confidence in the service's ability to promote safety and significantly improve behaviour. There is a strong emphasis on recognising and rewarding positive behaviour and effort. Staff develop positive relationships with residential pupils and help them to learn to manage their own behaviour in a way that is socially acceptable. Staff are well trained; residential pupils are supported with comprehensive behaviour management plans and positive handling plans. Pupils say physical intervention is seldom used. They understand restraint is only used as a last resort; they have seen their behaviour plans and understand that accountable records must include their own view of the incident and measures used.

Welfare is promoted and protected by a range of policies and procedures for child protection. The local safeguarding children board is very positive about how the service refers concerns, stating they are, 'proactive and thorough'. Residential pupils are safe because they are looked after by well-trained staff who consistently implement safeguarding arrangements. Staff are aware of safeguarding procedures and promote good inter-agency working. However, some procedures are not fully updated with current guidance. While there is effective staff practice in dealing with bullying, the countering bullying policy does not include homophobic and cyber-bullying. Similarly, staff know what to do should a pupil go missing from the service, but the school's procedure has not been checked for

compatibility with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols.

Risk assessment and management is a particular strength of this service. There are regular checks on the security and safety of the residential unit, school building and grounds. Records are detailed and accountable. All activities, environmental features and behaviour are routinely and robustly assessed to ensure safety. Risk management strategies are proactive, well resourced and effectively monitored. Residential pupils have every opportunity to find challenging opportunities in a safe and structured way. There is an excellent balance between safety and independence as young learn to take calculated risks, find positive challenges and promote their own safety. Residential pupils are protected by good procedures for safe recruitment and the monitoring of staff and volunteers. However, staff files are very disorganised with some information difficult to locate and monitor.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The management and organisation of the residential provision is good. Parents, residential pupils and other interested parties are informed about the aims and facilities of the school's residential service. There is a prospectus for parents and a residential pupils' handbook. Parents and pupils are very pleased with the induction process at the school, saying written information is usefully reinforced with visits to the service, regular discussion and consistent communication.

The service is effectively staffed with high staffing ratios, well-trained staff and highly motivated individuals. There is strong leadership and staff are supported to provide firm daily structures within a caring and nurturing environment. Routines and procedures are clear, well established and operate consistently to provide a safe, yet energetic and motivating environment for the residential pupils. There is consistent focus on reward and a strong emphasis on maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships between staff, residential pupils and families. The residential service provides a child-centred culture of respect, individuality and achievement. Staff are positive about the management team, their own professional support and the staff team communication processes.

There is a strong ethos for improvement of the residential service and most significantly for the outcomes for the pupils. Managers and staff are keen to track patterns and trends of behaviour, consider the impact of activities and to find measures to identify progress. The headteacher is currently involved in auditing the service against the new national minimum standards and inspection framework. Reports written by the independent visitor show good monitoring of the service and a developing focus on how the service can be improved. Similarly, records of governors' meetings acknowledge the development of the residential service. However, these lack detail in how further improvements can be achieved. All required policies, documents and records are in place but some have minor shortfalls. While senior care staff actively and regularly monitor the quality of care provided, they acknowledge these processes should pick up such shortfalls. They additionally

acknowledge that while processes are in place to canvass residential pupil's views, a more proactive approach to including all pupils in the development of the service is required.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- Include information about the independent person in the residential pupils' information booklet.
- Improve the organisation of staff recruitment files.
- Include cyber and homophobic bullying in the counter bullying policy.
- Ensure the missing from school procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols.
- Ensure the governing body makes a full record of the review of the operation of the school's welfare provision for residential pupils.

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.



30/01/2012

To all residential pupils at Holly House School

Inspection of Holly House School

The residential provision at Holly House School has been judged to be good overall.

There are outstanding outcomes for young people, a good quality care, good systems for safeguarding and good leadership and management.

You told Ofsted the school has a number of strengths and continues to improve.

Some of the key strengths you identified were the wide range of activities available to you. You very much value your relationships with staff. You also appreciate the help you receive to improve behaviour so that you can return to mainstream school.

The school has been asked to improve information about cyber and homophobic bullying and to include contact details for the independent visitor in the pupils' booklet. Some staff files need to be better organised. We have also asked the governors to write more about the residential provision when they have their meetings.

Yours sincerely,

Elaine Cray