

Hebden Green Special School

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

Inspection dates

19/11/2013 to 22/11/2013

Overall effectiveness

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

1

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

1

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

1

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Outstanding

1

Outstanding

1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Residential pupils look forward to and enjoy being in residence, where they receive outstanding levels of care and support in a comfortable, stimulating environment that meets their individual needs. This results in them benefiting from improved personal, social and emotional outcomes.
- Residential pupils enjoy living in an environment where they feel safe, can relax, develop their social skills and celebrate achievement. The promotion of equality and diversity is strong and disability is not seen as a barrier to experiencing a full, enriching lifestyle.
- Residential pupils live in an inclusive environment, with high levels of consultation in place to capture their views, thoughts, opinions and choices.
- The ethos, culture and working practices developed in the residential provision, promotes, guides and encourages pupils towards a more independent lifestyle.
- The organisation, management and leadership of the school and its residential provision is outstanding, with a particular strength being a willingness to implement consistent, effective monitoring, resulting in the ability to self-evaluate all areas of operation and introduce changes to promote improved outcomes for pupils.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The inspection of the residential provision commenced three hours after notice was given to the school. The inspector met with: residential pupils, the headteacher, senior school staff, residential care staff, the chair of governors, independent monitoring visitor 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 surveys completed by residential pupils, parents and staff.

Inspection team

Graham Robinson

Lead 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 2 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 in residence 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 East Cheshire National Health Service Trust.

The school was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2013, when an inspection of the schools residential provision took place.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Sensitive care, alongside high levels of support assists residential pupils to prosper, socially, emotionally, physically and educationally. Strong, meaningful relationships are developed, with individual differences accepted and valued by all living and working in the school. This allows pupils to develop trusting relationships with appropriate role models.

Responses received from residential pupils, parents and other external sources are all consistently positive regarding the way pupils are looked after and supported. For example, one parent says; 'My child is extremely happy since he began at the school. He has become very contented and calm.' A residential pupil encapsulated his own feelings and those of other by saying; 'We love the staff and they love us.' A professional from a disabilities team summed up by saying; 'The school has an holistic approach which underpins the ethos, culture and working practices of the school.'

Residential care staff are experienced, committed and understand the diverse needs of the residential pupils in their care. This knowledge is used effectively in for example, the high level of communication observed between staff and residential pupils. Communication with all pupils, no matter what difficulties they may experience, is not a barrier and does not impinge on any residential pupils ability to make decisions about themselves. This is enhanced with on-going consultation between themselves and staff.

Personal development is promoted positively in an environment that is inclusive, allowing residential pupils to contribute positively during the time they are in residence. For example, one young person assisted staff with the weekly on-line shopping order. Others have been influential in choosing colour schemes for bedrooms, in the choice of facilities available in the bathrooms and in the choice of new beds recently purchased. Records and photographs give insight into a whole range of areas where residential pupils contribute significantly to life in the residential unit. This results in pupils benefiting from developing a greater appreciation of other people's circumstances, giving them a feeling of self worth, achievement and satisfaction.

Regular, daily consultation with residential pupils is a particular strength of the school. Staff work to ensure a sense of inclusion, identity and community within the residential provision. Pupil and parental views are reflected within the individualised plans and strategies which underpin evening and morning routines. This ensures care is personalised, with working practices put into place to meet the individual needs of pupils as well as those of the group.

Staff are skilled in employing a range of different communication techniques to meet the needs of individual residential pupils. This leads to the excellent levels of communication that exist within the residential provision, resulting in pupils enjoying outstanding relationships with staff. This gives pupils a sense of inclusion, worth, purpose and direction, with their views and thoughts being used constructively to plan for change.

The behaviour of residential pupils throughout the inspection was observed as excellent, with pupils being responsive to each other's needs and treating each other with respect, sensitivity and understanding. This tolerance for peers leads to a strong sense of community which is apparent throughout the school. Pupils actively look forward to their allocated time in the residential unit, with one stating; 'We have really good activities. We are given choices about what we can do.' Another says; 'I feel safe because staff are all around.'

The residential provision contributes significantly towards preparing pupils for life beyond the

school. Pupils are encouraged to be as self-sufficient as possible. This is recognised as a strength by all parents communicated with, reflected with one saying; 'My daughter's independence has grown through being in residential. She packs her own bag before she goes as she knows exactly what she needs.' A number of older pupils supported this view with one saying; 'I have been having residential for over 4 years. It has helped me to become more confident and independent as my social and practical skills have developed. I would be lost if I could not come here.'

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding in all aspects. It is designed and organised to meet the specific needs of pupils who make use of the residential provision. Improvements to the fabric and facilities within the residential unit have taken place since the previous inspection. For example, bedrooms have been decorated, new beds purchased and all bathrooms used by residential pupils have been upgraded and refurbished. Overall, the standard of furnishings, fittings, equipment, décor and general state of repair is high.

The health needs of residential pupils are being promoted positively. Detailed information gathered from parents and medical sources, help to create individual health plans where the needs of residential pupils are assessed and catered for. The school's nursing team oversee, monitor and co-ordinate the health needs of all pupils. This includes medication. Nurses also provide waking cover when pupils remain on site overnight. This, along with other medical input provided by the school such as physiotherapy, allied to its excellent links with external specialist services, ensure residential pupils' complex health needs are well met.

This is recognised by parents who comment favourably about the arrangements the school make to promote their children's health. For example, one parent stated; 'Each September we receive a comprehensive questionnaire regarding my sons likes and dislikes, changes of behaviour, medical needs etc. This is very reassuring to us as parents and shows that the school are addressing any problems before they occur.' Another parent says; 'This is the only place I would trust to leave my very vulnerable daughter overnight.'

Staff promote healthy lifestyles in a variety of ways. Residential pupils actively engage in a wide range of group activities, individual interests and leisure pursuits, which aid their general health and fitness levels. They also benefit from eating healthy meals that take account of any special dietary requirements they may have. Pupils are encouraged to try unfamiliar foods, appreciate different cultures and try international cuisine. Festivals and religious events are celebrated.

Residential pupils prosper and thrive in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. Since the previous inspection, the school has revised and updated its residential care plan and individual risk assessment formats. It has also devised and introduced a new placement plan format, which compliments other planning documentation. Plans are reviewed and updated regularly to keep them current and include religious, cultural and racial needs. Residential pupils are encouraged to contribute towards their plans which includes evaluating their own experiences with staff on a regular basis.

Residential pupils benefit from the excellent and outstanding relationships developed with staff and their peers. One pupil says; 'Residential is good. I feel happy because I am with my friends.' Another pupil backs this up by saying; 'We all look forward to residential night. It gives us a chance to be with friends and have some social interaction.' Another says; 'I enjoy being with friends and people I like. We all chill out together.' Pupils also enjoy the company of staff who work openly, transparently and communicate positively with them. As a result, pupils enjoy living in a stimulating and trusting environment where they are cared for in a supportive atmosphere. This helps them to engage with their peers and adults in a positive way and develop trusting, meaningful relationships.

The ethos and working practices developed in the residential provision are based on building and sustaining positive relationships, supported with high levels of effective communication. This is an area in which staff are highly skilled. Professionals and parents report favourably regarding the excellent levels of communication that exist between the school and themselves, with one saying; 'Residential is excellent in providing a social atmosphere for our son and his peers and it is preparing him well for life in the larger community.'

No parents raised any issues or concerns regarding the quality of care received by their children. They support the high aspirations the school has for its pupils, with disability not viewed as a barrier to engaging in a full and active lifestyle. This gives pupils a more positive view of themselves and others and results in a significant improvement in their emotional resilience and knowledge gained.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The school has outstanding arrangements designed to keep residential pupils safe at all times. This is reflected in the range of policies, procedures and risk assessments in place, which are regularly reviewed, updated and put into practice. They underpin working practices developed by the school where safety is given the highest priority. For example, in the robust implementation of policies and procedures that relate to the clearance and recruitment of staff. As a result, only suitably checked people work with or have contact with pupils.

The welfare of residential pupils is safeguarded, with staff having the necessary leadership, knowledge, experience and training to keep pupils safe. The school maintains excellent links with external agencies tasked with keeping children safe. Significant changes have been made since the previous inspection with regard to the way the school organises, manages and monitors all aspects of its safeguarding provision. This has been overseen and supported by the local safeguarding in education team, who visit the school on a regular basis. This is an excellent example of the schools current proactive approach to review, evaluate and move forward in a number of areas since the previous inspection.

Bullying in the residential provision is not a live issue and is not a concern to pupils or their parents. High staffing levels, coupled with sensible deployment, are effective in minimising the potential for this to occur. Pupils confirm that bullying is not a problem and are confident that staff would be quick to intervene if needed. Pupils state clearly that they feel safe when they are in the school, a view that is replicated by parents and representatives from placing authorities.

Residential pupils are supported to work positively through difficulties and periods of anxiety. Staff look for supportive, practical solutions to behaviour management and do not implement any punitive measures. They work proactively to stop minor incidents and periods of anxiety from turning into more serious incidents. Excellent monitoring and evaluation of practice ensures each pupils individual strategy is kept under review and adapted. As a result, behaviour management in this school is not a live issue.

Residential pupils are protected with a range of risk assessments that identify hazards both in and away from the school campus. Pupils participate in regular fire drills, with individualised evacuation plans in place to allow for a safe exit if necessary. Checks to maintain a safe environment are regularly undertaken. Pupils individual risk assessments, coupled with coping strategies, promote a safer environment for all. Individual strategies are updated as required, based on each pupils identified risk, progress and changing needs.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

A new headteacher took up post on a permanent basis in September 2013 and this has resulted in a new senior staff team being formed. The headteacher has worked in the school previously and knows it well. Since the previous inspection there has been a drive and desire to move the school forward and improve outcomes for pupils. This has resulted in a range of new initiatives being introduced, which have come to fruition following the regular, consistent monitoring and evaluation of practice.

Some examples of the changes made by the new headteacher affecting the residential provision are; introduction of a key worker system and the creation of working groups overseeing the development of safeguarding, life skills and equality. The whole area linked to planning and assessing areas of risk for residential pupils has been revised and updated. For staff, this has improved their insight into residential pupils individual needs and requirements, resulting in an improved consistency of care. The energy, commitment and vision of the senior team, coupled with the full backing and support of other staff, has contributed significantly to the outstanding judgement achieved in this area.

Residential pupils benefit from having a practical, child-focused management team, who have a clear vision of how the residential provision should continue to move forward and develop. Consultation levels with staff, pupils and parents is high, creating a fully inclusive environment. This is deemed to be a particular area of strength for the school. Managers are supported by a staff team who are fully committed to the ethos, aims and working practices developed in the residential provision. They demonstrate a team-centred approach and understanding of their role and responsibilities. They work cohesively with parents and other school staff to address pupils' needs. The aims of the residential provision are clearly stated for both parents, pupils and others.

Residential staff receive excellent support, along with the improved supervision programme and creation of performance assessment, introduced since the previous inspection. Induction for new staff is another area that has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Training for staff is on-going and all residential staff have gained, or about to gain, an appropriate professional qualification. This ensures staff possess the competences and skills to effectively meet the diverse needs of each pupil.

The management team has a clear understanding regarding the strengths of the residential provision and areas in need of improvement. Both the internal and external monitoring of the provision takes place systematically, with monitoring reports being completed regularly. They contain elements of quality assurance and evaluation to ensure practice is accountable. Reports review performance and identify areas for improvements. This information is used effectively for future planning, reflected in the revised school and residential improvement plans. Plans are realistic yet ambitious. They also clearly identify areas of individual responsibility and accountability. Residential pupils contribute effectively to elements of the monitoring process and can discuss their views.

Residential pupils live in an caring, energetic, lively, supportive and child-centred environment. Staff work cohesively with families and other professionals to address young people's individual needs. Staff work with consistency to resolve issues and anxiety with pupils in a non-punitive way. They work through difficulties and challenges patiently, supportively and positively, recognising the needs of pupils and ensuring those needs are put first, addressed and then met. The energy around the campus reflects the significant changes introduced since the previous inspection, which are underpinned with appropriate plans for future development. As one professional spoken with says; 'It's a refreshing school which is going from strength to strength.'

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
Number of boarders on roll	37
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Ashley
Date of previous boarding inspection	14/02/2013
Telephone number	01606 594221
Email address	admin@hebdengreen.cheshire.sch.uk

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