

Horton Lodge

Staffordshire County Council, Horton Lodge Special School, 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/or 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, with up to eight pupils residing at the school on any one night. The residential provision is called Kiplings and is in a separate wing of the school.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 January 2022

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: 3 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children at this school receive outstanding care and support from a highly motivated and committed staff team. Staff know about every aspect of children's needs and make sure that their stays at the school develop them socially and emotionally. Parents delight in the way their children progress during their time at the school and the positive impact this has on their lives. One parent told inspectors that 'it is no exaggeration to say that Kiplings has been transformative'.

Children make excellent progress in relation to key areas of development. For example, staff helped one child to return to walking after a period when they had not done this. Staff also help children to take more ownership of their personal care in ways that are meaningful for them. The staff's pride in children's achievements shines forward when they talk about them. It is no wonder that children respond so positively to the adults who care for them.

The head of care has a comprehensive system to monitor children's progress. Staff record progress using photographs as well as words. This means that it is also accessible to children. Staff across the school and parents have a consistent and collaborative approach to children's individual communication styles. As a result, children are fully supported to have and use their voice in ways that work for them.

Children stay in a bright, child-focused environment. They have a large number of toys and a sensory area. Staff work hard to engage children and meet their sensory needs. Space is at a premium due to the equipment and aids that the children need. However, staff make sure they maximise how they use the space in Kiplings. This means that they can involve children in everything they do. Night staff are vigilant during the night, which adds to parents' confidence about the residential arrangements.

Children safely share rooms with their friends. This means they enjoy their sleepovers as any other child their age would. Parents are overjoyed that their children can have this experience. As a result of the comprehensive, well-thought-out arrangements, children thoroughly enjoy their stays at school.

Staff are highly attuned to the children they care for. This means the staff can understand children's verbal and non-verbal communication. As a result, children make their views known and adults advocate for them. For example, children were central in developing the school council and voted for its new name.

Staff give children as much choice as possible. They use communication aids well to help children enjoy the activities they want to take part in, whether it be quiet reading or more exciting games with friends. Staff carry on the themes of the school day through group activities. For example, staff carried on the whole school topic of

space through group stories with physical aids to make this more interactive. Staff further extend this to sensory activities to broaden children's experience. This all adds to children being fully part of their stays at the school.

Staff and leaders work tirelessly to keep children safe in relation to COVID-19 due to their additional health vulnerabilities. The school has closed at times, in line with government guidance, but residential staff have stayed in regular touch with children and parents. Children enjoyed activities shared by staff, as well as the bedtime story videos read by the staff. When children have completed activities and shared their photos, the head of care has responded to every child. This has provided encouragement for children and support for parents at what has been a very difficult time.

Before children returned to school, staff sent them videos of themselves wearing PPE. This helped children return without experiencing any surprises which would hinder their experience. Staff were happy to return to work and use whatever measures were necessary to keep children safe from COVID-19.

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

Staff put in place clear support plans and individual risk assessments to keep children safe. They talk with parents, colleagues in school and other professionals to make sure they fully understand children's needs. As a result, staff have comprehensive guidance to help them support children to safely take part in their residential stays.

The school's safeguarding team has a strong approach to protecting children. Staff know how to raise any concerns or worries they have about a child, and the safeguarding team is responsive. Staff keep detailed records that help them to understand concerns fully. The designated safeguarding lead has recognised that safeguarding records could be better organised and is addressing this. This shows their commitment to reviewing and improving their own work.

Staff have excellent systems to manage children's complex health needs and medication regimes. Staff assess children's additional health needs and make sure these are well considered, planned for, and understood. The head of care audits this area carefully and this is an area of outstanding practice. As a result, there is confidence that staff administer medication in a timely and safe way, which is in line with children's plans. Staff regularly complete refresher training related to children's health. This means that the most vulnerable children receive care in a way that promotes their safety and well-being.

Leaders and managers have considered their approach to recruitment. This has resulted in some retrospective consideration of records. Where needed, the leadership team has sought further information about staff to assure itself that the staff are suitable. As a result, the leadership team is confident that the staff working with children are safe to do so.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders in the school have high expectations of what children can achieve and they make sure that children have the support to meet these expectations. There is a clear vision for the way the school works as a whole, which means that children experience consistent help to grow and develop. The school uses a holistic model to support children and prioritise their needs. Residential staff are fully engaged in this approach, and it makes a difference to children's lives every day.

The head of care has clear systems to monitor all aspects of the care children receive. As a result, she has confidence in the care that staff provide. The head of care role models good practice and continually looks for ways that staff can develop so that children receive continually improving care. Staff have regular team meetings where they share ideas and discuss children. They look for creative ways to provide outstanding experiences for children. The head of care provides regular supervision sessions and appraisals for staff, which staff find helpful. Staff are confident they can raise any issue or concern with her, and they will receive a knowledgeable, supportive response. This all helps to create a working environment where staff say they 'love' coming to work.

Staff are qualified to support children. The school supplements this with relevant training such as in relation to feeding, communication and first aid. Staff also complete training that is specific to individual children, if necessary. This commitment creates a developmental atmosphere for staff.

Despite the excellent work of the residential provision, the head of care continues to look for ways to improve the experiences of children. For example, she has taken on responsibility for children's voices across the school. This includes helping children to redevelop the school council. The regular monitoring, and the head of care's presence in the residence, means that she knows what is working well and makes changes if needed. As a result, the service continues to develop.

The governing body of the school is highly committed to the children. The governors' knowledge of the school, its history and the challenges it faces is extensive. The governors support Kiplings by visiting regularly and scrutinising the work there. They also benefit from having several governors who bring a lived experience of being a parent to a child at the school. As a result, leaders are both challenged and supported with a shared goal of outstanding care.

Leaders in the school have good relationships with external professionals. They attend statutory meetings, including those relating to child protection or children in need, and share their extensive knowledge of children. Social workers, commissioners and parents all have confidence in the school, and this is well earned.

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

Recommendations

- The school should make sure that the new system for ensuring safer recruitment is embedded into practice.
- The school should enrol staff on training courses leading to qualifications to enhance their skills and role.

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: SC038727

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mrs Lucy Bloor

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01538 306214

Email address: headteacher@hortonlodge.staffs.sch.uk

Inspectors

Karol Keenan, Social Care Inspector (lead)

James Tallis, 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.

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 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://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 1234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022