

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 who have physical disabilities and associated medical and/or sensory needs. The school provides education to 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. The residential provision can accommodate up to 20 young people, but currently a maximum of 12 pupils stay each night. Forty-three children and young people are accessing the residential provision. The residential provision is staffed by care staff employed by the local authority, and supported by a team of qualified nurses employed by the National Health Service. The school was last inspected in June 2017.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 June 2018

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: 13 June 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

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Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Safeguarding practice is exemplary and is interwoven into everything that the school does.
- Children and young people are thriving and have a strong sense of safety and well-being. This is because of the trusting relationships that they have with the staff.
- Children and young people receive bespoke care packages that meet their diverse needs exceptionally well. As a result, children and young people flourish and are making sustained progress across all areas of their development.
- Staff build and foster respectful and meaningful relationships with the parents and carers. Excellent communication between parents, carers, the school and the residential provision means that nothing is missed for the children and young people.
- A key strength of the provision is the emphasis on encouraging children and young people to be as independent as possible. This is significantly enhancing their employability and future life opportunities.
- Parents and carers are extremely complimentary about the residential provision and the staff. They said that the residence is 'like a family' and that the staff continually 'go above and beyond' for their children.
- Staff's innate understanding of each child and young person and their vulnerabilities means that they take effective steps to minimise any potential risks to the children and young people's safety, health and well-being.
- An inspirational and aspirational leadership team oversees the school and residential provision. Leaders are highly committed to the service and, together with the staff, are continually striving to make improvements for the benefit of the children and young people. The team is extremely well supported by the governing body, which sees the residential provision as an intrinsic part of the school.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The hot water supply in the independence accommodation is slow to come through to the taps. Young people said that this is causing an issue for them when they are doing their dishes and when trying to wash. Immediate action to resolve this was undertaken during the inspection.
- The school returns any unused medication to the families. However, it would be beneficial to risk assess the arrangements for this.

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

Recommendations

- Consider risk assessing the arrangements for the dual prescribing of medication.
- Enhance the hot water supply in the independence accommodation.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff build tremendously positive relationships with children and young people within a safe, nurturing and supportive environment. As a result, children and young people excel. Staff have high aspirations for the children and young people and ensure that they benefit from the very best standard of care.

Children and young people thoroughly enjoy their stays in the residential setting. They said that it was because they have the time to spend with their friends and to have a 'sleepover' with them. Parents value the caring and trusting relationships that their children have with the staff. Parents said that the progress of the children is 'amazing' and that their children are growing in confidence and self-esteem. Parents frequently refer to the school and residential provision as being 'a family'.

Children and young people thrive because of their highly personalised and bespoke care packages. The plans are current, organic documents. Staff have an in-depth understanding of each child and young person's diverse needs and meet these exceptionally well on a day-to-day basis. Plans are regularly updated, particularly in light of any review of the care and support provided.

Children and young people are making excellent progress. This is, in part, because of the extensive range of activities offered to them. Activities complement and enhance the opportunities and experiences that the children and young people receive in school. Because of this, one young person chose to have their respite time at the school and to increase their stays here. This plan was agreed because staff listened to the young person's wishes and helped them to put the proposal to the local authority.

Encouraging children and young people to be as independent as possible is a key strength of the provision. One young person said that, when he was 10 years old, he told the staff that he wanted to have his own home one day. This young person was delighted to recently sign a tenancy agreement. He achieved this because staff empowered him to gain the skills that he needed to achieve his goal. Another young person confidently explained how they can now order and pay for a taxi unaided. Consequently, this young person has grown in confidence and can now meet their friends outside of school, thereby increasing their independence. The independent visitor wrote, 'Students in residence this evening are a testament to the work of staff to prepare them for life beyond school.'

Each step towards independence is celebrated, even when things do not go to plan. For example, staff congratulate the young people on successfully ordering their takeaway. The ability to pick up the phone and talk to someone is a significant achievement for some young people. This not only supports the young person's independence, but also makes the world much more accessible to them.

Young people aspire to stay in the independence accommodation as they can see the value of this experience. For example, a group of young people from the independence accommodation recently undertook a trip to Liverpool and stayed

overnight in a hotel. This is a considerable achievement for them as several had not stayed in a hotel before. A parent said, 'I just think it's amazing. The opportunities that the children get is brilliant here. I haven't met a school that does as much as this one.'

Each child and young person is treated with the utmost respect and dignity. This is evident through the care taken by staff when they are attending to children and young people's personal care needs, or when they are unwell. The staff's excellent understanding of the children and young people's health issues means that they respond quickly and sensitively to any medical emergencies. This ensures that children and young people receive the best possible care when they need it most.

Inclusivity is a strength of the setting. Staff are highly skilled at enabling children and young people to overcome barriers to their participation in events and activities. The recent introduction of wheelchair rugby is a prime example of this. All children and young people, regardless of their ability, had the opportunity to be involved. This prompted admiration from the more mobile children and young people for their friends who use a wheelchair on a daily basis. This successfully enhanced the children and young people's ability to work together as a team, built on their strength and stamina, and enabled them to have fun.

Staff are highly skilled in adapting their communication style as they converse with different children and young people. They seamlessly change their interactions based on the needs of the child or young person. This means that each child or young person's 'voice' is heard and their wishes are acted on. Staff understand the subtle nuances that a smile or look from a child or young person can mean and respond appropriately.

Children and young people are exceptionally well prepared for their futures. This process begins on the day that they start at the school. Staff listen to young people's aspirations and work in tandem with them to achieve their goals where possible. Young people are positive about their futures. They say that they feel confident about their move into further education, but are sad to be leaving the school. Commenting on the support for transition, one parent said, 'It is wonderful. The support that the staff offer is fabulous. It would be very sad if this experience did not happen for other children. Because of this, my child is going to thrive when they leave here.'

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

Exemplary safeguarding practice means that young people have a strong sense of safety and well-being. However, this does not mean that the setting is risk averse, as staff actively encourage children and young people to safely take a chance on trying new things. One young person was afraid to go outside in the dark; however, because of staff's encouragement, the child is now able to venture outdoors and engage in a wealth of opportunities and experiences. Parents reported that they trust the staff implicitly and feel safe leaving their child in the care of the staff.

The head of care and the designated safeguarding lead are not afraid to make difficult decisions when it comes to keeping children safe. It is a testimony to their compassion and understanding that they have successfully maintained positive relationships with families, especially when important information had to be shared with other agencies

to safeguard children and young people. This has enabled children and young people to remain in school and for them and their families or carers to receive the necessary support.

Similarly, the headteacher recently went looking for a young person who had failed to arrive at school. She located the young person and encouraged them to return to school with her. Once at school, the young person was able to share and explore their anxieties. As a result, strategies were put in place to support the young person, who later thanked the staff for keeping them safe. This is indicative of the dedication of all staff to keeping children safe.

Young people know how to keep themselves safe when participating in everyday activities such as bike-riding as a result of diligent care and support from the staff. Parents also said that it is wonderful that a group of young people meet up at the weekend to go to the cinema together. They said that the young people can now do this because they have the confidence to negotiate public transport safely and that they now have the skills to keep themselves safe when out in the community.

Children and young people do not go missing from the residence. This is because of the complexity of their disabilities and the high staffing levels in place to support them. However, staff are not complacent, and they have a clear understanding of the action to take should a child or young person go missing.

The school uses creative and innovative ways in which to help staff to understand potential safeguarding concerns. For example, staff talk to the children and young people about the founder of a football club, the fans' allegiance to their team, and then effectively linking this to world events to explore radicalisation and the Prevent strategy. As a result, staff have a secure understanding of these topics and the potential risks to the children and young people. Enhanced recruitment procedures mean that no member of staff commences work before all their checks have been received and validated. This conforms to the guidance in 'Keeping children safe in education 2016'.

Careful planning supports and guides the staff responses to the various behaviours that the children or young people display. This means that staff quickly identify any triggers and can move to alleviate the child or young person's anxieties. The staff pride themselves on being able to 'nip things in the bud' so that situations do not escalate to the child or young person becoming distressed. Staff make effective use of the early learning and support team (ELSA) to support its practice. The ELSA team is intrinsic to everything that the residence does, and it provides excellent support to the children, young people and their families. As a direct result of this proactive intervention, there has been a significant decrease in the child in need referrals to the local authority.

There are no incidents of bullying in residence. Staff sensitively manage any concerns a child or young person may have. A young person asked whether they could move bedrooms, but were concerned that this request would upset their friend. Staff listened and agreed a way forward with the young person that successfully supported both young people through this change. As a result, the young people remain firm friends. Parents are

very complimentary about the way this was managed to reduce the young people's anxieties.

The residential accommodation and wider school site are safe. Children and young people are proud of their accommodation and the freedom that it affords them. Young people using the independence accommodation commented on the hot water supply to the taps. This is causing an issue for them with regards to doing their dishes and washing their hands. The cause of the problem was investigated during the inspection and it was established that, although there is hot water, it is very slow in coming through. The school is looking into this further.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The head of care, headteacher and senior leadership team are aspirational and their enthusiasm permeates throughout the whole staff team. They have high expectations of their staff to change, challenge and improve the lives of the children and young people they are caring for. They have created a dynamic and inspirational environment where children, young people and staff can grow and gain an extensive range of new skills. Subsequently, children and young people receive the highest quality of care and support and enjoy a seamless journey through school and residence.

The residence continues to be a crucial part of the school. It is central to everything that the school does and is valued highly by the governors, senior leadership team, children and young people and their parents. The governing body plays a vital role in the monitoring of the residential provision. It maintains an excellent oversight of the residence and meets regularly with key members of staff. Detailed reporting by the independent visitor is instrumental in helping to drive forward improvements.

Governors are enthusiastic and are dedicated to the ongoing development of the service. For example, they are consulting health colleagues and families about the plans for the dual dispensing of medication. This will further enhance the already excellent systems for the administration of medication that are currently overseen by the nursing staff. Further consideration is needed to risk assess the return of medication that has not been used to parents at the end of the term.

The headteacher and head of care are unwavering in their dedication to share their knowledge with other schools and improve the life chances for other children and young people. Young people visit other schools to talk to the pupils. This enhances the other pupils' understanding of disability and increases their tolerance of others.

Staff receive good-quality training that enhances their existing skills, and which provides opportunities to learn new skills. Staff requested training in using British sign language, to aid their communication with children and young people who have a hearing impairment, and this was provided. Consequently, staff now feel much more confident in their ability to successfully converse with the children and young people. Staff also said that safeguarding training provided through the NSPCC was 'fantastic'. They said that the opportunity to explore the training materials prior to the training enhanced their discussions and solidified their learning. The commitment of senior

leaders to empower and develop staff is impressive.

The senior leadership team knows the strengths of the service and the areas that it wishes to develop. Residential improvement plans are organic working documents that are regularly reviewed, modified and updated. They are known and understood by staff.

Above all, parents are incredibly proud of their children's progress and achievements. This is evident by the longevity of the placements, with many children starting at the school at two years of age. Parents say that they have never looked at other schools and are very pleased with the care and support provided to their children. Parents said that their children are learning new skills every day and that they 'feel part of this wonderful family'.

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 differences 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

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Inspector

Chris Scully, social care inspector (lead)



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