

Holly House School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

Unique reference number for social care SC056234
Unique reference number for education 131322
Inspection dates 11/02/2013 to 12/02/2013
Inspector Pete Hylton

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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 being self-contained. The unit provides accommodation for up to six 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 February 2012.

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	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	good
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- Residential pupils make excellent progress as a result of staying in the residential provision. They benefit from strong and nurturing relationships with staff. A culture of openness, mutual respect and tolerance is evident between pupils.
- The residential environment is exceptionally well maintained, comfortable and enables residential pupils to relax and enjoy a wide range of stimulating and purposeful activities.
- The safety of residential pupils is good. Robust safeguarding procedures are in place and understood by all staff. Behaviour management is a strength of the provision and all residential pupils are safe, feel safe and make excellent progress in developing their behaviour and their emotional resilience. Parents express confidence in the residential provision with regards to keeping their children safe.
- Residential pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying, oppressive behaviours and are supported in raising concerns. This is effectively underpinned by clear procedures and good monitoring arrangements.
- The residential provision has made improvements since the last inspection all national minimum standards are met.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Residential pupils' outcomes are outstanding. They enjoy staying in the residential provision, make and sustain beneficial peer friendships and benefit from excellent relationships with staff. Residential pupils make significant progress in developing socially acceptable behaviour. A clear rewards system is understood by all pupils and

they are rewarded for their achievements in this regard. This results in significant improvements in behaviour, tolerance and academic progress. A residential pupil commented, 'being here has made me a better person. My manners have improved and my behaviour has improved a lot.'

Residential pupils make excellent transitions from the school to mainstream provision. They make significant improvements to their behaviour, their ability to integrate with peers and their attitude to learning. As a result, they are better equipped and thrive in their next step of academic development. Parents value the input from the residential provision. A parent commented that the residential provision in the school has, 'turned my child's life around.'

The emotional resilience of residential pupils is excellent. They are supported in voicing their concerns and worries and know that their views are listened to and respected. A residential pupil commented, 'I feel listened to and respected.' Bullying is not expressed as a concern and all residential pupils feel safe and secure in the residential environment. They enjoy spending time with each other and participate in a wide range of social activities. For example, regular 'movie nights' ensure that pupils are able to choose a film and watch this together. This is further enhanced through a structured discussion afterwards where they can share their views, opinions and thoughts about the film. As a result, residential pupils are able to develop skills in debating, group discussion and respecting the views of others. A culture of mutual respect and tolerance is clearly evident between residential pupils and further enhances their experiences and outcomes.

Residential pupils develop an excellent understanding of equality and are aware of the effects of bullying and oppressive and hurtful behaviours. They make significant progress in learning to interact appropriately with peers. Some residential pupils have experienced disrupted educational histories prior to accessing the residential service. All residential pupils are making strong progress with their academic studies. Comments from parents and carers include; 'able to make friends there', 'progress has been excellent', 'everybody has noticed a difference' and 'behaviour has vastly improved.'

The health outcomes for residential pupils further contribute to excellent outcomes. Residential pupils lead active, healthy lifestyles and truly benefit from the range of opportunities on offer. Excellent communication between residential staff, parents and carers ensures that patterns of care are consistent and provide familiar routines for residential pupils. As a result, pupils are very settled, look forward to their stays and are comfortable when they stay at the school.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of residential provision is outstanding. The staff team are committed, dedicated and highly motivated. They have excellent knowledge and understanding about the residential pupils and work tirelessly to build strong and meaningful

relationships. This results in highly individualised care that is focused on meeting the often complex needs of the residential pupils. This results in a nurturing, protective and stimulating environment where pupils are fully encouraged and supported to develop their potential and explore their aspirations.

Clear and comprehensive induction processes ensure that pupils, parents and carers are fully supported in accessing the service for the first time. An experienced residential staff team build and maintain excellent links with families and ensure that all needs relating to the pupils are thoroughly identified and planned for.

Residential pupils are encouraged to collaborate with writing their individual care plans and this ensures that their views are embedded into how their care is delivered. As a result, residential pupils feel respected and know that their wishes fully underpin their care.

The health needs of pupils are carefully managed. All pupils are encouraged to eat healthily, engage in regular exercise and embrace the benefits of healthy lifestyles. Medication is securely stored and safely administered in a dedicated area of the school. Specific provision is made for residential pupils who may be unwell. As a result, the health needs of residential pupils are robustly managed and their health and welfare is at the heart of staff practice. Regular visits from the local school nursing service enhance the health provision for residential pupils. A nurse commented that the staff are 'excellent at communicating issues' and the residential provision is a 'very proactive service.'

Residential pupils benefit from a homely environment that is warm, relaxing and comfortable. All areas of the residential provision are very well maintained and pleasantly decorated. This results in an exceptionally relaxing environment where residential pupils are able to spend time with peers and take part in a range of enjoyable activities. The provision of a separate games room, in addition to other activities in the school, enables pupils to make choices for their leisure time and pursue their individual interests. Other activities include trips to football matches, a local boxing club and regular visits within the local community. Residential pupils are encouraged to engage in these activities and make excellent progress as a result. Comments from residential pupils include; 'we do lots of physical activities', 'I really enjoy the climbing' and 'they (the staff) provide a variety of activities.'

Meals provided for residential pupils are balanced, nutritious and varied. The facilities for storing, preparing and serving food to residential pupils are well managed and compliant with regulations. Choice is actively promoted and specific diets are catered for. This ensures that the cultural needs of residential pupils are seamlessly integrated into the menu planning and are respected. A residential pupil commented that the 'food is really good.' Meal times are social occasions where residential pupils are encouraged to sit together and chat with staff and peers. This results in a calm, purposeful and relaxed atmosphere that further underpins the culture of mutual respect and tolerance in the residential provision.

The views of residential pupils are actively sought and acted upon. Regular individual and group discussions ensure that everybody is able to have their say and influence how they are cared for. Excellent pastoral support is given to all residential pupils and any issues from the school day are sensitively discussed. As a result, pupils feel supported and are able to discuss their feelings and any issues that may be affecting them.

Regular key working sessions focus on progress and celebrate achievement. This, in turn, encourages pupils to develop appropriate behaviours and work towards their goals. Relationships between staff and residential pupils are a key strength in the residential provision. This is further enhanced through an innovative school-wide reward system where residential pupils can redeem their reward points for specific rewards. This ensures that residential pupils feel valued and that their significant progress from their starting points is highly valued by the staff team.

Residential pupils are fully supported and encouraged to maintain contact with their families while they access the provision. The staff team are responsive to the needs of pupils and ensure that they are freely able to contact their families. A residential pupil commented, 'we can ring home whenever we want to.' This results in a caring and supportive atmosphere where parents feel reassured that their children are safe. A parent commented that they had 'no concerns about contacting my child at the school.'

Residential pupils' safety

The safety of residential pupils is good. They feel safe and are safe in the residential provision. Behaviour is extremely well managed and a range of positive reward systems promote socially acceptable behaviour among residential pupils. Detailed behaviour management plans ensure that residential staff are able to provide supportive interventions. Furthermore, excellent communication between education and residential staff ensures that any concerns over behaviour are appropriately shared and resolved. As a result, restraint is seldom used and residential pupils feel safe, well looked after and are aware of the expectations and rules of the school. A residential pupil commented, 'the rules are really fair and we know how to earn rewards.' Parents' and carers' views are also positive with regards to safety; 'no concerns about safety' and 'happy that they keep him safe.'

The views of pupils are fully explored and recorded. This ensures that any concerns are acted upon and this further contributes to the safe and supportive environment. Clear and detailed procedures are in place should a pupil go missing and, since the last inspection, there have been no incidents of residential pupils going missing from the provision. Good relationships with the local police, including regular informal visits by officers to the school as part of the wider curriculum, ensure that pupils have a strong sense of safety.

Health and safety are given a high priority in the residential provision. Any defects are swiftly identified and promptly resolved. This ensures that the physical environment is safe, secure and appropriate for use. Regular fire drills ensure all residential pupils know how to evacuate the school in the event of fire. All required checks on electrical and gas fittings are up to date and regularly reviewed.

Residential pupils are encouraged to develop a strong sense of emotional resilience and an awareness of how to respond to bullying behaviour. The residential staff team are vigilant and responsive to any tensions between pupils. All residential pupils know how to report discriminatory and harmful behaviours including racism, homophobia and cyber-bullying. The school has robust policies in place to address these behaviours and residential pupils are encouraged to voice any concerns or worries. A range of appropriate contact details, including the Children's Rights Director, are provided to residential pupils. However, the telephone number for Ofsted is out of date in literature provided around the residential provision.

The recruitment and vetting of residential staff is robust. All required checks are undertaken prior to a person starting work in the school. This ensures that residential pupils are protected from contact with adults who may pose a risk to them. All residential staff are trained in safeguarding and know how to raise concerns about the safety or welfare of residential pupils. The school's child protection coordinator is appropriately trained and ensures that all residential staff are aware of how to implement the school's robust safeguarding policies. Since the last inspection, there have been no incidents or concerns that have required notification to the local authority safeguarding department. Furthermore, the local authority safeguarding department confirm that there are no concerns about the residential provision.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Leadership and management are good in the residential provision. The management team has ensured that the five improvement points from the last welfare inspection in 2012 have been appropriately addressed. The contact details are now readily available for the independent person; staff files are clearly organised; cyber and homophobic bullying are included in the countering bullying policy; missing from school procedures are compatible with the local protocols and the governing body more robustly records the review of the school's welfare provision. These improvements have further enhanced the standard of care given to residential pupils staying at the school.

Issues of equality and diversity are well managed in the residential provision. Staff are diligent in ensuring all pupils are treated fairly, respectfully and with due regard for religious and cultural requirements. Care plans are regularly audited by the management team and focus on the individual needs of pupils. This is further underpinned through a cohesive school approach to ensuring bullying and other forms of oppressive behaviour are robustly monitored and addressed. Clear leadership ensures that all residential staff provide high levels of care at all times.

Recording is detailed and effective and all records are appropriately stored.

The residential provision is an integral part of the wider school and is valued by residential pupils, parents and carers. Excellent communication between academic and residential staff ensures that consistent care is provided for pupils accessing the residential provision. Handovers between staff teams are thorough and well planned. Furthermore, these meetings ensure any issues arising during the school day are sensitively and appropriately managed in the residential provision.

Residential staff are well trained, supported in their duties and provide high levels of supervision to residential pupils. The ratio of staff to residential pupils is high. This ensures that there are always enough staff members on duty to provide appropriate levels of supervision and care to pupils accessing the residential service. Residential staff are well managed and are clear about the aims of the provision. Routines are clearly defined and embedded into the wider school community. The residential staff team are highly motivated and passionate about their work. This is reflected in highly positive survey responses from residential staff. Positive comments from staff include; 'I am proud to be a member of the residential staff team' and 'we make a difference to the lives of the young people who access the service.'

Reports from the independent visitor drive improvements; defects in the physical environment, for example, are swiftly brought to the attention of managers and improvements made in a timely manner. This is further underpinned by effective monitoring by the residential staff of all areas of provision. However, the reports from these visits do not demonstrate a robust approach to seeking the views of pupils. For example, only brief comments are made about discussions with residential pupils and there is no exploration of thematic views. As a result, senior managers are unable to fully evaluate the standard of residential provision at the school or be fully appraised of the views of those using it. The residential management team have adapted the quality assurance systems used to monitor the provision following changes to guidance and national minimum standards. All required policies, documents and records are kept and maintained. Regular reviews of the residential service ensure that any areas of weakness are identified and all national minimum standards are met.

Although the school maintains excellent links with parents, carers and statutory agencies, the school's website has not been updated for several years. As a result, residential pupils, parents and carers are not able to review the school's published policies and procedures that are available online. This has had no demonstrable impact on the outcomes for residential pupils.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- Ensure that the contact details for Ofsted are updated in literature given to residential pupils.
- Ensure that the school's website is updated so that residential pupils, parents and carers can view updated policies relevant to the residential provision.
- Ensure that reports completed by the independent visitor contain more detail regarding discussions with 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.



11/02/2013

Dear pupils

Inspection of Holly House School

Thank you for spending time with me when I recently inspected the school's residential areas.

I enjoyed meeting you all and enjoyed hearing about your experiences and how well you are all doing. I was pleased to see the wide range of activities, how you enjoy spending time with each other and also how well you get on with staff. You make excellent progress, are well looked after, are safe and benefit from a residential service that is well managed and meets your needs.

I have asked the school to make some improvements. When the independent person visits the school, I have asked the manager to ensure that they always make sure that the visitor speaks to you and records that you are happy, safe and have no worries. Also, the school's website needs updating. This will mean that you, your parents and carers will be able to read about the school's policies with regards to bullying, safety etc. Also, I have asked the school to make sure that you have the correct telephone number for Ofsted so you can make contact if you have any worries.

Once again, I enjoyed meeting you all and wish you the very best for the future.

Kind regards,

Pete Hylton
Social Care Inspector

Yours sincerely,

Pete Hylton