

Horton Lodge

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

Inspection dates	28/03/2017 to 30/03/2017	
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	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because:

- The residential provision is an area of excellence in the school. Children that stay at the residential provision are growing in confidence and independence as a direct consequence of their residential experience. Parents praise the staff for their high level of commitment and child-centred care.
- Staff implement safeguarding procedures extremely well. This practice ensures that children stay safe at all times.
- Seamless links between children's families, school and the residential provision mean that residential staff have access to up-to-date information that is centred on the unique needs of each child.
- Children are empowered to make informed choices. Residential staff actively listen to each child and respect their views.
- Every child has access to a wide range of activities that they thoroughly enjoy.
- The residential provision success emanates from the very top. The headteacher and members of the leadership team share a clear vision, in which children's welfare, education and well-being are their top priority.
- The staff work in partnership with other schools to secure continuous improvement.
- The staff provide frequent and regular opportunities for every child to be praised for their achievements.
- Leadership actively uses research, including childcare theory, to improve staff practice and to enhance children's residential experiences and progress.
- All national minimum standards are met. Two recommendations have been made to

leadership to improve some records.

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?

- Formalise the records relating to annual appraisals and the residential development plan.
- Update the statement of purpose to include recent staff changes.

Information about this inspection

This welfare only inspection was completed over three days, following the appropriate notice period for this type of visit. A tour of the residential accommodation was undertaken. Two 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 were 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

Andrew Hewston

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Horton Lodge is a local authority maintained residential special school for 52 boys and girls aged 2 to 11 years who have physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties. Some of the children have additional visual, hearing and/or speech and language difficulties. The school's education is based on 'Conductive Education'. The residential provision operates from Monday to Wednesday each week with 6 to 10 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 residential provision was last inspected in February 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Children receive an outstanding level of care from a staff team that puts each child's welfare, care and well-being as their top priority. One parent commented, 'The fact that my daughter has learned how to start dressing herself is a significant move forwards for us as a family, and would have taken a lot longer if it weren't for residence.'

Relationships observed in the residential provision show that staff care for children exceptionally well. Staff are constantly aware of children's complex needs and support them throughout their residential experience. Alongside this care, staff positively challenge children to develop further by improving their physical and cognitive skills. Communication between staff and parents is strong. This strength of communication means that parents are able to talk to both staff and their children at any point. Parents find the home/school communication book an invaluable tool to share information. One parent told the inspector that they read the book when their child comes home and stated, 'It is really exciting to hear what they have been up to.'

Children play an integral role in decisions about their school lives. For example, children are able to discuss their residential experiences in school council meetings. This gives children influence in decisions that have a direct impact on their everyday life. To ensure that this engagement is meaningful, staff work hard to ensure that every child's voice is at the heart of the decision-making process. This is achieved because staff are highly skilled in using a wide range of different communication methods that enable children to be included in these key discussions.

Safeguarding in the school is given a high profile and consequently the children say that they feel safe. Staff receive training that ensures that they stay competent in their designated safeguarding roles. There are clear systems to monitor children's safety including robust recruitment procedures.

Children's behaviours are well known by the staff. Staff use this knowledge extremely well to enable them to use a range of strategies to defuse possible areas of challenge, while at the same time praising children for their achievements.

Children's health needs are well considered and responded to in a professional manner. Healthy living and exercise are promoted throughout children's stay, with children being encouraged to enjoy the outside world. The school's external area is fully used to help stimulate children's senses. Staff are always looking for different ways to enhance children's experiences. For example, there are plans in place to further encourage children to explore their own environment in a range of ways such as camping.

Children are flourishing from opportunities to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities that positively stretch their abilities. For example, children completed an arts and craft activity during the inspection that included decorating Easter eggs with a range of colourful and tactile items. Children were seen to be very proud of their achievements. This enhances children's self-esteem and brings out children's creativity.

Residential planning for children integrates the school's planning processes, with a consistent drive towards children achieving their individualised targets. The school's management structure helps to support a cohesive approach to the residential provision

being an integral part of the school.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Staff create an inclusive residential provision in which every aspect of practice is set at optimising life chances for all children. Children told the inspector that they really enjoy their stays at the residential service, highlighting the best things as the 'nice staff'.

Communication between school and residential provision is strong, with effective systems in place to ensure that up-to-date information is shared between the two areas. Residential staff also work in the school environment. This helps to ensure that children receive a consistent level of care.

The residential accommodation is pleasant, warm and comfortable. Communal areas are colourful, including photographs of all children that choose to use the residential provision. Residential staff give consideration to the wishes and feelings of each child about shared bedrooms. This ensures that children are central to the key decisions.

Children state that they like their bedrooms, with one child excitedly bouncing on his bed while pointing out the bed of his best friend and telling the inspector, 'I can chat to my friend at night-time when we are in our rooms. It's great.'

Children hugely benefit from the comprehensive oversight from school staff that monitor all aspects of a child's healthcare. Clear therapeutic support comes through referrals to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) as well as regular input from a physiotherapist. Children's personal care is well managed, with staff encouraging children to take an active part in their washing and teeth cleaning, and developing their independence. One parent told the inspector, 'You wouldn't believe how much of a difference it makes at home now that (the child) can brush her teeth independently.' A new 'tooth-fairy' toy is used to celebrate the small milestone for children, showing the consideration that is given to all aspects of children's health.

Excellent provision is made for healthy food and social mealtimes. Meals are home-cooked and healthy, and there is a wide variety and choice. Children eat breakfast and dinner together. This ensures that children receive a balanced diet, and benefit from social interaction that comes with quality time with staff and friends. A range of feeding systems are used, with staff being well trained in each area, promoting children's privacy when necessary. Specialist equipment and staff's constant awareness of the children's abilities help children to learn new skills at mealtimes, developing their independence.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Children are very safe, and state that they feel safe during their residential stays. Individual risk assessments are revisited regularly and staff manage risks well. Children are encouraged to take controlled risks, promoting the development of their physical and social skills.

The staff approach to safeguarding is excellent. The designated safeguarding lead

ensures that procedures are followed rigorously. The child protection records are clear, and the system of monitoring safeguarding concerns ensures that records detail the immediate action taken to protect children's welfare. These enable the swift assessment of whether or not further action is necessary. A tremendous response to a concern relating to possible radicalisation highlights staff's strong awareness of the 'Prevent' agenda and shows staff's willingness to work with different agencies to protect children and their families. Weekly multi-disciplinary safeguarding meetings ensure that all concerns are formally recorded and reviewed if necessary. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and are confident in discussing how they would respond should they have concerns.

Children achieve high standards of exceptional behaviour because of the trust and sense of security they get from having a stable and consistent staff team, who know their individual needs extremely well. Staff constantly use praise, promoting consideration of their peers and taking turns. A new 'star of the night' process acknowledges all children's successes daily, with children actively collecting stickers and being proud of their achievements. Staff ensure that clear boundaries relating to behaviours are in place. The staff focus on de-escalating challenging behaviours and preventing incidents by using diversion. As a result, there have been no physical interventions or incidents.

Clear procedures are in place relating to incidents of children going missing. No such events have occurred.

The school site is physically safe and secure. The staff ensure that visitors are monitored and that they sign in and are chaperoned around the school. Maintenance is of a high standard, with minor repairs completed quickly. Therefore, residential accommodation is free from hazards and children are physically safe. The premises manager takes pride and care to ensure that the premises and grounds are well maintained, with good risk awareness and risk management.

Leaders ensure that recruitment procedures are rigorous so that all staff working with children are suitably vetted. These comprehensive measures help to keep children safe.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The headteacher strives to deliver high-quality care that focuses on helping children to achieve their full potential. A joined-up approach between teaching staff and care staff means that children thrive, physically, emotionally, socially and educationally.

Although there have been some changes in staffing, these changes have not affected the stable and consistent approach to the care of the children. A range of staff and parents have been complimentary about the improvements that have come with the changes, highlighting increased communication and better organisation of paperwork. However, some records do require improvement. This includes staff appraisals records and the residential provision having a detailed development plan. The statement of purpose has been updated since the last inspection, although it still requires further updates to staffing information following recent recruitment. These minor shortfalls do not detract from the excellent practice and high-quality care that the children receive.

The residential staff thoroughly enjoy working at the school. They show enthusiasm and imagination when talking about the care they provide.

There have been no complaints in respect of the residential provision. However, clear and detailed procedures are in place should parents or children wish to do so. The headteacher and the governors ensure that the policies are up to date and suitable.

The staff receive regular supervision and attend weekly team meetings. They are cohesive and supportive of one another. This results in good team morale and ensures that staff clearly understand their responsibilities and roles. The staff speak positively about the headteacher and head of care, who they feel are approachable and supportive and listen to new ideas that may improve the quality of care for the children. Staff receive training that is pertinent to their role, with more established staff now completing diploma level courses in childcare.

Monitoring systems are strong. The school works collaboratively with other residential schools in the local authority. This includes sharing ideas and best practice. Meetings include examination research practice. This extends to sharing the principles of the school's own theoretical models. A reciprocal visiting system allows heads of care to see how other schools work. A dedicated link governor regularly visits the residential provision, checking records, observing practice and talking to staff. The independent visitor from a local school offers support to the children as well as having an awareness of the expectations of the national minimum standards. These different monitoring visits ensure that staff keep necessary records up to date and are constantly involved in learning about different ways of working with children.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors 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 exceed the standard of good and result 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 that children and young people are not protected or that their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or, if their care and experiences are poor, that they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	124496
Social care unique reference number	SC038727
DfE registration number	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.

Type of school	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	59
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	2 to12
Headteacher	Mrs J Damach
Date of previous boarding inspection	08/02/2016
Telephone number	01538 306214
Email address	headteacher@hortonlodge.staffs.sch.uk

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