

Heathlands School

Heathlands School for Deaf Children, Heathlands Drive, ST. ALBANS, Hertfordshire, AL3 5AY

Inspection dates	14/11/2014 to 14/11/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
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

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Relationships between adults and residential pupils are very good and interaction is extremely respectful and sensitive. The high aspirations staff have for residential pupils helps them to develop as individuals and reach their potential.
- Residential pupils have very positive role models in the care staff team. Levels of trust and confidence in adults are high, and residential pupils feel safe.
- Family members and external professionals are extremely complimentary about the quality of care provided. Deafness is not seen as a barrier to a full active life. Developing communication skills and confidence are key to promoting residential pupils' well-being and preparing them for the future.
- Highly individualised targets are set in collaboration with residential pupils. Weekly logs ensure progress is effectively monitored.
- Managers are aware of the strengths and weakness of the service. They continually reflect on and improve practice, the environment and facilities for the residential pupils accommodated at any one time.
- Residential pupils behaviour is very good and staff consistently maintain boundaries, praise and reward positive behaviour. Residential pupils make excellent progress and develop the skills and confidence needed to integrate into the 'hearing world'.

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 at the school covered the boarding house. This took place within three hours of notice given to the school and the inspector was assisted by interpreting services. Inspection activities included meetings with; residential pupils in groups and individually, the residential care staff, the senior management team, the head teacher and head of care. Consultation with local child protection agencies, social workers, therapists and family members. A tour of the residential premises led by pupils, and observations of activities, meal times and residential routines formed part of the inspection. Information was gathered from documents, policies, records, monitoring reports. There were insufficient responses from the Parent View survey available to contribute to the inspection.

Inspection team

Gwen Buckley

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Heathlands School and the residential provision, Heath House, is in St Albans, Hertfordshire. It is a local authority run day and residential school for pupils aged 2 to 16 years, who are deaf. Residential provision and education are on the same site. There are 96 pupils on role with 11 receiving residential services.

Residential students reside at the school during the week. Heath House is a two-storey building that offers accommodation on the first floor for up to 20 male and female residential pupils, in single or shared study bedrooms. The residential provision was last inspected in March 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ratify with the governors and implement in practice the new government guidance on recruitment practice.
- Continue menu development to prevent repetition.
- Assess the integrity of fire doors and take action if needed to make them safe.
- Clarify physical intervention expectations, particularly for deaf children and reflect this in school information and policy guidance.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. There is an inclusive residential community where the relationships between adults and residential pupils are a strength of the service. Residential pupils made a significant contribution to the operation and development of the residential community. Their views and ideas are regularly sought through a number of different forums. The school council, targets setting, meetings with staff to discuss menus and they are actively involved in the recruitment of new staff. As a result they have a strong sense of feeling valued members of the community and know their views are respected. They consider the guidance from staff helps them to have a strong sense of their own safety and well-being. Residential pupils influenced the recent improvements in the residential areas and know further improvements are planned. They are very proud of the residential areas and help to keep the areas looking nice.

Pupils enjoy the residential experience and are very positive about the care, support and activities offered which helps them develop as individuals. A residential pupil stated 'the best thing about being here is the activities and staff.' Residential pupils have excellent opportunities to develop their social skills which ensures they are confident, become more independent and well equipped to take an active role in the community. Life skills are actively promoted and targets are highly individualised. This means residential pupils are continually making progress.

Residential pupils are actively involved in a wide range of community activities that includes attending a gym, youth clubs, cubs as well as shopping and eating out. This positively supports their social development and skills for independence. One residential pupils spoke of skiing lessons he had last year and was looking forward to these again this year. Joint working with parents and across the school ensures all pupils have access to the best possible care and life experiences. Residential pupils have excellent opportunities to develop their social skills which ensures they are well equipped for the next stage in the lives.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of the care is outstanding. There is a consistently high quality of care and a commitment to promoting equality and diversity by ensuring that all aspects of care planning are highly personalised to meet individual needs. Staff are extremely respectful and sensitive and have very different skills, abilities and cultural backgrounds. Staff are very positive role models for deaf children. This and the trusting relationships they have ensures residential pupils feel safe and well cared for.

The well-being of individual residential pupils is central to practice. Targets are devised in collaborations with residential pupils and these regularly reviewed. The high aspirations staff have for residential pupils and the highly individualised care helps residential pupils develop as individuals. Staff are effective in facilitating positive relationships between residential pupils through initiatives such as mentoring schemes and developing leadership skills. Residential pupils respect and support each other in many aspects of daily life.

Staff provide safe access to medication and maintain effective links with parents and carers to ensure continuity and consistency in identifying health needs. Staff are readily available to discuss any emotional and physical needs with the residential pupils. Staff work collaboratively with parents, carers and other professionals such as speech and language therapists to promote the health needs of residential pupils.

Residential pupils are encouraged to care for themselves by choosing healthy meals and taking

part in regular exercise. Arrangement for the provision of meals during the day in school have changed in the last few weeks. Residential pupils are very positive about the choices and quality of food provided. However, the changes to day-time catering arrangements, has on occasions meant similar foods could be on offer twice a day to residential pupils. The senior staff team have recognised that duplication is possible and plan to consult residential pupils on how to resolve it.

Residential pupils have a detailed care plan incorporating clear targets and risk assessments. These ensure that their well-being is at the centre of staff's practice. Targets take account of individual needs including social skills, educational targets and any specialist targets such as those set by speech and language therapists. Targets are challenging but realistic. Parents and carers are kept informed of progress and staff actively contribute to reviews and advocate for the residential pupils.

Residential facilities are of a high standard. Decoration and refurbishment is on-going, those areas completed are highly individualised and reflect each pupil's interests. A new kitchen has been installed which the residential pupils are proud of. The residential areas offer a homely environment and good levels of privacy and reflect residential pupils levels of maturity, for example, older residential pupils have single bedrooms, and some rooms have en-suite shower rooms. This means residential pupils are able to relax and feel comfortable. The residential area is safe and well maintained with safety checks undertaken routinely. However, some fire doors from the school to the residential setting need repair.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

Arrangements for residential pupils' safety are outstanding and safety is at the heart of the school. Staff are aware of their responsibilities, and lines of accountability are clear. All staff have a sound appreciation of child protection issues and protocols. Reflection on previous events has ensured they continually learn and improve practice. There is a history of excellent practice in monitoring practice and reporting any concerns. This culture of safety is successful in keeping residential pupils safe and residential pupils say they feel safe.

Two senior staff have designated person training and there is always a member of staff with safer recruitment training involved at each stage of the recruitment process. Policies have been updated and reflect recent government changes to recruitment processes, these have yet to be ratified by the school governors.

E-safety is taken seriously. Training has been provided to staff and residential pupils and information made available to parents. Residential pupils are aware of rules around the use of their phone cameras in residential areas and say all the boundaries and rules are fair. Behaviour is generally very good, and pupils quickly learn what is expected of them and modify their behaviour. This is helped by a focus on helping children to communicate their feelings more effectively through sign language. Residential pupils understand bullying is not accepted and will always be challenged if it is noted. Staff are skilled, they defuse tensions and use de-escalation techniques effectively. As a result no restraints have been used, sanctions are very seldom used, and residential pupils feel they are fairly treated. Although no restraints have been needed staff have previously been trained in physical restraint. However, this training has not been updated and previous training involved holding of arms which means residential pupils are no longer able to sign and express themselves during a restraint.

An independent person visits the residential pupils regularly and residential pupils know they can talk to her and they also say they have care staff they can talk with if they are upset or want to discuss private issues. The school takes an excellent approach to assessing risk. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly. They are updated and endorsed after auditing by senior managers. Fire drills take place regularly. These occur both in during the day and night, and

different scenarios practiced which means residential pupils are confident they know how to respond in case of fire.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

Leadership and management are outstanding, There are clear aims for the residential provision that are translated into practice by the highly skilled and motivated staff team. Staff promote the social and personal development of residential pupils. They have high aspirations for pupils and a commitment to provide high quality care/ as a result, routines run smoothly and residential pupils are fully supported with all aspects of their care. There is high quality self-assessment and development plan used to drive forward improvements. The views of residential pupils, their family members and external professionals develop care plans and influence plans for future developments.

Effective staffing arrangements ensure that there are staff on duty with the skills needed to care for the residential pupils. The management team reflects on practice and develops practice. On commencement of employment all new staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction. Following this staff are enrolled in the level 3 training and undertake specialist training when needed to meet specific needs. Supervision is carried out regularly both formally and informally. Staff say this effectively supports them to carry out their roles well. Appraisals occur and promote personal development which enhances the quality of care provided. These approaches ensure there is a highly individualised approach to care.

Required policies and procedures are in place and used to promote consistency of practice. There is highly organised, detailed recording which promotes the welfare and safety of pupils. Records are clear and non-stigmatising, reflecting individual needs and progress. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated in response to new guidance or incidents within the school. They provide clear guidance and instruction.

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	117685
Social care unique reference number	SC056396
DfE registration number	919/7032

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 School
Number of boarders on roll	96
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	7 to 16
Headteacher	Mrs Deborah Jones-Stevens
Date of previous boarding inspection	17/03/2014
Telephone number	01727 754060
Email address	head@heathlands.herts.sch.uk

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