

# Hebden Green Special School

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

<b>Inspection dates</b>	29/11/2016 to 01/12/2016	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Pupils make significant progress as a result of the highly effective collaborative working between care, therapy and education staff. Staff implement strategies compiled following on-going, detailed assessment of pupils' needs. This ensures pupils receive tailored care and support to promote their specific developmental requirements.
- Pupils flourish and improve their social, communication and independence skills. Through extremely responsive and positive relationships with staff, they are developing confidence and self-esteem knowing they are valued as unique individuals.
- The safety of pupils is central to all practice. Robust and effective safeguarding measures protect pupils. Staff are confident and competent in their safeguarding role and implement appropriate action to protect pupils' welfare.
- Leaders are passionately committed to providing pupils with high standards of individualised care and support. All staff share this dedication which is clearly demonstrated through numerous examples of best practice in providing care and support for pupils with complex needs.
- A strength of the school is the support provided for families. Staff work in partnership to promote pupils' development and provide additional support in the form of an open door policy.
- Leaders are proactive in extending the benefits of their expertise to the wider community, working with teachers from other schools to help develop a broader understanding of their client group to benefit young people in the wider society.

## **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?**

- Ensure that the accommodation contains suitable specialist facilities to support pupils whose disabilities require them, with particular regards to a shower chair.
- Allow pupils to benefit from a broad range of social and recreational activities which include activities in the wider community.
- Demonstrate to pupils how their views have made a difference to the residential provision.
- Increase the opportunities for males to work or volunteer in the residential provision to more accurately reflect the gender balance with the pupils.
- Ensure the residential provision is effectively led by suitably trained managers, with particular regards to the head of care to undertake a leadership and management qualification.
- Actively monitor the quality of care with the use of learning from feedback to improve the experiences and care of pupils such as feedback from residential staff, pupils, parents and carers and other agencies in contact with the school.

## Information about this inspection

The school was given three hours' notice of the inspection. Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, head of care, senior care associate, business and finance officer, nursing manager, a group of parents, residential staff and pupils. Both residential houses were visited, with observation of staff and pupils' interactions and activities. The inspector joined pupils for two meals. Policies, records and individual pupil files were examined. Telephone contact was made with the local safeguarding team.

## Inspection team

Elaine Clare

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 5 upwards. Different groups stay overnight between Monday and Thursday. Although the residential provision can accommodate up to 20 young people, the actual numbers in residence on any one night are fewer. The residential provision is staffed by care staff employed by the local authority, supported by a team of qualified nurses employed by East Cheshire National Health Service Trust. The residential provision of the school was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2015. In July 2014, Ofsted inspected the education provision, and all areas linked to education were judged to be outstanding.

## Inspection judgements

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

**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. One parent said: 'Both my son and myself get fantastic support from staff at the school. They understand his needs and I am happy his needs are being met.'

Responses received by parents and other external sources are positive regarding the way pupils are looked after and supported. For example, one parent says, 'The school provides great care in what they do and the attention to detail is outstanding.' A residential pupil encapsulated his own feelings and those of others by simply saying 'yeah' in response to whether he liked staying at the school. Another residential pupil was observed to undertake a lap of honour in his wheelchair around the lounge at the delight of winning a board game, while other pupils celebrating his success, with him.

Residential care staff are experienced, committed and understand the diverse needs of the residents in their care. For example one parent commented about the care staff: 'They know the individual needs of my child.' Staff know the pupils very well and are nurturing and responsive to their needs. Through consistent, positive interactions, pupils develop warm, trusting relationships with staff. As pupils develop their social and communication skills they learn how to deal with social situations and establish friendships

Developing pupils' life skills and independence skills is integral throughout the school's curriculum, including the time they spend in the residential environment. Care staff support them to become confident young adults at a pace and level appropriate to their ability and vulnerability.

Staff are skilled in communicating effectively with pupils which results in high levels of ongoing, daily consultation where the views and wishes of pupils are known and understood. As a result pupils contribute effectively to aspects of the residential provision such as the food they eat and the appearance of the living areas. This provides them with a feeling of worth.

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 relationship between peers leads to a strong sense of community which is apparent throughout the school.

The residential independent flat provision contributes significantly towards preparing 16+ pupils for life beyond the school. Pupils are encouraged to develop life skills and to be independent. For example, older pupils visited the local furniture store to decorate the flats to be 'more homely'. They socialise with their peers on age appropriate

activities, for example watching reality television programmes and listening to music. As a result, this promotes residential pupils confidence, which in turn provides a sound basis for later life.

## **The quality of care and support**

**Good**

Highly individualised care plans demonstrate that staff know pupils extremely well. Support strategies are specific to the needs of each pupil and include particular communication therapy interventions for staff to use to promote development and provide a constructive experience. Staff are skilled in implementing these support strategies within a structured environment. Adopting a positive and enthusiastic approach, staff offer a nurturing environment where pupils can develop their individuality, benefit from opportunities to maximise their potential and improve their self-esteem.

Interaction with pupils is calm and focused allowing them to respond positively to the support staff offer and build trusting relationships. Enabling pupils to make their views, opinions and needs known is a clear priority for staff. Speech and language therapy is embedded into the school, supporting pupils with communication difficulties. Care staff receive training to support pupils' communication needs. Individual support plans include information on assisting pupils with their social and communication skills. Staff use alternative forms of communication for pupils who are pre-verbal to aid their understanding and ensure they have opportunities to express themselves. This integrated approach to therapy allows pupils to benefit from the consistent application of communication methods best suited to their individual needs.

Staff are proactive in seeking pupils' views and opinions, providing them with support to help make responsible choices according to their age and ability. Residential meeting minutes show that not everything pupils ask for happens, however there is no explanation to the pupils as to why. This could leave pupils feeling that staff do not listen to their views and opinions. Each pupil has a key worker who meets them individually and advocates on their behalf to ensure their opinions are known. Pupils are not given an option about who to have as their key worker. Currently care staff are assigned to a pupil. This does not provide pupils with a choice of who they would prefer. Pupils are involved in residents' meetings and the school council where they can put forward their views in a more formal setting.

Individual health and well-being profiles highlight all medical and health needs. Their emotional needs have a high priority. Systems for the administration of medication are robust. Nursing staff are contracted to work alongside care staff. They are well-trained to manage medication safely and nursing managers regularly audit the process to monitor safe practice.

Staff organise structured activities for pupils with a focus on physical and craft activities to promote their well-being. Community experiences are currently limited as the school has no access to its own adapted vehicle and has limited funding. As a result, pupils cannot expand on their social experiences or have further opportunities for developing appropriate social skills to become more confident in managing situations. In addition, staff are limited in promoting pupils' individual interests. Some pupils commented that

activities were 'boring' and a parent felt that too much emphasis was placed on craft.

Accommodation for pupils is comfortable and tailored to meet their individual needs. This enables them to relax and reduces their level of anxiety. One pupil raised a request that a specialist shower chair be purchased so he would be able to use the shower independently. This was discussed with the headteacher at the last inspection. His request has since been minuted in the residential meetings but, a year later, a chair has still not been purchased. This does not ensure that the promise to purchase specialist facilities required to support a pupil with a disability is fully fulfilled.

## **How well children and young people are protected**

## **Outstanding**

Extremely effective safeguarding measures protect pupils. All staff are acutely aware of pupils' vulnerability and staff responsibility for ensuring safety. Pupils are happy and relaxed in the residential environment. Parents report that they have no concerns about their children's safety.

Staff are well trained and confident in their safeguarding role, with the necessary understanding of current issues that can pose risks to pupils such as child sexual exploitation, e-safety and radicalisation. The headteacher leads a safeguarding team which considers all concerns referred by staff. Appropriate action is taken including consultation with, and referral to, external agencies.

In line with the integrated, multidisciplinary approach, all staff involved with a pupil meet to compile risk assessments. These are highly specific to the pupil and rigorous. Termly reviews of pupils' plans and risk assessments by this multi-disciplinary group ensure strategies are current and appropriate for their developing needs. Consequently, incidents involving physical intervention are not used in the residential provision and behaviour management is excellent.

Throughout the school there is an emphasis on educating pupils so that they can keep themselves safe. E-safety has a high priority. There is on-going work by staff to ensure pupils are aware of the risks they face when using the internet. Parents and carers are included in this programme to ensure they have sufficient knowledge to monitor their child's on-line safety. A proactive approach to bullying helps pupils appreciate the effect of their behaviour on others.

There has not been any incidents involving pupils leaving the residential provision without permission. Appropriate measures are in place to protect pupils who are at high risk if they leave the premises without staff support, including site security and liaison with the local police in line with local authority protocols. These measures do not restrict pupils with greater levels of independence.

Comprehensive health and safety measures protect pupils. Appropriate fire safety checks are routinely applied including regular fire drills. Robust recruitment processes safeguard pupils from unsuitable adults working with them.

The headteacher is passionately committed to providing high standards of individualised education and care for pupils and senior leaders share this dedication. The head of care is part of the senior leadership team, who view the residential provision as an integral and valuable aspect of the school. The residential staff team supports the work of education staff in implementing specific targets to support residential pupils. Pupils benefit enormously from this truly multidisciplinary approach to their education and care.

Appropriate staffing levels are available to meet the needs of the pupils. However, there is a significant gender imbalance which does not reflect the gender balance of the pupils. Efforts to increase the number of male staff at the residential setting have been an area of development for the headteacher, but its success has had little impact on the pupils. Training and development of staff has a high priority to ensure all staff understand learning disabilities and have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support pupils and promote positive outcomes. The appraisal and supervision process to manage staff performance ensures they understand their role, have clear objectives and training to support pupils' progress and achievement.

A new head of care and two new care staff have been recruited to work in the residential provision since the last inspection, and all have previously worked in the school. The head of care is a very experienced member of staff with care qualifications to assist her in her role. Part of her role is to supervise and appraise the residential care staff team. While she has some experience in this area she has had no formal training and does not have a management and leadership qualification.

New staff members receive thorough induction support which takes them through the whole school provision. They quickly understand everyone's roles and responsibilities and how these impact upon their own job role. All members of the residential staff team have completed, or are studying for Level 3 Diplomas. A team of staff who strives to maintain their competence, skills and expertise provide good quality support to pupils.

The governing body provides support and effective challenge to senior leaders. Governors use an independent person to conduct unannounced visits to the residential provision on their behalf. He produces reports which focus upon areas to improve. Some areas required to be monitored by the governors are not being reported upon and an evaluation of what they have seen is sometimes missing. Staff, parents and other professionals in contact with the school do not have an opportunity to meet with the independent person, on an individual basis and in private, to talk about their experiences in the residential provision. This feedback from pupils, residential staff and other stakeholders would assist the governing body further to learn and improve on the pupils' experience.

The school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Clear and measurable development plans are under continuing monitoring and review.

Working with parents and carers is a strength of the school. Staff work collaboratively with families, know them well and keep them informed of a pupil's targets and progress so that pupils benefit from a consistent approach. Leaders and managers are aspirational and proactive in disseminating excellent practice to benefit children and young people

with specific learning needs.

## 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>	111505
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC006614
<b>DfE registration number</b>	

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>	105
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	8 to 19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Ashley
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	08/12/2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01606 594221
<b>Email address</b>	admin@hebdengreen.cheshire.sch.uk

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