

# Hamilton Lodge School

Hamilton Lodge School, 7-9 Walpole Road, Brighton BN2 0LS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Hamilton Lodge School is a non-maintained co-educational residential school which caters for children between five and 18 years of age who are hearing impaired, with some children having additional complex needs. The main form of communication used is British Sign Language (BSL). English and Sign Supported English are also used. Children board Monday to Friday in residential houses which are adjacent to the main school site. At the time of this visit, 38 children were resident.

**Inspection dates:** 12 to 14 March 2019

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>outstanding</b>
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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:** 6 June 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- The residential provision is highly valued by the children.
- Children gain essential self-care skills and increase their self-confidence and independence.
- There is a well-integrated and consistent approach across the school and residential setting. Therapy services, health, school and residential staff work together to support every child.
- The residential provision is staffed by workers who bring a wealth of experience to the school and retain a commitment to developing their skills and supporting the children.
- Leaders and senior managers prioritise children's safety. Senior staff in each house are trained to be designated safeguarding leads to ensure that staff have easy access to safeguarding advice.
- Leaders and managers share research and network with similar provisions to disseminate areas of experience and expertise.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The senior management team has not ensured that risk assessments are reviewed for their effectiveness.
- An issue relating to an agency staff member was not reported to the designated officer.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The school is to ensure that risk assessments have more detail in regard to how safety plans are followed. Senior managers are to ensure that the designated officer is aware of all concerns relating to staff, including agency staff.

### **Inspection judgements**

#### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children thrive at this residential provision. Thorough assessments involving all professionals and carers involved in their care ensure that each child's needs can be met prior to them staying here. The multi-disciplinary team, including teachers, therapists and care staff, agree how best to tailor the services available to the children. Children make good use of the services available to them. Consequently, their progress is excellent in all areas: socially, emotionally and academically.

Children receive targeted and effective specialist support services. When children struggle in the residential setting or at home, the team around the child in the school and residential provision meets weekly to address any issues and devise strategies to help the child. Agreed care plans provide a consistent approach across both settings. The 24-hour learning environment is a strength of the school.

Children's communication is the primary focus for staff who are well trained in the children's individual communication methods. Their expertise in encouraging positive interactions and developing children's social skills includes teaching the children's families to use sign language. One child's family had not previously been able to communicate effectively with him about forthcoming events and family members are now able to prepare him.

Children are given the unique opportunity to mix with their peers in a safe, supportive environment. The freedom to visit each other's houses builds on the positive relationships developed at school and encourages enduring relationships.

The children learn to celebrate their strengths and differences. A positive identity is encouraged in all aspects of the curriculum and residential experience. Staff act as positive role models. The children grow in confidence and attain achievements and skills that neither they, nor their parents, thought possible. One child previously didn't have the confidence to cross the road unescorted, but she is now able to go into the local town centre with friends. Another child has learned to manage his diabetes.

The senior management team ensures that children integrate into the local community. The children access local groups for disabled artists and support from a

lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender group. In addition, the local football team runs an indoor sports and football club at the school.

The residential houses are well furnished with further improvements planned. A sensory room with interactive equipment is popular with the children. The room is used to complement therapy programmes, and is a fun, calming space to enjoy in the evenings. This has had a positive effect on children's social relationships.

Staff place great emphasis on increasing children's independence. Similarly, staff are also very successful in supporting children to attend further education and employment. Young people over the age of 18 can stay in a self-contained flat with minimal supervision. This motivates the younger children to aspire to work towards their independence. They are prepared for this opportunity through small, successfully thought-out steps to achieve their goals. All the children have an enormous sense of pride in not only what they achieve themselves, but also in what each other does too.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

On the whole, risk assessments are very detailed and record clear guidance on how staff can keep children safe. However, on one occasion the safety measures were not adhered to by an agency worker. A review of the risk assessment would have highlighted the need for more clarity about the expectations. This incident was reported immediately to the local authority safeguarding team and the head of care was proactive in requesting and attending a formal meeting to discuss any risks. Action was taken immediately to reduce any further risk to children. The head of care reported the failing to the agency; however, the designated officer was not directly informed.

Leaders and managers acknowledge the lessons learned from this incident. A meeting has been arranged with the designated officer for the local authority to share roles and responsibilities. The designated officer reported, 'I am happy about the safety of the children since the head of care has been in post.'

The children's safety is a priority. A team of designated safeguarding leads is readily available for staff to consult. This team is being increased to include all senior team leaders. Safeguarding expertise is, therefore, strengthened across all the residential houses. Staff's knowledge of reporting procedures is evidenced by the appropriate use of 'letters of concern' which effectively highlight emerging issues or incidents.

Senior staff are alert to the needs of the children to use social media and the challenges that they may face. Safety measures restrict internet use and alert staff of any misuse. Children rely on their mobile telephones to communicate. Consequently, they are taught internet safety as a group and individually. The strong relationships between staff and children mean that staff are made aware of any child who undertakes risky behaviours. They intervene swiftly and educate the child by reinforcing safety messages. Children appreciate this care and concern for them.

Staff use relatively few sanctions. The use of physical interventions is rare. The records include details of the incident and discussion with staff and children. This enables senior leaders to analyse the effectiveness of such measures. A strong ethos of restorative practice and repairing relationships is evident.

Children rarely complain, but if they do they are well informed of the steps that they can take and who to go to. When it is known that a child has shared concerns, which could have been viewed as a complaint, they are encouraged to do so.

The staff have held fire evacuation drills at different times to include early morning drills in the residential provision. Risk assessments are in place to assist children who need help in the event of an alarm being raised. This ensures that staff and the children are prepared for such a situation. The school has thorough health and safety processes, and repairs are identified and carried out promptly. All the appropriate checks are conducted to safeguard children.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The newly appointed principal is a strong leader who has integrated into the school, bringing his experience to the excellent senior management team. The residential provision has gone from strength to strength. Leaders and managers invest in the services by identifying continual improvements in the quality of provision. This is mirrored in the high calibre of not only existing staff but also those joining the team.

This is a school where the residential aspect shares expertise with the deaf community and with other residential and boarding schools. A local community resource identified the school as having successfully supported children through challenging identity issues. The school are now supporting other schools and sharing their learning.

Leaders and managers network very effectively. The head of care attends a local safeguarding forum to share knowledge regarding any concerns within the local area. Strong links with the local child and adolescent mental health services for the deaf and forensic mental health services complement the highly experienced and dedicated in-house therapy team.

Children have a strong voice at this school. The student council is well attended. Older children encourage the younger ones to participate meaningfully. This forum is instrumental in achieving further improvements to the residential provision. Senior managers listen to children and act on their requests where possible. For example, one child wanted a room on her own; managers considered the layout of the building and found a way to fulfil this.

Staff morale is high. The staff team values its senior management support. Weekly staff meetings, supervisions and appraisals are informative, child focused and allow time for reflection. Staff are, therefore, equipped and able to provide excellent care for each child and are committed to helping them reach their potential.

The residential staff have all obtained the required level three qualification and have access to a wide range of training opportunities, both general and specific to the new cohort of children moving in. Managers and staff evaluate the training for their effectiveness. The number of highly skilled and experienced staff contribute to the children's successful journey through the school.

Managers demonstrate an extremely supportive and cohesive relationship in the school team. Managers ensure a culture of learning and development. Ambitions for the school, as part of the wider deaf community and for the benefit of the children, are inclusive and forward thinking. Managers are exceptionally ambitious for, and proud of, the children. They maintain and improve the far-reaching opportunities for the children within the school.

## **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:** SC050400

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Billy McInally

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

**Telephone number:** 01273 682362

**Email address:** Billy.McInally@hamiltonlsc.co.uk

## **Inspectors**

Suzy Lemmy, social care inspector (lead)  
Paul Taylor, 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 children looked after, 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2019