

Hebden Green Special School

1 Hebden Green Special School Grounds, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 4EJ
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special 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 two 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 the National Health Service. In July 2014, Ofsted inspected the education provision, and all areas linked to education were judged to be outstanding.

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 June 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 29 November 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children are making significant progress in their behaviour, social skills, independence, self-confidence and self-esteem. Improvements in their emotional health have a positive impact on their academic progress.
- Children's safety and welfare are given the highest priority at the school. Safeguarding arrangements are strong across all areas of residential and school life. Rigorous whole-school systems keep residential children safe. There is creative direct work with children on personal safety.
- The residential facility is integral to the school and contributes significantly to the progress of the children and young people who use it. They are helped to manage their anxieties and deal more effectively with transitions and change.
- Residential pupils know that they are highly valued by staff, who demonstrate genuine care and affection for them. The strength of these relationships helps residential pupils to readily settle, enjoy their residential experience and take full advantage of all that the provision has to offer.
- Parents and carers have trust and faith in the staff team. The excellent relationships achieve consistent care and support at home and school. One parent said: 'This is a fantastic, well-led school whose staff are extremely dedicated, and there is a lovely, caring atmosphere where the children all look after each other.'
- Superb leadership and management arrangements hold everyone to account within a nurturing and enabling environment. Staff are supported and managed, in equal measure, to ensure the best outcomes for the residential pupils.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Residential care staff could improve on recognising and recording the individual achievements that the children have made at the residential provision.
- Provide families with an understanding of who the children's friends are within the residential provision and whom they spend their time with on their overnight stays.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- In order to ensure that the recruitment of staff is always robust, the headteacher should have regards to and should follow the Secretary of State guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education'.
- Establish a monitoring system that ensures that all recruitment checks completed by administrators have regards to Secretary of State guidance, on, 'Keeping children safe in education'.
- Review in children's records the statutory care recommendations following a looked after child review to ensure that the school is assisting with any points with regards to education and social or emotional well-being.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children and young people say that they enjoy the residential experience. They recognise that it helps them to learn new skills and to become more independent. They say that the best part is 'that it feels like you're having sleepovers with your friends'. This is having an extremely positive impact on young people and demonstrates a sustained improvement on the young people's personal, social and emotional development.

Children and young people receive care from an established, familiar, staff team that provides a consistent approach to the children. The staff know and respect the individual identities of the young people, and they use positive reinforcement and celebration of difference to allow individual personalities to shine. Peer relationships are strong, and the staff support children to understand each other's differences. An example of this is the observation of children signing and interpreting what another pupil was saying to the care staff. One child had researched on YouTube signing conversations so that he could communicate with his friend better.

Residential pupils settle quickly, because of high-quality assessment and admission processes. Rich information is sought from previous schools, relevant professionals, parents and carers. Introductions to the school are individually tailored, and might include tea visits before overnight stays. Patient staff said: 'It is best when the child and their parents/carers make the final decision that everyone is ready. Typically, the children can't wait to join us.' Skilful staff allay parental anxieties quickly. One parent said: 'My child only joined the school in September 2016, and the school and staff have gone above and beyond to ensure that the settling-in period went as smoothly as possible. Every query that I have had has been dealt with.' The relationships between staff and children are supportive and nurturing as children adjust to residential overnight stays, and they help the children to build emotional resilience while away from home.

The children and young people make exceptional progress in all areas of academic and emotional development from their starting points. They engage with staff, and are both motivated and supported to learn. There is good data capture and analysis to evidence children's attainment and their behavioural changes. However, recording around the impact of the residential setting on outcomes for young people could be further developed. The staff provide highly personalised care, which means that residential stays further enhance children's and young people's progress.

Children and young people are confident that they can approach staff with any concerns or worries. Each young person has a key worker who provides individual support in accordance with their care plan and risk assessments. One-to-one sessions provide opportunities for young people to put forward their views and their opinions on their plans and targets. School forum meetings are effective in allowing children

and young people opportunities to voice their opinions on a range of subjects, such as menus, bullying and activities. Feedback provided by the senior leadership team clearly demonstrates to young people that their views are important and that they value their ideas and suggestions, and respect their viewpoints.

Developing young people's independence skills is a priority as they move through the school towards the next stage of their lives. Staff design specific programmes to advance young people's practical daily living skills so that they can successfully look after themselves. There is also a focus on increasing their knowledge of how to access the facilities and services that they will need as young adults. An example of this was sixth-form pupils ordering a taxi to take them to a retail coffee outlet so that they could chat with friends over drinks. Young people spoke of how proud they felt about their achievement. Staff ensure that planning for young people leaving the school begins well in advance to support their successful transition, and outings such as these support them and help them grow in confidence.

One parent encapsulated the views of many by writing a comment on Parent View: 'I feel that my daughter is extremely lucky to attend this school. There is a great, supportive, family feel to the school. My daughter just loves going to school every day and is making slow but steady progress, at the right speed for her, in class. Teachers are dedicated, caring and want your child to achieve the best that they can. My daughter attends residential for one night a week. The staff there are fantastic, making it a home from home with the right amount of structure and routine. I feel happy that my child is safe and cared for while there. I am confident that my child will continue to thrive and learn at (name) School, and would not hesitate to recommend the school to other parents of children with a disability.'

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Children and young people say that they feel safe, and they undoubtedly have a strong sense of safety and well-being. The parents spoken to have confidence in the school's ability to ensure their children's safety, and they appreciate the level of supervision provided. Information displayed throughout the accommodation informs children how to make a complaint or raise a concern.

The headteacher and staff are well aware of the vulnerability of children and young people at the school, due to their different levels of ability. They are therefore especially vigilant in their practice. Staff are knowledgeable and well trained in safeguarding. They are confident in their roles, alert to any concerns, and conscientious in reporting and referring any safeguarding concerns. The headteacher adopts a timely and proactive approach to referring concerns to external agencies by implementing follow-up action to ensure that appropriate action is taken to protect children's and young people's welfare. Any risks are well understood and are being significantly reduced through effective liaison with external agencies, such as the local authority designated officer and local authority safeguarding teams. This highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the school and,

ultimately, strengthens the school's response to safeguarding concerns.

Children are clear about the expectations of their behaviour, as staff and children create and implement behaviour management strategies positively and proactively. The staff focus on defusing and preventing incidents, and children are well stimulated during their stays. As a result, there have been no physical interventions and minimal incidents. When incidents do occur, staff, children and young people have the opportunity to reflect and learn new strategies to help to manage pupils anger and frustration. This helps children to build confidence and emotional resilience.

There have been no incidents of young people going missing or requiring a restraint since the last inspection. Bullying and conflicts are very infrequent, and children spoken said that they do not recall anything in residence around bullying. Much of this is due to the level of supervision, but also the role modelling by staff. Young people reported that they know how to report bullying, including cyber bullying, and that it would be regarded as a serious matter.

External agencies support the staff to engage with the children around the dangers and risks associated with the internet. The parents and carers can attend evening information sessions held throughout the year.

Governors, together with the independent visitor, play their role in monitoring the school's progress and safeguarding, with regular visits and the consideration of reports prepared by staff. All necessary protocols are in place to underpin safeguarding practice and are periodically reviewed by the board.

The site is physically safe and secure. The staff ensure that visitors are monitored, signed in and chaperoned. Maintenance is of a high standard, and minor repairs are completed quickly. Therefore, the residential accommodation is free from hazards, and children are physically safe. The premises manager takes pride and ensures that the premises and grounds are well maintained, with good risk awareness and risk management. Overall, the health and safety of the residential provision are robust.

On the whole, the recruitment procedures ensure that all staff working with children and young people are suitable to do so. These comprehensive measures result in a school that is safe for young people. On one occasion, a member of staff started at the school before all references were obtained. While all other recruitment checks had been completed, the references remained outstanding. The office manager had signed off the applicant to start employment, yet the references confirming the applicant's good character and integrity were obtained some weeks later. During this period, the staff member was supervised when with young people. However, this process does not show regard for the guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education', issued by the Secretary of State. The guidance suggests that references are obtained prior to the start of employment. Furthermore, the headteacher and governors of the school were not aware of the anomaly, and this exposes a shortfall in the monitoring. The headteacher fully acknowledged that the outcome could have had an impact on

the safeguarding of children but, in this instance, the impact on children who access the residential provision was negligible.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The school has been judged to be outstanding for a number of years. However, the headteacher and her staff have not been content to stand still, and demonstrate a strong desire to continually improve. Leaders and managers know the strengths and challenges of the provision and continually want to do better, and they are ambitious with their plans. Recommendations made at the last inspection have been met and there was a keenness to benefit from any advice or suggestions made during this inspection.

The headteacher, head of care and staff form a very strong, stable staff team. Many staff team members are long serving. They strive to deliver the highest quality of care, and they focus well on helping children to achieve. Staff members are commended for the support that they provide to each other and their focus upon meeting the needs of the residential pupils. The joined-up school and residential management and staff teams provide effective, attuned leadership and care across the provision.

The headteacher provides inspiring leadership and has drawn together a team that believes strongly in the ethos of the school. The senior leadership team has a 'hands on' approach, including spending time in the residential provision, where leaders model excellent childcare practice. There are high aspirations for children and young people across the range of their progress, both socially and emotionally as well as academically.

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 they clearly understand the responsibilities of their roles. The staff spoke positively about the head of care, whom they feel is approachable and supportive, and listens to new ideas which may improve the quality of care for the children.

There have been no complaints in respect of the residential provision. However, clear and detailed procedures are in place, should the school receive a complaint. The leadership team regularly reviews and updates policies, procedures and guidance to ensure that it meets the changing needs of children. There is close management oversight of how staff implement policies and the impact that this has on care delivery. Policies are available on the website for current and prospective parents. Records are generally well maintained. However, on occasion, not all known information is consistently put on all children's paperwork, in particular information following statutory reviews of children looked after. The impact on the children is minimal, due to the staff's in-depth knowledge and understanding of the children and the robust communication between all staff. This minor shortfall does not detract from the excellent practice and high-quality care that the children and young people

receive.

Strong governance includes the good number of parent governors who bring a diverse and challenging dimension to leaders and managers. Regular sub-committees question expenditure and scrutinise the reports and information presented by the school. The health and safety committee has a visionary plan to ensure everyone's safety and well-being within the constraints of a tight budget. The main ingredient in achieving success across and throughout the school is the genuine and tangible professional respect and challenge that are demonstrated by all departments and disciplines. This practice brings everyone together with the single aim of working together to achieve the very best outcomes for the residential pupils.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC006614

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Alison Ashley

Type of school: residential special school

Telephone number: 01606 594221

Email address: admin@hebdengreen.cheshire.sch.uk

Inspector(s)

Elaine Clare, social care inspector (lead)

Jackie Line, social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017