

Horton Lodge

Staffordshire County Council, Rudyard, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 8RB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Horton Lodge is a local authority-maintained residential special school for 54 boys and girls aged two 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 Thursday each week, with six 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 Kiplings, and is in a separate wing of the school.

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 January 2019

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: 10 October 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- The quality of care is exceptional for all children.
- Children receive outstanding support that enables them to make exceptional progress to achieve their full potential.
- The positive behaviour model followed by staff is highly effective in promoting and supporting children to develop safe, caring and thoughtful behaviours towards each other and the staff team.
- Children have a clear voice. Staff listen to their hopes and wishes, as well as their concerns. As a result, children are confident that staff take their views seriously.
- Staff are extremely responsive to children's needs. Children are encouraged to be as independent as possible.
- Positive management of risk allows the children to enjoy a range of activities while the staff still ensure that they remain safe.
- Excellent healthcare arrangements and facilities ensure that the complex medical needs of children are met.
- Staff training and formal supervision are highly effective and enhance practice. This means that staff enthusiastically support children's growth and development with care, knowledge and understanding.
- Partnership work between staff, parents and other key agencies is excellent. This approach is successful in supporting children to achieve their individual aspirations.
- Managers benefit from effective external monitoring from the independent visitor and school governors.
- Strong leadership and management arrangements ensure that children receive consistently high standards of care which meet their individual needs. Leaders and managers are aspirational for the children, and this sets the culture and ethos in the residential provision.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children who use the residential provision thrive, as they respond to the highly personalised support and excellent standards of care that they receive from well-trained staff. Children have developed their communication skills, motor skills and personal independence with increased social and emotional confidence. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about what the provision does to help their child to achieve academically and socially. One parent told the inspector, 'It's a wonderful place. Her independence has been developed, she now feeds herself and chooses her own meals; she is also more confident and willing to try different things. She loves going to residential.'

Referral and admission procedures to the residential facility are thorough. Prior to a place being offered, an assessment determines whether the needs of the child can be met. A range of professionals, parents, carers and the child contribute to the assessment. Admission takes place at the child's own pace. They can try tea-time visits and activities first, before deciding if they want to stay overnight.

Staff know the children very well and are nurturing and responsive to their needs. Through consistent, positive interactions, children develop warm, trusting relationships with staff. They also make friendships with their peers and enjoy each other's company. One child told the inspector, 'I love coming here. It's fun and I get to play with my friends.' Children flourish in an environment where they are valued as unique individuals and where staff appreciate and act in response to their views.

Staff communicate with parents and a range of health professionals effectively. This ensures that care is provided in a consistent way. Staff receive specific training in the safe administration of medicines and managers conduct regular audits of medication to ensure that practice remains safe.

Children share their views in many different ways, including using regular questionnaires. Children who use the residential provision are on the school council. They use this forum to influence decisions about their residential experience. Children representing the residential provision take this responsibility seriously. They ensure that they highlight any concerns, issues or requests and identify solutions.

Children participate in a range of evening activities that have the aim of providing opportunities for them to relax and enjoy their leisure time, and at the same time promoting their independence and social skills. Full use is made of both the school facilities and, where appropriate, local community facilities.

The physical standards of the residential provision are high and reflect the importance that staff place on providing a safe, comfortable accommodation for children. There is ample space for activities such as cooking and a comfortable

lounge area that provides opportunities for the children to participate in board games, listen to music, watch television or use a computer. Two of the children showed the inspectors around the provision and proudly showed where they slept and that it had been personalised to their own taste.

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

Arrangements for keeping children safe are excellent. Staff are aware of the vulnerabilities of the children due to their different levels of ability, and are vigilant in their practice. They work in partnership with each other as well as with other professionals to share information that is necessary to promote everyone's welfare and safety. Parents have confidence in the school's ability to keep their child safe, and they appreciate the level of supervision provided. One parent told the inspector, 'When my daughter stays at residential I have absolute trust in the staff to look after her'.

Highly individualised care plans demonstrate that the staff know children extremely well. Risk assessments are working documents that are regularly reviewed. This enables the positive and dynamic management of any future risks.

Staff maintain firm boundaries while at the same time showing sensitivity, care and patience. The staff team has created a homely, calm and positive environment. This assists children who have high levels of anxieties and complex needs relating to their communication and behaviour to interact with each other with kindness and care. It enables children to manage and regulate their behaviour in a positive way without the need to resort to self-harm or challenging behaviour. Staff know and understand each child very well and successfully implement personalised support strategies.

All children using the residential provision have comprehensive personal emergency evacuation plans. These plans detail the actions that staff must take to ensure that children exit the building safely. Health and safety checks ensure that the residential provision is well maintained, and any potential hazards are identified and rectified promptly. The fire risk assessment is reviewed and amended appropriately, and all fire safety equipment is regularly serviced.

Safer recruitment processes are effectively followed. Thorough records detail all necessary and updated information on new and existing staff. This ensures that children are cared for by adults who have been appropriately vetted.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The school senior leadership team, staff and governors are passionate about the residential provision and the role that it plays in enhancing and improving the lives of children. It is viewed as an integral part of the whole school.

The provision is extremely well managed by an enthusiastic and experienced head of care, who has been in post since 2016. She is suitably qualified, having attained the level 5 diploma in leadership, health and social care. The manager makes sure that she stays up to date with current practice to ensure that her knowledge is contemporary and well informed. This includes identifying relevant research documents and sharing them with staff.

Staff feel motivated and supported by the leaders and managers, and provide excellent care and protection for the children. They benefit from receiving good-quality, practice-based supervision, and this enables them to reflect on their practice and identify areas for professional development. A range of training in safeguarding, medication and care practice ensures that staff have the appropriate skills to care for children. All residential staff have the required qualification for working with children. As a result, children benefit from having skilled and experienced staff.

Monitoring of the residential provision is a continuous process on all levels in an effort to drive improvement. It includes self-evaluation, quality assurance visits from the local authority, peer reviews and consultation with stakeholders. This extensive level of scrutiny ensures that children benefit from high standards of care and good opportunities to develop. Governors, together with the independent visitor, play their role in monitoring the school's progress and safeguarding, with regular visits and reviewing reports prepared by managers.

The two recommendations for improvement from the last inspection have been met. All staff now receive formal annual appraisal of their performance, and fire drills are carried out regularly.

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: SC038727

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Miss Sarah Latham

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Dave Carrigan, social care inspector (lead)

Michelle Spruce, social care inspector



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