

# Holly House School

Holly House School, Church Street North, Old Whittington, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S41 9QR

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Holly House School is a maintained residential community special school for children who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school provides education for 43 pupils aged 7 to 14. The school is in Chesterfield, Derbyshire. The residential unit is in an annex to the main school and is on two floors. The unit provides accommodation for up to eight pupils each night from Monday to Thursday during term time. Pupils access the service on a voluntary basis. The residential provision was last inspected in February 2019.

**Inspection dates:** 12 to 14 November 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:** 4 February 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

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

Staff clearly understand the needs of each individual child and tailor the extended day activities and residential experience accordingly. They set aspirational targets for each child, in consultation with them. The standard of individualised care is excellent. As a result, attending residence has a significant impact on the progress and experiences of each child. Pupils who access the residential and extended day activities make improved progress academically, as well as with their behaviour and attendance.

Children make excellent progress in understanding their own health needs and in their personal hygiene routines. Children are encouraged to eat healthily and exercise. One child has significantly improved their fitness and weight in recent months. Staff sought training from a specialist epilepsy nurse to support one child, thus enabling him to attend the residential activities and sleepover.

Staff ensure that they understand the emotional health and well-being needs of children. The provision of therapies, such as Lego therapy, reiki and yoga, combined with improvements in the physical environment, and staff training, improve children's mental health, calming their behaviours and helping them in school.

Children's educational progress improves because of being resident. For example, one child worked extensively on their science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) project, designing and creating an outdoor learning space for others to enjoy and utilise. This encouraged his attendance at school and his engagement in lessons, improving his literacy and numeracy. Other pupils, including those who use the residence, continue to benefit from the outdoor education space, improving their educational experience and their behaviour.

Some children have accessed a course provided by the local fire service. For one child, this inspired him to join the fire service cadets, potentially providing a career path. For another child, their achievements on the course prompted a senior fire officer to provide a reference for him, which has helped the child access mainstream education.

Children engage in activities and have opportunities to socialise that they would not otherwise be able to enjoy. This includes daily activities, trips out and holidays, tailored to meet the needs of every child. Parents comment on the improved social skills of their children, how they seem much happier, and how children transfer those skills to the home environment. Parents comment on the growth in confidence and self-esteem of their children.

Children access a range of community activities and attend several local events. They also support other schools for children with complex needs, and local and national

charities. This gives children an understanding of others in need.

Staff and children enjoy excellent relationships, and there is an atmosphere of care, nurture and love in the residential home. This is reflected in the relationships that children have with each other. They get on very well together, showing a great deal of support and care towards each other.

Since the last inspection, staff have worked extremely hard to improve the transition experience for children. Children are involved in their transition planning and meet regularly with staff to discuss plans and prepare for visits. Children are given every opportunity to learn varied self-help skills while in residence. This supports their move on to other schools and helps them to do more in their home. Children who have moved on are contacted regularly. Staff check how they are getting on and if there are any issues they can help with. Children who have left have been asked to come back to the school to talk to other pupils about successfully moving on from here.

Children are listened to by all adults who care for them, and they have access to several adults they can talk to. This includes the standard 20 visitor, governors and the independent person. There are many opportunities for children to raise any concerns, discuss their ideas and share their views.

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

Staff have an excellent understanding of the individual risks and vulnerability of each child. Staff are not risk-adverse, and excellent management of risk ensures that children still enjoy a range of activities, holidays and exciting experiences. Staff provide clear instructions and safety briefings to children prior to activities. This means that the children understand how to keep themselves safe.

There have been no incidents of children going missing since the last inspection. Staff do understand the process to follow should such an incident occur. No allegations have been made against staff since the last inspection, and again, staff are clear how to report any concerns and disclosures.

The school is undergoing significant refurbishment internally and externally. The increased risks this poses have been explored and staff are acutely aware of how to maintain the safety of children during this work. Fire evacuation plans have been amended, and additional risk assessments have been implemented to maintain safety. Children also understand the risks posed by the work on site.

Staff understand how to respond to risks posed to children through social media, radicalisation, abuse, sexual and criminal exploitation, and neglect. Extensive training in these areas ensures that staff have a breadth of knowledge and skills to deal with any issues or concerns.

Bullying is not an issue. Children understand how to be kind to one another and demonstrate a great deal of care and warmth towards each other. Any potential issues and fall-outs between children are managed quickly and effectively by staff. Bullying is regularly discussed in key-work chats and children's meetings.

Children's behaviour in residence is excellent. Staff provide strong and consistent boundaries that are understood and respected by the children. A combination of strong boundaries, staff skills in managing behaviour, excellent relationships between staff and children and the children's willingness to engage in residential activities ensures that any incidents of poor behaviour are kept to a minimum. There have been no restraints in residential since the last inspection.

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

The school has continued to make significant improvements since the last inspection. The STEM outdoor learning project, training on autism, epilepsy and mental health, and the improvements to the physical environment ensure a continued outstanding service that meets the individual needs of children.

Leaders have also improved how they evidence the work children have done and the progress they make. There are more displays of work and photographs of activities, with brief evaluations of the activity, not just in residence but throughout the whole school. Children are given photograph books of their holidays and activities. This ensures that they have great memories of their time here. Staff understanding of children's targets has improved across the whole school, enabling consistency in helping children achieve the best they can be.

Leaders are aware of the changing needs of children in the school and have ensured training and development in areas such as domestic abuse, neglect, mental health, autism and epilepsy.

Children regularly report to the board of governors, sharing their experiences and progress in residential. The school has appointed more governors since the last inspection and they are taking a more active role in school and residential.

Monitoring by governors, the standard 20 visitor and the headteacher is robust and offers challenge, helping the service to continue to improve and develop.

The staff team is small, and all staff have been in post for some time, providing consistency for children. Any gaps in residential staffing are covered by education staff and vice versa, enabling children to form excellent relationships with all staff and providing stability for children. Staff are very experienced and have a range of skills. All staff are appropriately qualified.

The residential team is led by an excellent and experienced head of residential, ably supported by an equally experienced and excellent deputy. Staff say that they feel supported by the managers, in their work and in any personal concerns. Supervision

is regular and covers staff development opportunities as well as discussing practice, children and safeguarding.

Excellent partnership work and access to community organisations and projects, such as the fire service programmes, local church, and community boxing project, provides a range of opportunities for children.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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:** SC056234

**Headteacher:** Mr Iain Williams

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Judith Longden, social care inspector (lead)



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