

Horton Lodge Community Special School

Rudyard, Leek, ST13 8RB

Inspection dates 13–14 February 2013

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|---|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Overall effectiveness of the residential experience | | Outstanding | 1 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. It is improving well due to the work of the senior leaders.
- The teamwork of staff in class is excellent. All staff are proud to work at Horton Lodge.
- Pupils enjoy school very much. Their behaviour and attitudes to work are outstanding and they are kind and gentle to one another.
- There are extremely good partnerships with parents and carers. They are full of praise for the school and the support they receive.
- Outreach work for pupils with physical difficulties in other schools is greatly valued.
- The new executive headteacher is very effective and highly regarded. He is leading the school forward with the full support of all staff.
- The new system for checking on pupils' achievement is very good, although it has not yet had time to pick out more subtle trends.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools. Provision in Kiplings is outstanding in all aspects.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, teachers do not take pupils' physical needs into account well enough when planning work and resources.
- The Conductive Education method is not always well enough carried through into other lessons and parts of the day, particularly when classes are stretched for support staff.
- Not enough pupils make outstanding progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Conductive Education planning does not always show how other subjects are included in the sessions.
- Horton Lodge does not make best use of its federation with Springfield to improve the quality of education and pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Six teachers and a higher-level teaching assistant were observed teaching nine lessons. Short observations were also made of two other lessons and a lunch time. Observations were made in the residential provision. All observations during the school day took place with the headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team.
- Discussions took place with pupils, the headteacher, the two assistant headteachers, the school business manager, residential staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and an additional governor, two parents and the teacher in charge of the outreach service and her colleague. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to pupils' progress, behaviour and safety, school self-evaluation and improvement, governance and keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors took account of 13 responses on Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents and carers, and the school's own most recent survey of their views. They also considered 31 inspection questionnaires from members of staff.

Inspection team

Judith Charlesworth, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alan Jones

Additional Inspector

Trevor Hall

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Horton Lodge serves pupils who have physical disabilities. The school specialises in Conductive Education, which is a highly structured approach to supporting pupils' physical and independence skills.
- All pupils have additional learning needs. Most have moderate or severe learning difficulties, and some have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Most pupils have communication difficulties, many of which are severe. Some pupils have significant medical needs.
- Nearly all pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most come from within Staffordshire, but a few pupils come from other local authorities. Most pupils are White British, with a few from other ethnic heritages. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in one class group.
- An average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for certain groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after. Almost all of the pupils at Horton Lodge who benefit from this support are those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- About one third of the pupils board at the school in 'Kiplings' for part of the school week during term times. Kiplings has 16 beds in total.
- The school provides out-of-hours facilities for pupils, including swimming, recreational activities and a summer school.
- Horton Lodge does not use any other school or location to provide regular education for its pupils.
- The school has a second function as a Key Learning Centre. Along with three other special schools for children with physical disabilities in Staffordshire, it provides support and training for pupils of nursery and primary school age who have physical disabilities, their parents, and the mainstream schools they attend.
- Horton Lodge runs a 'School for Parents' group which provides Conductive Education for babies and very young children, together with their parents.
- Horton Lodge became federated with Springfield Community Special School in April 2012. A new executive headteacher over both schools, and two assistant headteachers for Horton Lodge, began work in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement, so that more is outstanding by:
 - making sure that teachers always take pupils' physical needs into account when planning work and resources for learning, so that they can be as independent as possible
 - making sure that the planning for Conductive Education sessions clearly indicates what other subject learning is included, so that pupils' skills and learning in subjects can be systematically reinforced and developed.
- Ensure that the Conductive Education methodology is reinforced and practised throughout the school day.
- Make full use of the opportunities offered by the federation with Springfield School to work together, share expertise and develop joint systems and practices to improve the quality of education and pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' skills and understanding vary widely when they join the school but are always lower than expected for their age. Pupils make good progress in all age groups. Some individuals make outstanding progress and develop their skills rapidly.
- The school has recently introduced an excellent system for tracking pupils' learning. This replaces the previous tracking system, which the last inspection found required sharpening. The new system allows the progress of various pupil groups to be compared. Information so far shows that all pupils make good progress towards demanding targets, regardless of particular circumstances such as ethnic heritage, gender, or learning difficulty. The information shows some slight differences in achievement, such as in boys' writing.
- Longer-term records show that just over two thirds of pupils make good progress in English. Over a third of the pupils are achieving levels above those expected. Most pupils do particularly well in reading but less well in speaking, which is a measure of their communication difficulties.
- Throughout the school, pupils learn to talk and to recognise objects, use symbols and understand signing. Some pupils learn to communicate through the use of very sophisticated technology such as that based on eye movements. Some read and write simple texts. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties show increasing awareness and motivation to communicate and respond, often shown in laughter and broad smiles.
- Pupils make the same good progress in mathematics as they do in English. They do best in using and applying their skills. Younger pupils learn to count objects and recognise numerals, while older pupils have more advanced skills, such as performing calculations.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in science, with over half making better progress than expected for their age and ability. They also make good progress in the development of their physical skills and in their personal development. However, teaching does not always allow pupils to be independent enough or to properly use the skills learned through the Conductive Education sessions to improve progress in these areas as far as possible.
- Where individual pupils do not make expected progress, the school investigates possible reasons. These are often to do with the individuals' health or particular circumstances. Additional support or resources are provided where necessary. For example, the extra money derived from the pupil premium has been used to provide additional communication aids, such as tablet computers. Their impact on these particular pupils' achievement is closely checked and found to be making a positive difference.
- Boarders make excellent progress in their personal development. They enjoy the residential experience and the fun that they have with their friends. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly happy with their children's progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good which contributes to pupils' good achievement. Some teaching is outstanding. Pupils' achievement is supported very well by high-quality teamwork in which each adult uses their initiative and skills to support learning. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent which helps staff to understand each individual's needs and encourage their responses. Staff are often seen laughing along with a pupil, sharing in a joke or their delight at

success. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and personal development. Parents and carers are very pleased with the quality of teaching.

- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is very effective and children make rapid progress. English and mathematics are taught well throughout the school. There is a good focus on developing communication skills and on helping pupils to use literacy and numeracy in all subjects. In some lessons, however, there are not enough adults to see that all pupils have enough attention to practise their physical skills or to learn as much as possible. This can limit their progress.
- Where class teaching is most effective, staff take into account pupils' verbal, intellectual and physical abilities. For example, symbols are provided for some pupils to communicate their responses, while others are expected to use spoken language. Pupils are given tasks that require minimum adult support, but that are nevertheless demanding. A good example of this was seen in a Task Series (a series of activities which are taught, learnt, practised and generalised as part of a structured programme to meet the needs of individual pupils), where pupils were asked to kick an object off a plinth unaided. This took several attempts for most pupils, but they succeeded.
- In the best teaching, the teacher keeps a clear overview of the whole class and all adults, even when working with an individual themselves. Pupils and staff are encouraged and directed in a continuous, calm flow throughout the lesson. Questions are pitched at different levels to check on pupils' understanding and to extend or support their responses. Pupils are given constant feedback and clear praise. They are told what exactly they have done well, rather than just 'well done', which encourages them to repeat the action.
- Musical cues and song are frequently used to signal a particular activity, especially in the Task Series. These help pupils to organise their thoughts and bodies to perform specific tasks, such as reaching out, grasping or standing up. Light and colour are used well to focus the attention of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- Where teaching is less effective, resources and activities are not always well enough tailored to suit all individuals in the group. As a result, some pupils need too much help to be able to perform the task physically, although they are able to do so intellectually. An example of this was expecting pupils with severely restricted hand movements to use a glue stick to stick down a small piece of paper to indicate a choice they have made. While pupils of all ages learn to read, teachers do not always use the most up-to-date methods for linking letters and sounds.
- Kiplings supports the school's work very well and makes a very good contribution to pupils' progress. It helps them to use and practice their developing physical skills and reinforces educational topic work. During the inspection, for example, Chinese New Year was celebrated through art work in the school and by a Chinese buffet in Kiplings.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe, happy and very well looked after in both the school and in Kiplings. 'Super school, super staff', 'my child has an excitement about the world' and 'has thrived beyond all our expectations' are typical comments from parents and carers. The safety of pupils in Kiplings is outstanding.
- Staff show very high levels of care and concern for each pupil. Staff are sensitive to small changes in their well being and provide speedy support if necessary. Occasional health crises are extremely well dealt with in this way. Pupils are very well cared for and safeguarded, both in the

school and in Kiplings.

- Pupils enjoy each others' company at school and in Kiplings. They are kind and welcoming to one another, as shown by the unexpected placement of a young pupil in Kiplings who was snow-bound at school during the inspection. This pupil went to bed happy and woke up chuckling. The whole event was an outstandingly positive experience for him.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. They try very hard to succeed, even when tasks are very demanding. They respond very well to praise and to 'wow' stickers for particularly good work, and try all the harder as a result.
- Staff, parents, carers and pupils themselves have no concerns about behaviour. There have never been any exclusions. A few pupils have special arrangements to support their behaviour. Staff carry these out very well, and the pupils' behaviour usually improves so much that the arrangements become unnecessary.
- Pupils say that there is no bullying or harassment, and there are no recorded instances. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, particularly in relation to their physical well-being when moving around. In line with their age and ability, pupils understand about the risks and possible dangers that life holds, such as bullying, internet safety and stranger danger. These are consistently reinforced during everyday school life.

The leadership and management are good

- The new executive headteacher is very strongly supported by the school staff and governing body. He has introduced a number of new systems and practices to improve and develop the school further from its already strong position. The entire staff and parents and carers are ambitious for pupils' future lives and well-being, and keen to help them succeed as much as possible.
- All pupils are given equal opportunities for learning. The progress of pupils in all groups, including (among many others) age, ethnic and disability groups, gender and class groups, and those in receipt of the pupil premium, is closely checked. Parents and carers are regularly consulted and are very happy with the school's work and their children's safety and progress.
- The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is thorough and accurate. The executive headteacher has recently implemented excellent systems for tracking pupils' attainment and progress, and teachers' effectiveness, in order to set targets to improve them further. As a result, a number of areas to celebrate and improve have been identified, and work on school improvement has already begun.
- Responsibilities for leadership and management are increasingly spreading throughout the school. The two new assistant headteachers, who are also trained Conductors, advise class staff effectively on Conductive Education methodology. They also provide guidance for new teachers, and for those who require support.
- Other teachers have responsibility for pupils' progress and developments in the various subjects. Higher-level teaching assistants have teaching responsibilities in line with their particular skills and aptitudes. The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding.
- The quality of teachers' work is carefully checked so that clear feedback, support and guidance can be given. The system also allows the easy identification of training needs, for the whole

staff, and for any individual whose work requires improvement. Further observations follow up any areas of less effective performance identified in individual teachers' work.

- The school day includes a mix of lessons in Task Series, traditional subjects, self-help skills and personal development delivered through the principles of Conductive Education. All the required subjects are included. Together they provide an interesting range of activities which contributes well to pupils' good achievement and prepares them well for the next steps in their lives. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. For example, pupils learn about different cultures and are told how well they are doing.
- The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is extremely well planned. It fully incorporates the expected methods for the age group as well as taking good account of their physical needs. However, throughout the school, it is not always clear in the Task Series what other subjects are being taught. Similarly, Conductive Education methods are not always sufficiently well carried through in the more traditional subject lessons. This can limit pupils' progress in both aspects.
- The school has excellent partnerships with parents and carers. They are overwhelmingly pleased with all aspects of its work. Many families benefit from the 'School for Parents' which gives them an excellent introduction to the school and to Conductive Education. Parents and carers feel that the school is highly approachable and that they can turn to the day or residential staff if in need.
- Horton Lodge has very strong partnerships with local schools. These include an innovative, new business relationship involving twenty two of the schools, and the long-established outreach service. The service provides support to around 100 pupils in local schools. Evaluations show that it is very well led and managed, very effective and highly regarded.
- The school benefits from the local authority's support, for example, from the educational advisers and educational psychology departments. Additional support has been given because of the recently appointed leadership team. However, the school is recognised to be of high quality with only light-touch support required.
- Pupils from Springfield school have access to Kiplings, and some Springfield staff work in the residential provision. However, Horton Lodge has not yet made the most of its federation to improve the quality of provision or pupils' achievement, for example, by working together to share expertise and develop joint systems and practices for assessment, teaching and learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body understands the school's strengths and weaknesses due to the outstanding information provided by the headteacher. However, governors do not always independently challenge the senior leaders enough about the school's work or effectiveness. Nevertheless, they are very proud of the school and committed to its excellence. The governing body ensures all statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding pupils. It is clear about the quality of teaching overall and of individuals, and is supportive of measures introduced to tackle underperformance and to reward and improve performance further. Similarly, governors understand the information about pupils' achievement. The governing body recognises that the new tracking system has revealed a few differences in pupils' performance that they must keep an eye on in subsequent updates. It already checks the impact of the pupil premium funding on eligible pupils' achievement. The governing body manages the budget very effectively.

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| Outcomes for residential pupils | are outstanding |
| Quality of residential provision and care | is outstanding |
| Residential pupils' safety | is outstanding |
| Leadership and management of the residential provision | is outstanding |

- Pupils enjoy their residential experience at Kiplings and their outcomes are outstanding. The professional service supports pupils' academic and personal achievement and enables them to have an enjoyable and sociable stay.
- Kiplings strongly supports the development of those that use it. It expands pupils' experiences and encourages very positive social interactions and the development of self-confidence and independence. Pupils show consideration and respect for each other, and relationships between them and the staff are extremely good.
- The staff team is suitably qualified, competent and passionate about its work. The staff place pupils' well-being at the centre of their practice. The residential experience is clearly valued, not only by the pupils but also by their parents, carers and social workers. Pupil groupings each night are carefully considered to make sure that individuals will get on well. Parents and carers are encouraged to keep in very close contact. Staff understand their anxieties and are keen to keep them up to date with their children's progress.
- Care planning for the pupils is highly personalised and of the highest quality. Staff are experienced and well trained, and treat pupils as unique individuals. They are extremely knowledgeable about each pupil's difficulties, personality and behaviours. Activities and resources are quickly adapted to meet individuals' needs. Early recognition of signs of anxiety or distress enables staff to manage such situations sensitively and effectively.
- The staff actively promote pupils' awareness of their own individuality and the needs and rights of others. Full attention is given to individuals' gender, faith, culture, communication and intellectual ability, so that their diverse needs are respected and met. Diversity and difference are explored by the regular celebration of a variety of cultural events, such as Chinese New Year. This helps pupils to recognise and value others' beliefs and values.
- Safeguarding procedures are very well understood by all staff and pupils' safety is outstanding. Senior managers fully understand their wide-ranging responsibilities, which helps to make sure that pupils are extremely well safeguarded. All risks are assessed and minimised, equipment and fire safety are regularly checked, and staff training is up to date. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy when staying at Kiplings.
- The leadership and management of Kiplings are outstanding. Kiplings forms an important part of school's provision and fully complements the daytime educational aspect. The senior staff team provides excellent leadership and management. Staff have high aspirations for the pupils and have created a nurturing environment that supports their development and celebrates their achievements very successfully.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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> |

| Residential provision | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements. |
| Grade 3 | Adequate | A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses. |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 124496 |
| Social care unique reference number | SC038727 |
| Local authority | Staffordshire |
| Inspection number | 403559 |

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

The inspection of residential provision 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.

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 2–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 57 |
| Number of boarders on roll | 28 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jon Harris |
| Executive Headteacher | Charlie Rivers |
| Date of previous school inspection | 15 January 2008 |
| Telephone number | 01538 306214 |
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