

# Cicely Haughton

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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**Inspector** Julian Parker

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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.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Cicely Haughton is a Staffordshire Local Authority school offering day and residential places to girls and boys aged five to 11 years. There are 51 pupils on roll, of whom 27 currently use the school's residential provision. The residential provision was last inspected in June 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
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.

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is outstanding.
- The residential education provision offers an excellent social experience for a broad ability range of children using a model of regular short blocks of attendance.
- Being in residence enhances children's enjoyment of the school experience, enables them to develop a range of practical skills and be part of a sociable friendship group.
- Excellent, constructive relationships developed between parents and residential staff help ensure a consistent approach in the care provided. Behavioural, academic and social objectives are realistic and achievable because of this high level of cooperation.
- Children in residence form excellent relationships with their care staff, clearly benefiting from the clear boundaries and individual support provided within the safe and stimulating environment provided by this school.
- The provision for safeguarding children's welfare is robust and effective. School procedures ensure that children are cared for in a safe environment by people thoroughly assessed as being suitable for their role. Staff are well trained and take their duty of care very seriously.
- Children enjoy living in accommodation of a very good standard that is homely, can meet personal needs and provides access to a substantial variety of recreational amenities.
- Residential provision is diligently managed and organised. There is a very strong

commitment by the school and its governors to the ongoing improvement of all areas of this aspect of the overall provision. An absence of recommendations from this and the previous inspection confirms the quality of the school.

- Good planning and the sensitive provision of care addresses children's diversity and disability-related needs. The school advocates for and provides equality of opportunity for all as far as is possible.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Outcomes for the residential pupils are outstanding. Children in residence thrive in an inclusive, nurturing community that welcomes family involvement. Children forge positive and meaningful relationships with staff and their peers. This helps them to achieve exceptional emotional and behavioural stability relative to their starting points.

Children show a strong affiliation to their school, expressing this by asking to remain for overnight stays and enrichment activities linked to the school's 24-hour curriculum. Indeed, some children complain if they cannot stay.

Children are making exceptional progress, positively benefiting from the care and structured activity they experience while in residence. Well-trained staff help them to manage their emotional and behavioural difficulties through encouraging interventions and the occasional mild sanction. Children's safety is promoted through robust, informative recording and safe practice.

Children have improved their self-esteem and confidence by learning to respect each other, be tolerant, play considerately, have fun and form reciprocal friendships. Children practice and develop the life and social skills that they will need to make the eventual transition to the next stage in their education. As the school consistently 'aims high', children are helped to return to mainstream education.

Children thoroughly enjoy their residential time, particularly the opportunities it provides for them to participate in new and stimulating experiences. The scope of the school's resources, coupled with the commitment of the whole-school staff group, is commended by many visitors from other schools. It is generous in sharing its competence and resources both locally and with overseas visitors. The richness of the experience helps children to develop well-rounded interests and feel confident in working towards fulfilling their own potential.

Children using the residential option aspire to take on roles and responsibilities. They are actively enabled to make a significant contribution to the school's operation and development, confirming the school motto: 'Pupils First'. The regular school forum and other feedback systems demonstrate how children's views have actively influenced the recreational agenda of the school and helped young people make their views known in areas such as activities, mealtime choices and decor. Children take

pride in their school by fully contributing to the role it plays in the local community. Children are able to compete in a meaningful way with their peers in mainstream schools in terms of sports and fundraising activities. Children enjoy good health and fitness, supported by regular exercise.

Children's medical needs are assessed and addressed quickly through effective inter-agency working between school staff and healthcare professionals. The whole school is highly effective in promoting and maintaining children's physical and psychological health and providing emotional support to parents.

Through the whole-school approach to learning, children receive elevated levels of practical and emotional support, effectively preparing them academically and socially for the next stage of their school career. This approach is summarised by the school's vision: 'all pupils are given the opportunities to return to schools in their home communities (where this is most appropriate for their needs and their families) or being placed in provision which continues to meet their needs.'

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

Because the school assesses children comprehensively and thoroughly, ensuring that needs are met, the quality of the residential provision is exceptional. Where children present complex needs requiring additional knowledge, skills or resources the school leadership team provides bespoke training for its residential staff. This ensures that children receive excellent support and sensitive pastoral care.

An inclusive and well-designed induction process meets the needs of new residents. Academic and residential staff work closely and cooperatively together to ensure that high quality, consistent support is provided for all children by the timely sharing of information. This excellent feature permeates all aspects of school life, actively promoting the placement stability that enables children to settle in, learn and assemble their social skills.

Excellent and unusual facilities, such as a tepee and BMX bike track, are available for residential pupils to enjoy outside of the school day. Children are actively encouraged to participate in a broad range of interesting extra-curricular fun activities, suitable for the ages and interests and a range of ability levels. The scope of the provision coupled with the caring intervention of staff promotes an ideal environment for personal development and social learning.

Staff ensure that children are provided with a broad choice of opportunities to express their views. Through this medium, they can influence the operation of their residential house and school activities.

Staff practice has progressed in response to national policy, ensuring that children have priority in terms of the school's service delivery. For example, person-centred developments in placement planning recording assist children to comprehend how

the plans for them are developed. Importantly, they know how they can contribute to their plans, because they assist in creating them. This form of imaginative, focused and detailed planning will further enhance promote beneficial outcomes and help children to become more involved with their placement review process.

Established and effective arrangements for healthcare, including access to National Health Service and specialist support, is embedded in school practice. This ensures that children receive early health and dental assessments, with parents' permission. Arrangements for the administration of homely and prescribed medication are safe, doubly-monitored and effective. Careful and considered staff practice keeps children healthy. Good relations between staff and children's parents assist children who are unwell to return to their family homes quickly.

Residential accommodation is of a very high standard, scrupulously clean, well maintained and furnished in a style that helps children to feel safe, warm and comfortable. These homely areas support their learning and relaxation extremely well.

The school consistently maintains its 'healthy school' status and excellent catering provision. The conscientious school catering team ensure that locally sourced, freshly-prepared food is of a high quality and plentiful. Children's forum feedback, suggestions and cultural festivals influence the variety of the weekly menu. Informed nutritionally-based meal planning, ample healthy choices and empty plates confirm children's considerable satisfaction with every meal.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

There are robust procedures in place for child protection and the recruitment and vetting of staff. All staff access safeguarding training, ensuring that they understand their professional responsibilities. They know how to refer pupils on to the appropriate authorities or deal with any concerns. Conscientious practice promotes keeping children safe from all forms of harm or bullying. Senior managers prioritise the importance of safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children effectively.

Children say that they feel safe at school because staff are swift to spot any unusual behavioural traits. They also observe when they are unhappy. Children confirm that there many trusted adults among the school staff to talk with if they feel unsafe. By being able to access comment boxes, a private free phone and various advocacy services, children can share quickly and easily any sensitive concerns they may have.

Staff consistently implement the whole school positive behaviour strategy to support pupils. Clear policies, procedures and annual training underpin staff practice, ensuring the use of permissible action only to manage children present dangerous or challenging behaviour. Active liaison with parents encourages a useful continuity of approach between children's different living environments. Clear case recording facilitates transparent scrutiny and evaluation of staff practice.

A clear policy for countering bullying, implemented by all residential staff, keeps children safe from comments or behaviour they may perceive as hurtful. Prominent artwork and posters around the school give the consistent message that oppressive behaviour of this kind is unacceptable. The school has a child-centred system in place to report any concerns about bullying. For example, the staff team are permanently vigilant, they recognise the vulnerability of this group of children and look out for tell-tale changes in behaviour. All children who responded to the inspection survey agreed that there is currently no bullying at the school.

The school dutifully assesses and manages all perceived risks to protect children who use its services. As appropriate to their age, children are helped to engage with new challenges as a component of their growth and development; for example through activities such as bush craft, BMX cycling and grass sledging. Children's case files and plans explicitly identify any risks and protective factors in place for individual children. This helps to ensure that children are kept safe.

Rigid adherence by the senior leadership team to day-to-day health and safety regulations and the consideration of all potential major hazards helps promote a very safe as well as nurturing environment for children. An exceptional record of prompt and effective maintenance alongside continuous site improvement maintains this high standard. Through regular practice drills, children in residence know how to escape in an emergency such as a fire.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The residential houses benefit from very effective leadership and management. Staff understand the aims and purpose of residence, with all routines being competently organised to run smoothly. Children are individually supported and well cared for. Prompt staff action addresses any identified service weaknesses.

The school has an insightful and accurate evaluation of its present performance, using this knowledge effectively to drive forward improvement in pursuit of the highest calibre experience for its children. Forward planning is thorough, with steps for further improvement both in residence and in the classroom. Any proposed development is always for the benefit of children.

The senior leadership team ensure that there are enough well-trained, experienced and suitable staff on duty at all times to offer high quality good support and care for all children using the residential service. Senior staff remain in touch with new legislation and developments, sharing best practice with staff to improve overall effectiveness and the quality of the service. Senior staff provide very good quality support, supervision and appraisal of training needs to ensure that individual staff needs are being addressed. Staff team and cross-remit development with teaching colleagues is a high priority, generating enthusiastic, knowledgeable and committed practitioners.



Comprehensive school policies are implemented effectively and regularly reviewed. This promotes consistent, high quality and transparent childcare founded on regulation and best practice. Thoroughly detailed children's case records substantiate that holistic progress takes place and individual needs receive the support required.

Residential provision is an important and respected feature of this school, used creatively for the benefit of the greatest number of eligible pupils. Staff commitment to improving choice, quality and further development, influences the service's positive contribution to meeting many of the diverse needs of children. This enables each child to develop and achieve.

Excellent levels of communication between parents, carers and placing authorities effectively address needs of children by working together. Parents unanimously express a very high level of satisfaction with the contact they have and service they receive from the school, citing how their children make improvements academically and socially.

Children's forums, stakeholder feedback and reviews confirm that residents' views influence changes to the boarding routine and environment. As a result, children are encouraged and empowered to feel that they can make a difference to their school.

## **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.**



30/04/2012

Dear Children

### **Inspection of Cicely Haughton**

I recently visited your school to do an inspection and was fortunate enough to spend time with some of you in your residential unit and around the school. Thank you for talking to me about what it is like living at the school during the week and letting me watch some of your evening activities.

I saw that you had plenty to do during the evening. You have a really good choice of activities and I saw some of you on a treasure hunt in the 'secret city' some of you cooking muffins (yummy) and some of you playing pool and air hockey in the games room. All these activities helped you learn how to share and get on with each other.

One of you told me that the staff were really good and looked after you very well by helping you with personal needs. Another told me about how she helped new children settle in. I heard that staff help you develop social skills like keeping your things tidy and helping with mealtime chores.

I was also impressed by the food choices you have at mealtimes and how good your behaviour at mealtimes is. You told me about how you sometimes have themed meals from other countries and that was fun.

Overall I think your school is outstanding in the way it looks after all of your needs and by sharing how you are looked after by talking with your parents. The residential staff are very caring and supportive by helping you to make lots of progress that will be really useful as you get older. Thank you very much for sharing your valuable time with me.

Yours sincerely

Julian Parker

Yours sincerely,

Julian Parker