

Holbrook Centre for Autism

Portway, Belper, DE56 0TE

Inspection dates

7–8 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching requires improvement. Not enough is good or better to ensure that students make good progress.
- Teachers do not always make clear what individual students are expected to learn in each lesson.
- Sometimes staff help too quickly before students have time to try things for themselves.
- Students are not always told how well they are learning, and what they need to do to improve their work.
- The amount of time available for learning is shortened by long breaks during the school day.
- Subject leaders are not fully involved in improving teaching in their subjects they are responsible for.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' behaviour is good, both in and out of lessons. They enjoy being at school and feel safe.
- Students make good progress in developing their behavioural, communication and social skills.
- The sixth form is good. More visits in the community are helping to develop students' independence, and the range of qualifications now better meets their needs.
- The acting headteacher, the new headteacher and the deputy headteacher have all helped to improve teaching over the past year.
- Governors give good support and challenge to help the school improve.
- Parents and carers' views of the school are very positive. They particularly value the care given to their children by all staff.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 10 lessons, five of which were jointly observed with senior staff. They also made a number of short visits to other lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, students, two external partners, and a representative of the local authority. The views of staff were also gained through a questionnaire completed by 24 staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including those concerning safeguarding, records on behaviour and attendance, data on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, and samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors took account of 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and discussions held with three parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Kathy Yates, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rosemary Barnfield

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Holbrook Centre is a small residential special school that provides specialist education for students who have autism.
- All students have complex needs, including severe learning difficulties and behavioural needs.
- The school provides an outreach service supporting staff and pupils in mainstream schools.
- The school was without a permanent headteacher for a year.
- A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in January 2013.
- The Chair of the Governing Body has been in post since September 2012.
- A quarter of the students are supported by the pupil premium (extra money from central government for certain groups, including students known to be eligible for free school meals). This is in line with national averages.
- The very large majority of the students are White British, with very few from other ethnic backgrounds.
- The sixth form will be moving into new purpose-built accommodation in December 2013.
- The residential provision was not inspected in detail on this occasion, but it was inspected separately in November 2012 and judged good overall.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so it is good or better, by ensuring that:
 - more time is made available for lessons, and all staff make the best use of taught time for purposeful learning
 - all teachers have clear targets for exactly what each student is to learn in each lesson, and tells students what they are
 - students are given enough time to respond to questions and tasks, so they develop the skill of learning independently without direct help from adults
 - written and verbal feedback always tells students what they need to do next to improve their work.
 - the role of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching is extended.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Although standards are rising, achievement is not yet good because in too many lessons, teaching is not strong enough to ensure that students make good progress in their learning.
- Not enough time is given to students' learning due to extended breaks, both in the morning and at lunchtime. Also, in some lessons students are given too much time on free choice activities that do not help them to make good progress in their learning.
- The plans for how literacy and numeracy are taught are appropriate, but students are not yet making the progress they are capable of in these areas. Students across the school make good progress in learning to speak or use visual symbols to communicate. They also make good progress in their personal and social development in all key stages, including the sixth form.
- There are no marked differences in achievement between boys and girls, or those from differing ethnic minorities. Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals make similar progress to other students at the school.
- Learning is good when teachers have high expectations about what each student will learn. An example of this was seen during the inspection when students successfully constructed sentences using a word bank.
- In the sixth form, students achieve well when they take on responsibilities in the community. For example, they take responsibility for and enjoy delivering post in the local area.
- Parents and carers are positive about the progress their child makes, especially in the areas of behaviour, communication and independence.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is improving, but the pace of improvement has not been fast enough and the quality varies across the school. Occasionally teaching is outstanding, but too much requires improvement.
- Common weaknesses across the school slow students' learning. Staff often help students too quickly, and do not give them enough time to think and respond individually to questions asked or activities presented. Teachers do not always plan lessons well enough to make the most of the learning time available. Marking and verbal feedback are not detailed enough, so students do not always have a good understanding of how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve.
- Where teaching is good or better, teachers show that they have high expectations for what students can achieve. They have a very clear understanding of what they want each student to learn and carefully match their work accordingly. In one outstanding literacy lesson observed students made exceptional progress. This was because they were given demanding, carefully planned tasks which enabled each student to understand about and write the main characters in the story being read.
- A key strength of the school is the very caring interactions between staff and students. Teachers

and other adults establish a calm and purposeful learning environment in lessons where students are keen to engage and learn. They readily praise and encourage students, which adds to their confidence and self-esteem.

- In all subjects, good opportunities to practise speaking, signing or communicating using visual symbols help students to develop these skills well. This is well supported by the skilled guidance of the speech and language therapist. Sensory activities are well planned, and supported by a good range of resources. This enables students to reach out and feel objects of different textures, or to react to sounds.
- Teachers and teaching assistants promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well by giving them good opportunities to share and learn together.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well around school and in lessons. Their enjoyment of school is evident, and they say they are happy and are kept safe at school. Attendance is good for all key stages, including the sixth form.
- Behaviour and safety are not yet outstanding because some staff help pupils too much, and this reduces the amount of responsibility and independence pupils are able to develop.
- The school is calm and welcoming. This supports all students, especially those who join with challenging behaviour, to settle quickly and enjoy participating in their learning. Incidents that are serious enough to require fixed-term exclusion are rare. There have only been two fixed-term exclusions and no permanent exclusions since 2009.
- Relationships between staff and students are exceptionally positive, and students show they feel safe by the way they approach and respond positively to adults. All staff are highly committed to ensuring the very best care and support for their students. Good supervision at break times and around school helps to promote a safe environment at all times.
- Staff plan opportunities within the school and in the community to help each student to become more responsible in keeping themselves safe. These include using a knife safely when preparing food, or learning to cross the road safely.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The activities on offer and the values of the school place a strong emphasis on students' social skills and personal development. Work placements and weekly enrichment activities help students to make good progress in their personal and social development.
- All parents and carers say that they feel their children are kept safe and secure at all times. They are very pleased about the positive effect the school has on improving their child's behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are closely involved in all aspects of the school's work, and have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They carried out lesson observations in their first week at the school, and this enabled them to support individuals to rapidly improve their teaching. All of the senior leaders have contributed to successfully tackling poor teaching over the past year. As a result there is no longer any inadequate teaching.

- Leaders have good plans to further improve the quality of teaching to a good or better standard. Regular monitoring of teaching is linked closely to targets for improving teachers' performance. A wide range of training has enabled staff to develop their skills. This is clear in the consistent use of communication, and the effective behaviour management strategies by all staff.
- Subject leaders are monitoring and developing the curriculum and progress of students in their areas of responsibility. However, they are not yet fully involved in monitoring the quality of teaching in their subjects, or evaluating its impact on pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is suitably flexible so that the needs of the individuals can be met, and includes an important element of personal and social development. In the sixth form, a good range of work-related and community experiences result in students being well prepared for their next stages in their education or training.
- The effective outreach service ensures that students in mainstream schools are supported well.
- The senior leaders and staff have ensured that the school is a highly inclusive community. All students are treated equally and without discrimination, while full account is taken of their individual needs. The pupil premium funding is used productively. It has been used for additional staffing to enable students to attend enrichment and community activities.
- All of the 20 parents who responded to the online survey and the three who spoke to the inspector said their child is very safe and well cared for at school. They feel that teaching is good, and the school is led and managed well.
- The local authority knows the school well. It has provided effective support for improvement planning and recruiting the new headteacher, and training for governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a wide range of skills and experiences and give effective challenge for the school's improvement. They have received good training to help them in their role as supportive friends who challenge school leaders. The governors are well informed about the school's work, and have a clear and accurate view of the quality of teaching and students' progress. They make certain that the performance management of staff and their pay are linked to these outcomes. Governors ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures meet all national requirements, and that the practice is of a high standard. They manage finances well and are clear about the use of pupil premium funding, and have suitable plans to evaluate the effect it has on students' progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	131323
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	402462

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	8
Number of boarders on roll	7-bed placement
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Brown
Headteacher	Julian Scholefield
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2009
Telephone number	01332 880208
Fax number	01332 781916
Email address	info@holbrookautism.derbyshire.sch.uk

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