

Hebden Green Special School

1 Hebden Green Special School Grounds, WINSFORD, Cheshire, CW7 4EJ

Inspection dates	14/02/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Adequate	3
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Adequate	3
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is adequate because

- Residential pupils greatly enjoy the experience of boarding. It provides them with a range of diverse activities and an opportunity to spend time with their friends.
- Relationships between staff and residential pupils are excellent. Residential pupils show courtesy and respect for each other, contributing to a happy and productive atmosphere within the residential setting.
- All staff are highly aware of the vulnerability of residential pupils, and the systems in place to keep them safe are very effective. As a result, residential pupils feel safe and secure.
- Leadership of the residential provision is strong, innovative and ambitious for improvement. Monitoring processes enable managers to evaluate the performance of the residential provision and so improve outcomes for residential pupils. However, the school does not provide the required induction programme for new care staff.
- Staff are skilled in supporting residential pupils, helping them to develop, and promoting their rights. They enable all residential pupils, whatever their individual difficulties, to take full part in the life of the school. However, placement plans are of poor quality and there is little evidence that residential pupils are aware of their content.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of the residential provision commenced three hours after notice was given to the school. The inspectors met with: residential pupils, the headteacher, senior school staff, residential care staff, the chair of governors, and parents. Inspection activities included: a tour of the premises; observation of activities, meal times and residential routines; and examination of policies, records, monitoring reports and a number of point-in-time surveys completed by residential pupils, parents and staff.

Inspection team

Nicholas Murphy	Lead social care inspector
Deborah White	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Hebden Green Community Special School is a local authority maintained school for children with physical disabilities and associated medical and sensory needs. It educates children aged between two and 19 years. The residential provision caters only for those from year 6. Different groups stay overnight between Monday and Thursday. Although the residential unit can accommodate up to 20 young people the maximum staying on any one night is 12.

The residential unit is staffed by care staff employed by the local authority and a team of qualified nurses employed by the Primary Care Trust.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Add greater detail to individual risk assessments for residential pupils so that they take account of all hazards.
- Establish a set agenda for staff supervision meetings to ensure that all aspects of the work of staff, particularly in relation to the plans in place to meet residential pupils' needs, are addressed.
- The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.
 - New staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction, beginning within 7 working days of starting their employment and completing training within 6 months. (NMS 19.3)
 - The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of special educational needs. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day to day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans. (NMS 21.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Residential pupils have greatly improved their social skills and confidence as a result of the residential experience. Parents comment on the change in their children after a few months of coming into the residential provision. One said, 'From being a very clingy child, he has blossomed into an increasingly independent one whose week revolves around the anticipation of his night in residential, which he adores. He is proud of his social life there, it is definitely the best experience he has.'

Residential pupils have increased their self-esteem and a belief in their own abilities. They relish the time they spend in residence. Three residential pupils confidently showed the inspectors round their accommodation, and were clearly very proud of it. The residential experience is highly stimulating and supports and promotes educational attainment. Staying in residence enables pupils to get to school in a relaxed and unhurried manner which helps them to have a more productive day. Close and frequent liaison between residential and education staff, and parents, ensures that all residential pupils achieve to the very maximum of their potential.

Residential pupils have developed a sense of self-worth and know that whatever they say will be taken seriously. There are frequent residential meetings where everyone can participate. It is clear that residential pupils identify strongly with the school and feel good about what they contribute to it.

Residential pupils' behaviour is excellent. This is a happy community where residential pupils share good times with each other. They develop networks of friends and learn how to interact with others, thus building emotional resilience. A parent said, 'It enables our child to spend time with his friends, have the freedom of boy talk at bedtime, to share each other's confidences and support each other accordingly.' A residential pupil said simply, 'resi's a blast'.

Residential pupils enjoy good health within the limitations of their disabilities. They can exercise choice in how they have their personal care needs met. This ensures that their personal privacy and dignity is respected at all times. Residential pupils have many opportunities to learn self-care skills. One residential pupil proudly told the inspector how he and his friend had learned how to make their breakfast tea and toast. Another said, 'Staff help us to do things for ourselves so we can become more independent.'

Quality of residential provision and care

Adequate

The quality of residential provision and care is good. Staff provide very good support to residential pupils. They are experienced and well trained, displaying empathy, consideration and respect for the young people in their care. Residential pupils said of staff, 'they are cracking...they are very helpful...they care for us really well'.

This quality of care is helped by the close and frequent liaison that residential staff have with parents, teachers and nurses. There is a good and carefully thought out introduction programme for new starters during which their response is monitored and evaluated. This means that changes can be made to the pace of the induction if necessary and so meet each pupil's particular needs. For example, those pupils who have never been away from home before may need a longer introduction to help them settle in. Most pupils spend only one night a week in residence, but are still able to have telephone contact with parents if they wish.

There are care plans in place for residential pupils but there is little evidence of systematic consultation with young people about these. Additionally, information is located in several places

and not coherently set out in the residential file in a form which clearly links with assessed needs. This means that national minimum standard 21 is not fully met. However, this shortfall does not have a major impact on residential pupils, as staff have a deep knowledge of pupils' needs and share information effectively with each other.

The school is good at meeting the health needs of residential pupils, even those with the most complex disabilities. There is close collaboration between nurses, physiotherapists, other health professionals, teachers and care staff. This means that residential pupils are kept as well and as comfortable as they can be. Staff are skilled in communicating with residential pupils who have difficulties in this area. This means that no young person feels excluded or less valued by staff.

Meals within the residential provision are good, with all dietary needs accommodated. Staff are sensitive and caring in helping those young people who need assistance with eating. Residential pupils say they love the food. Accommodation is generally of high quality, and bedrooms in particular are comfortable and welcoming. The school carried out recent refurbishment of these areas in consultation with residential pupils, who chose the paint scheme. The space and layout of the building allows residential pupils with limited mobility to move about freely, and provides ample opportunity for group activities or private time.

Residential pupils are able to enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities. These improve the development and health of young people as well as being huge fun. Staff make sure that everyone, whatever their capability, can participate. A recent development is the immersive room. This outstanding resource provides a unique multi-media sensory experience for residential pupils which they find tremendously rewarding. Gym sessions are led by a particularly enthusiastic worker. He makes sure that all residential pupils, and inspectors, join in the fun. Residential pupils also go into the community for leisure activities. One residential pupil excitedly reported that he had gone to the pub for a bar meal the other week with other young people and staff.

Residential pupils are able to make their views known in a variety of ways and know that they are listened to. For example, pupils have a say in what group they are part of, have choice of food at meal times, and can pick preferred activities. This gives residential pupils ownership of their surroundings and enhances their sense of worth. A member of staff said, 'Residential pupils walk around the place as if they own it, because they do!'

Residential pupils' safety

Good

The residential pupils' safety is good. The school carries out robust recruitment and vetting checks to ensure that only people suitable to work with young people are employed. Premises are safe, with access to the site being securely controlled. The school has improved the arrangements for fire safety following collaborative working with the local fire officer. Residential pupils have an excellent understanding of what to do in case of fire.

There are assessments in place which identify potential hazards and how to reduce the resultant risk. However, risk assessments for individual children do not cover all areas, for example the use of equipment such as wheelchairs or specialist beds. This creates the potential for a residential pupil to come to harm.

Child protection arrangements are very robust. All staff from the headteacher down have a thorough understanding of policies and procedures which is maintained by regular refresher training. The governing body is closely involved with the school on a daily basis. This enhances the level of protection by providing another route for residential pupils to access if they have any concerns or worries. The school has an excellent working relationship with the Local Children Safeguarding Board which recognises the expertise in the staff group. A worker from this agency

recently visited the school and commented to the headteacher in an email, 'I am feeling quite humbled by the palpable empathy and doubtless dedication to the wellbeing of children that I encountered with you all this morning.'

As a result of this attention to child protection, residential pupils say they feel safe here. A parent said, 'Because of her extreme disabilities my child is very vulnerable and this made her anxious about other people caring for her. Since coming here, she is not worried, she feels very comfortable and safe.' There is no bullying but staff are alert to behaviour which might lead to it and act quickly to intervene. Behaviour management is positive and highly effective. There are no restraints, the school does not use sanctions, and residential pupils do not go missing. The school promotes equality and diversity in every aspect of its operation including the residential provision. This ethos creates an orderly community where residential pupils respect each other's rights.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Adequate

The leadership and management of the residential provision is good. The school is very well managed and led. Managers and staff have the highest regard for residential pupils and do not allow the disabilities of any pupil, however profound, to limit their participation in the life of the school. The leadership team views the residential provision as an integral part of the wider school. There is a genuine sense that the contribution made by care staff is valued by the other professionals working here. One parent said, 'I trust the staff to do the best for my child. This place is the pinnacle of what good care should be.'

Everyone understands the daily routines which are clearly set out and followed in practice. This provides a safe and nurturing environment for residential pupils where they can develop their abilities and exercise choice. Staffing is sufficient to meet the needs of all residential pupils. This ensures that everyone receives the right level of support to keep them comfortable and stimulated.

Internal and external monitoring of the school is thorough and evaluates progress. It is used creatively to inform plans for further development and improvement. For example, the staff training and development plan links directly to the findings of monitoring exercises. Visits by the independent person are focused on the experience of residential pupils. These provide another opportunity for young people to raise any issues they may have. Complaints are effectively non-existent. On the contrary, the feedback from parents and residential pupils is uniformly highly positive.

Staff are appropriately qualified, enabling them to support and nurture children and respond to their needs. However, staff who have been appointed to the residential provision in the recent past have not undertaken the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction. This shortfall has limited impact on outcomes, but means that national minimum standard 19 is not fully met. As a result, staff may not have the underpinning knowledge they need when they first start to care for residential pupils. Staff receive professional supervision at regular intervals. However, the content of supervision sessions lacks structure. This means that the support and direction provided to staff may not address all aspects of their work.

The school has good capacity for further improvement. For example, during the inspection, the headteacher and senior staff had already begun to remedy the identified shortfalls. The leadership team is energetic, and committed to developing and strengthening the service for the benefit of residential pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

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

Unique reference number	111505
Social care unique reference number	SC006614
DfE registration number	896/7109

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.

Type of school	Maintained residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	34
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Toni Findley
Date of previous boarding inspection	23/06/2011
Telephone number	01606 594221
Email address	admin@hebdengreen.cheshire.sch.uk

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