

# Horton Lodge

Staffordshire County Council, Horton Lodge Special School, Rudyard, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 8RB

## Inspection dates

08/02/2016 to 10/02/2016

## The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Outstanding** **1**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding 1

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding 1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Children are safe and feel safe. Their safety is prioritised and is embedded in daily routines. Children build immensely strong and trusting relationships with care staff, managers and school staff.
- Children reside in an inclusive environment where conductive education is the focus of the whole school setting. Disability is not a barrier and children experience an inspirational and stimulating routine.
- Residential care staff, leaders, managers, other professionals, parents and carers have exceptionally high aspirations for children.
- Children enjoy their time in residency and look forward to spending quality time with their friends and peers. These relationships consistently support and assist their interpersonal social skills and emotional development.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are integrated and comprehensive; they ensure that children are protected and that any concerns regarding their welfare or safety are immediately referred to external professionals.
- Regular consultation is a considerable strength of residency. Care staff work with parents, carers and teaching staff to capture children's views and wishes. They are provided with opportunities to make genuine choices that reflect their personal communication needs.
- The school and the residential provision are well integrated. The management team work together in their shared desire for continued improvement. They use social care research and published information to support on-going improvements to the service.

## **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Explore the potential to extend children's time in residency until the conclusion of their schooling in this setting.

## **Information about this inspection**

This welfare only inspection was completed following the appropriate notice period for this type of visit. A tour of the residential accommodation was undertaken. Two afternoons and early evenings were spent in the company of children and staff. Several children were spoken to and all children were observed during the inspection. Two evening meals and one breakfast were also observed. A range of records and documents were examined relating to the care provided. Discussions were held with members of the senior leadership team, managers, care staff, parents and carers.

## **Inspection team**

Jo Stephenson

Lead social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Horton Lodge is a local authority maintained residential special school for 57 boys and girls aged 2 to 11 years with physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties. Some of the children have additional visual, hearing and/or speech and language difficulties. The school's education and residential provision is based on 'Conductive Education'. The residential provision operates from Monday to Thursday each week with six to ten pupils residing at the school on any one night. Pupils access the residential provision on a rolling six monthly programme and usually for a maximum of two nights per week. The residential provision is called Kipling's and is located in a separate wing of the school. The school is situated in the village of Rudyard approximately three miles outside the town of Leek. The residential provision was last inspected in December 2014.

## Inspection Judgements

**The overall experiences and progress of children and young people**

**Outstanding**

Children make outstanding progress in residency taking account of their starting points. They experience nurturing and tailored care that reflects their individual needs and vulnerabilities. Care is extremely well organised and remains focused on the conductive education model used across the wider school. This genuine 24-hour curriculum means that children experience integrated and comprehensive care. Parents, teaching staff and other professionals recognise and commend the immensely positive impact this service has on the development of children's social, emotional, practical and educational skills.

Stimulating activities are central to children's time in residency. These are interesting, rewarding and motivational. All children, regardless of their individual support needs or communication needs are enabled to participate fully in all activities. Staff engage children from the moment their school day ends, using fun and entertaining activities to continue the learning process and support children to develop new skills. This continual learning culture forms an essential aspect of residency.

Children receive effective support that is individually tailored to meet their bespoke needs. Personal goals and targets are set to be challenging in line with ethos of conductive education. This supports each child to achieve their full potential. Residential staff work in partnership with parents, carers and teaching staff, to find ways of helping children overcome any barriers or difficulties they face. This outstanding practice means that children's progress is measurable and sustainable. One parent said: 'I am truly amazed my child can do things I never dreamed possible. I am so proud and so thankful.'

School leaders and residential managers ensure that the service is effectively monitored to challenge any noted shortfalls and identify any patterns or trends that hinder children's development. Monitoring systems incorporate children's progress, along with feedback from others. Parents continually praise the setting for its 'care, support and safety', highlighting the knowledge, skills and experience of the staff team.

Children are safe in residency because this aspect of care is prioritised. Safeguarding procedures are robust, detailed and regularly reviewed and monitored. These link to behavioural strategies that reflect children's ages and abilities. They place emphasis on a collaborative approach to promoting children's safety and security.

Children's complex health needs are consistently met. Staff work in partnership with other agencies, and health professionals to ensure that medication is safely administered. Multi-disciplinary health plans means that all aspects of children's health and well-being are supported to ensure their health is promoted.

Positive relationship between children and staff is a considerable strength of residency. The atmosphere is relaxed, warm and welcoming and children thrive in the setting because they receive bespoke care that enhances their life chances. The appropriate levels of affection between children and care staff means that they begin to develop relationships with others based on trust and respect.

Children consistently receive outstanding care and support that is tailored to reflect their individual needs and circumstances. Staff received comprehensive and clear direction from a strong and effective leadership team. This sets the standard of day-to-day routines in residency and as a result, children thrive in this environment. The conductive education ethos is promoted throughout school and residency. This provides children with optimum opportunities to enhance and develop their social and emotional skills along with their practical and independence skills.

The inclusive 'can do' approach of residency is achieved through child focused and constructive relationships between the staff team, children and their families. Children have strong and appropriate attachments to staff. Boundaries and expectations of behaviour are clear. These expectations are communicated to children in an age appropriate manner that supports their understanding and reflects their cognitive skills.

Admission and induction practices are extremely well planned and organised. Children and their families are aware of the residential service offered by the school before they are eligible to access the provision. A 'parent lead' approach to considering residency as a viable option for children means that transitions are well supported and successful. Residential staff understand the anxieties experienced by children and their families when they first access this service. Their work is partnership to emphasise the positive impact the service has on children's development. One parent said: 'At first I was reluctant because it's hard to let go and trust others with your child, but the change in my child is phenomenal and I am so pleased I embraced the opportunity.' There is scope for residency to continue until children leave the school and this potential should be considered to maximise children's developmental opportunities.

Partnership working between education staff and care staff means that children experience a seamless transition between school and residency. Coupled with the continued ethos of the conductive education model embraced by the setting, this means that children receive continuity of care. This is further enhanced by care staff frequently fulfilling roles in the school during the day.

Staff promote children's health and work in partnership with families and medical professionals. This ensures staff are fully aware of children's complex health needs. These include long-term health conditions, dietary requirements and medications. While at school, children are supported to access routine and specialist practitioners such as physiotherapists, epilepsy nurses and school nursing services. The school effectively utilises these links to ensure specific health needs and conditions continue to be monitored and assessed when children are in residency. Residential staff are well trained to respond to children's complex health needs and complete specific training in the delivery of bespoke health care such as gastrostomy tube feeding. This promoted children safety whilst enabling them the experience residency.

Mealtimes are fun and socially stimulating occasions. Children are encouraged to try new foods and embrace food from other cultures. Meals are nutritional and well balanced and any specific dietary needs are catered for. Children's views and preference relating to food choices are gathered and these are assimilated into menu plans.

Residency provides children with suitable accommodation that is safe, clean and tidy. Children are able to access school facilities outside of usual school hours and along with ample external space. The environment is comfortable and homely. It is well maintained and decorated. Children are able to personalise their bedrooms with pictures and photographs if they wish and are encouraged to do so.

## How well children and young people are protected

**Outstanding**

Children are safe in residency and feel safe. This is because protecting children from harm is prioritised across the school environment. Leaders and managers demonstrate a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the accountability of all staff is continually emphasised. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and their knowledge is confirmed through team meetings and formal supervisions sessions. Staff are alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse and when necessary refer any concerns onto designated officers. Safeguarding referral procedures are outstanding. These are 'user' friendly and child-focused. Their simplicity means that staff are confident in recording any concerns they note and they fully understand the scope of the safeguarding remit and the importance of open and transparent communication with other agencies. Furthermore, all visitors and parents attending the school are provided with clear information about what to do if they have a concern about a child. This practice demonstrates the school's approach to highlighting safe practice across the service.

Children's ages and cognitive abilities means that care staff are acutely aware of their individual risks and vulnerabilities. When appropriate, residential staff encourage children to consider their own risk factors. Strategies to manage risks are focused on safety but also promote opportunities to take age appropriate risks. For other children, the emphasis is on shift organisation and routines within residency. For example, when children require full personal care, this is planned and delivered with care, sensitivity and dedication to continually promote and respect children's dignity. Safety and child protection is never compromised in favour of speed or convenience.

Staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the children's complexities, including their behavioural difficulties and communication needs. They utilise this knowledge to promote positive behaviours through verbal praise and tangible rewards. This approach replaces the need for sanctions or physical restraint and helps children to manage their anxieties. The continual celebration of children's achievements promotes their self-confidence and self-esteem.

The recruitment, selection and vetting of staff is effective. Robust monitoring systems detail employee references, any gaps in employment and verifies relevant qualifications. This promotes children safety and means that they work with suitably vetted adults.

Environmental health and safety issues are exceptionally well managed and monitored. Robust systems ensure that all specialist equipment and fire safety equipment are regularly tested. This ensures that children remain safe in residency. Detailed risk assessments are also completed to minimise risks to children both on and off site.

## The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

**Outstanding**

Leaders and managers are inspirational and passionate; they have high expectations of children as well as the whole staff team. Experienced managers and senior staff are accessible and supportive. The school and residential environment strives for continual improvement through the delivery of conductive education. This child centred approach provides staff with a clear focus that enables children to develop socially, emotionally and educationally. This holistic care and education package means that children make remarkable progress as a result

of accessing this service.

Managers provide excellent day-to-day support and ensure that sufficient staff are available to meet children needs. Staff receive regular formal and informal supervision and appraisals. These meetings promote the professional development of the team and ensure excellent standards of practice. Staff participate in core training and specialist training as well as 'whole school' learning events. This enhance their knowledge and ensure they have the necessary skills to effectively support children in residency.

Managers have an excellent insight into how well children are being looked after and supported, and the progress they make in residency. Monitoring systems highlight areas for development and the strengths of the service. This robust monitoring is evaluative and reflective of the views and opinions of others. For example, the head of care uses questionnaires to seek feedback on the quality of care, operational issues and suggestions for improvements. Governors continue to report on the suitability of the service and the impact this has on children. This provides a helpful level of scrutiny. The head of care is well supported in her role and full understands the aims, objectives and purpose of the residential provision. This is reflected in the targets set in the school's development plan. As a result, the whole staff team are involved and responsible for the development and progress of the residential service.

The systems for dealing with complaints are robust and transparent. There have been no formal complaints from children, parents or others since the last inspection. A full range of statutory and complimentary policies and procedures are in place, and accessible via the schools' website which is currently being updated.

A number of developments and improvements have occurred since the last inspection. A new head teacher is in post and there is a regenerated commitment to delivering exceptionally high quality care. Practice changes are underpinned by sound research relating to child development and educational achievements, and an excellent knowledge of children's individual needs with an emphasis on partnership working.

## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124496
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC038727
<b>DfE registration number</b>	860/7003

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	26
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	6 to 11
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Dambach
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	12/12/2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	01538 306214
<b>Email address</b>	headteacher@hortonlodge.staffs.sch.uk

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