

Hamilton Lodge School

Hamilton Lodge School, 7-9 Walpole Road, BRIGHTON, BN2 0LS

Inspection dates	21/01/2015 to 23/01/2015	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Residential care is a central element of the school. The majority of pupils board and the promotion of their views and quality of life are a valued and embedded part of the school's ethos.
- Residential pupils are at the centre of all practice and make excellent progress during their time at the school. The development of their self-esteem, confidence and independence skills is outstanding, especially when considering their starting points.
- The safety of the residential pupils is of paramount importance and the systems operated in the school ensure that this is maintained to a good standard. Residential pupils report feeling safe living at the school and all have a choice of adults to whom they can address concerns and worries.
- A committed staff team are very well led by a vastly experienced management team. Members of staff receive good levels of training and report that they feel very well supported. The confidence and skills of the staff team enable residential pupils to feel cared for and to be able to develop strong and trusting relationships with the members of staff who look after them.
- Residential pupils live in a school where they are able to take part in enriching and challenging activities which increase their self-confidence, self-esteem, increase their community presence and ensure they widen their circles of friends.
- All national minimum standards are met.

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

Inspection team

Paul Taylor	Lead social care inspector
Lucy Martin	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Hamilton Lodge School is a co-educational residential school which caters for pupils between 5 and 18 years of age who are hearing impaired, with some pupils having additional specific needs. The main form of communication used is British Sign Language (BSL). English and Sign Supported English are also used. The school is situated in a residential area of Brighton. The boarding houses are adjacent to the main school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- review the consistency of how care plans are organised.
- extend the use of written risk assessments to evidence the work undertaken around safe relationships between older residential pupils.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. They benefit from having their needs met in an individualised manner which enables them to make significant progress. Being part of the residential group means that many of the residential pupils are not isolated and that they can enjoy meaningful and enjoyable relationships with their peers. 'If I wasn't here, I would be lonely, it's my second home' is a comment from a residential pupil.

Relationships between residential pupils and members of staff are excellent. They are able to develop trusting relationships with the adults who care for them and benefit significantly from the guidance and support they receive. Subsequently they grow in confidence and self-esteem. One residential pupil commented, 'When I came here I used to stay in my room all the time. Now I have friends and go out into town on my own if I want.'

The variety of activities in which residential pupils partake enables them to develop social skills, friendship groups and confidence. The school actively promotes the presence of the residential pupils in the wider community and this enables them to feel valued and not isolated. Examples of activities have included completion of Duke of Edinburgh Awards with pupils from mainstream schools and who are able to hear. They have also been able to lead activities with groups of young people in clubs and this has promoted their self-esteem and given young people from the 'hearing community' an opportunity to learn about young people living with hearing loss or impairment.

The open and inclusive atmosphere of the school ensures residential pupils have a strong voice in all areas of school life. A number of opportunities are available for young people to express their views to staff such as through daily informal conversations or focused key-working sessions. In addition the school council provides a more formal process for issues or ideas to be raised. These avenues enable residential pupils to contribute to decision making and to feel that their views are valued and respected.

Residential pupils' health is promoted to an excellent standard. They are encouraged to lead healthy, active lifestyles and receive sensitive and well planned guidance regarding health issues. For example, bespoke programmes and activity plans help with weight loss. This has had significant results for some residential pupils. Emotional support is of a particularly high standard with residential pupils receiving specialist support from psychologists and psychiatrists who specialise in working with deaf young people, if required. This input enables members of staff to put in place the supports and strategies needed to assist residential pupils to feel safe and cared for in a consistent and nurturing manner.

Residential pupils are very well prepared for their transitions to either college or work. Those with more confidence and established independence skills attend local mainstream further education colleges. Others, who stay at the school for the post 16 provision, develop their life and social skills at a rate commensurate with their abilities and vulnerabilities. Such opportunities are used to develop their independent living skills, improve self-esteem and ultimately prepare them for the next stage of their lives.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The care offered to young people is very supportive and nurturing. Each residential pupil's needs are known and met to a good standard. Effective levels of communication are maintained across the school and this ensures information is shared easily between education and care staff. Such an approach leads to young people receiving consistent good quality support, care and guidance

in all areas of school life.

Care plans are of a good quality and clearly outline each residential pupil's goals and targets. The care plans also outline any specific needs and whether there are strategies which are needed to support them at times of anxiety or stress. The care plans record residential pupils' progress and give a good account of their time at the school.

Residential pupils have a number of activities available to them. These include activities arranged by the school as well as an opportunity to attend clubs and other interests delivered by other organisations, such as Brownies and Scouts. As a result, they are able to widen their interests and circles of friends.

Residential pupils are supported to live healthy lifestyles and to understand what this means for them. All residential pupils are encouraged to take part in physical activities and all are offered a healthy and balanced diet. Health care arrangements are very good and administration and care of medicines well organised and effective. Whenever possible, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own health needs and self-administer medication when this is appropriate. All residential pupils have access to specialist health professionals where needed, for example, audiologists and occupational therapists as well as psychologists and psychiatrists who specialise in working with deaf young people.

Residential pupils' views are integral to the running of the residential provision. Regular meetings with key workers and involvement in the school council ensure ideas for change are heard and responded to. An independent visitor who visits regularly is available to all students. Governors also visit the residential accommodation and meet with the residential pupils to seek their opinions on how they feel they are being cared for. This ensures that residential pupils feel they have an active voice and influence in the running of the residential provision.

Young people enjoy a varied school menu which offers good quality food. All individual dietary needs are catered for with specialised menus and meals provided for residential pupils with specific dietary needs, whether these be based on religious, cultural or medical grounds.

Residential accommodation is of a good standard. Living areas are comfortable and maintained to a high level. Residential pupils are able to personalise their own rooms with pictures and posters. There is ample communal space which allows them the opportunity to share meals together, play games or watch television. Residential pupils say their living areas are comfortable and that they can relax in them.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

Residential students consistently report that they feel safe in the residential provision and can identify staff they would go to if they were worried or upset. Staff are aware of individual vulnerabilities and concerns and respond effectively to alleviate any fears. Staff are aware of safeguarding procedures to follow should they be concerned for a residential pupil's welfare or emotional well-being.

Safety is central to practice and the culture within the school ensures residential pupils have their safety and well-being promoted to a high standard. Designated senior staff take responsibility for child protection and all have undertaken appropriate training. The school works effectively with the local safeguarding board and designated officer, promptly addressing any safeguarding incidents or concerns. Records of any concerns about pupils are maintained well and provide an audit trail and timeline, demonstrating how procedures have been effectively followed and how issues have been resolved.

A thorough and effective recruitment process ensures that all prospective members of staff have the correct background checks carried out before they work at the school. Consequently, pupils are cared for by adults deemed suitable to work with children.

There is a strong approach to e-safety. All members of staff have received training in e-safety. The school is not risk averse and residential pupils are able to bring electronic devices into the residential setting. The value of using electronic communication and the internet as a means of communication, especially for deaf pupils, is appreciated and promoted by the school. Residential pupils are educated and supported to use their devices safely.

There have been no incidents of young people going missing from the school since the last inspection. There is an appropriate policy and procedure in place which reflects the locally agreed police protocol. Staff are aware of what to do in the event that a pupil is absent without permission. Before residential pupils are able to go into the community unsupervised they are assessed as being safe to do so. This process includes an assessment of the residential pupil's knowledge of road safety and how they will communicate with the school and members of the public if they experience any problems. Parents are involved in this assessment and endorse the independence plans to show that they agree their child is able to be in the community unsupervised.

Incidents where young people have to be physically restrained in the school are very rare. In one year there have been three occasions when this has occurred. Clear strategies are in place for members of staff to follow if there are concerns about a residential pupil's behaviour. This ensures that they are very well supported if they are anxious and are displaying challenging behaviour. As a result, behaviour is of a good standard and there is an embedded culture of respect and tolerance for each other.

Residential pupils do not identify bullying as a concern. Staff set clear and consistent boundaries and expectations of behaviour. Residential pupils are confident in approaching staff to support them in managing disagreements and conflict. 'Staff deal with bullying quickly, it's just not a problem here', is a comment made by one residential pupil.

Most risk assessments are very thorough. They reflect individual need and abilities, while allowing students to take age-appropriate risks, such as climbing, canoeing and swimming. Regular review ensures students are able to take new controlled risks in line with progress they have made within individual plans, for example, going out into the community unsupervised. Some older residential pupils have girlfriends or boyfriends who visit them in their houses. They are also assessed as being able to go out into the community with them unsupervised. While members of staff have spent time with them speaking about relationships and potential risks, this has not been recorded in specific risk assessments. Although this has not had an impact upon the residential pupils' safety due to the close support they receive and staff knowledge of individual vulnerabilities, there is no written evidence to underpin this safe practice.

The environment is physically safe and the estates manager conscientiously ensures all safety checks are up to date and responds swiftly to any maintenance issues that arise. Arrangements for fire safety are rigorous, fire drills are regular and all young people know the procedure to follow in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

Managers of the school provide strong leadership. A very experienced team of senior staff provide thorough oversight of the running of the school and especially the residential provision. A new principal, who has been at the school since September 2014, provides clear leadership and has a wealth of experience. He is in turn supported by key members of staff who are also very

experienced and who have been at the school for significant periods of time.

The school has a website and statement of purpose which clearly outlines the aims of the school and how boarding is integrated and central to the service it provides. The majority of pupils are residential and so routines and procedures revolve around that part of the school's function. As a result, the residential provision is very well organised and residential pupils experience living in a safe and stimulating community.

There are sufficient members of suitably experienced and qualified staff to ensure that the residential pupils receive the support they need and to provide stimulating and fun activities. Good training opportunities are made available for staff with a majority of them being qualified to the required level; the few that currently do not have this are enrolled to undertake it. All members of staff also receive training in key areas, such as safeguarding, e-safety and behaviour management techniques. Regular supervision and appraisals also means that members of staff feel well supported and confident in their roles.

Robust monitoring of the quality of care provided to residential pupils is achieved by having an independent visitor assess the areas outlined in the national minimum standards (NMS). The reports written as a result of these visits include comments from the residential pupils and outlines areas which need improvement. This practice is underpinned further by having governors visit the school on a half termly basis who also assess how the residential provision is meeting the NMS. This ensures external monitoring and accountability for practice is robust and provides an opportunity for reflection on the effectiveness of care. The Head of Care outlines clearly in action plans how any shortfalls are being addressed and how the provision is planning improvements in areas such as residential pupils care plans.

Two points for improvement made at the last inspection have been addressed. Residential pupils now have involvement in planning their targets and make comments on these in their care plans. Additionally, members of staff have received training in e-safety and have had training in fire safety.

Feedback from parents is unanimous that the school is well led and that their children have a positive experience of boarding. Regular communication is maintained with parents so that they are aware of how their children are progressing and if there are any concerns or specific achievements that their child has made.

There have been no complaints with regard to the quality of care in the residential provision since the last inspection. There is a clear policy and procedure in place for complainants to follow in the event that they wish to formally complain to the school.

Records are of a good standard and care plans, provide a wealth of information about the residential pupils and how they are progressing. The organisation of the care plans is inconsistent and this means that information, such as risk assessments and weekly progress reports, are sometimes found in different sections in different care plans and not all information in the care files is up to date. This is a minor shortfall and does not impinge on the well-being of the 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	114619
Social care unique reference number	SC050400
DfE registration number	846/7003

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	49
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	10 to 19
Headteacher	Mr David Couch
Date of previous boarding inspection	21/01/2015
Telephone number	01273 682362
Email address	david.couch@hamiltonlodgeschool.co.uk

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