

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 with 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 10 upwards.

The residential provision can accommodate up to 20 children, but currently a maximum of 14 children can stay each night. Twenty-five children are currently accessing the residential provision. The provision is staffed by care staff employed by the local authority and supported by a team of qualified nurses employed by the NHS.

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

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 January 2023

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 last inspection: 1 December 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive high-quality individualised care and support from dedicated staff who know them exceptionally well. This helps children flourish from their individual starting points. Parents and the children themselves said that they have continued to improve their skills. This has led to better communication, socialisation and independence at home, in school and in the community. One child said, 'I am allowed to do a lot more at home now because I have been able to practise at residential. It is great.'

Children use different forms of communication methods, including sign language, Makaton and the Picture Exchange Communication System. Staff know and encourage the children to use their preferred system, therefore, children can share their views, wishes and feelings. As a result, children are central to the overall care provided.

The experience of staying at the residential provision enhances children's life opportunities. They engage in a variety of activities in the local and wider community. Children mix with their peers in well-organised activities. This maximises their opportunities to grow and develop and helps to prepare them well for their future adult lives.

Parents are complimentary about what the residential provision offers their children. Comments include:

- '[Name of child] has learned how to be independent of his family in a safe, supportive and extremely nurturing environment.'
- 'Staff really listened and made sure [name of child]'s needs were met. He was anxious about staying over but staff were great. They checked in with me throughout his stay. It is the way they work. That is why it is so successful.'
- 'The service is a safe space, where [name of child] can spend time with his mates.'
- '[Name of child] is much clearer on what he wants now and has started to engage with us at home. He can now dress himself. He knows how to put his socks on and his pants; he understands that people will not do it for him.'
- 'The staff are fantastic; they know my child extremely well. They encouraged him to be an independent learner.'

Staff ensure that children have a positive introduction to their residential stays. Children move in at a pace that helps them to adjust and settle. This supports families to feel confident and secure with their children accessing the residential

provision. A child said, 'I was unsure about staying over but from the first tea visit, I knew I was going to be OK. I love it and I am already learning new things.'

Some children are moving on from the school and residential provision. Comprehensive transition plans ensure that their next placement is fully supported to meet their needs. A child said, 'I am going to college this year. I feel that I have learned lots of skills, such as making snacks. I am going to be alright.'

Residential staff work closely with parents, nurses and teachers, and effective communication ensures a joined-up approach. Children make excellent progress in line with their education, health and care plans. Parents were overwhelmingly positive about the communication staff provide in relation to their child's well-being.

The residential provision remains an integral part of the school. The whole site is kept in exceptionally good order. Children's bedrooms are clean and personalised to reflect their own style and tastes.

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

There is a strong and proactive response to safeguarding. Staff are very clear on their roles and responsibilities. Procedures for reporting and recording any concerns are clear and effective.

Children said that they feel safe. They gave the inspectors examples of how staff are preparing them to identify risky situations, such as being safe online. Children can identify trusted adults that they can go to when they need support. Parents said that they are fully included in all decisions about their child, especially to ensure their safety. Close communication has meant that children's routines at home and in the residential provision often mirror each other.

There is highly effective planning in place so that staff understand children's risks. Risk assessments include individualised strategies for staff to manage the risk. This ensures that children are supported by adults who keep them safe.

The use of positive behavioural support is fully integrated in all aspects of care for each child. Children have a clear plan that helps support them in times of crisis. Consequently, restraint practice is not required.

There are clear medication procedures in place. The nurses ensure that there is effective communication with the residential staff through daily handovers. The staff are suitably trained by relevant qualified professionals in all health procedures. The nurses ensure that the care plans are updated whenever required.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training, including on topics such as child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation and radicalisation. This training is further

developed through regular team meetings, so that safeguarding matters are at the forefront of daily practice.

Research-informed practice is embedded in the service through various workshops that promote healthy discussion in staff team meetings. More recently, the senior leadership team has considered the findings from a recent serious case review at another residential special school and completed a thorough safeguarding audit. This ensures that staff are continually updating their knowledge and that they take learning to improve their practice.

No new staff have started since the last inspection. There is now a new central register that records all recruitment details. This has improved the oversight of staff recruitment checks and allows for better scrutiny by the senior leadership team.

The physical environment is safe and secure. Any matters relating to safety and maintenance are promptly addressed by the maintenance team.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

A highly committed and dedicated care manager leads the residential provision. She works in partnership with the headteacher, the independent visitor and a range of governors, parents and health professionals to continually improve the opportunities available to the children. For example, weekly senior management and leadership meetings ensure that messages to the team are consistent and shared promptly.

There is a core group of staff who have worked together for a considerable time. Staff said that they are fully included in discussions about the children, are well trained, are confident to challenge each other and other professionals and that they are included in the development of the service. Staff say that they are well managed and that they feel valued. The staff team has a shared vision that puts children at the heart of their practice. All staff are experienced, suitably qualified and have access to regular supervision and training. This supports their ongoing professional development.

Due to changes in the national minimum standards, a new independent visitor has been brought in. Previous reports provided by the last independent visitor have been of a good quality, and helped the staff, managers and governors to get a clear picture of the day-to-day running of the residential provision. They provided clear suggestions for areas for development and/or improvement, which are used by leaders to improve.

The school's governing body monitors the effectiveness of the leadership and management team and delivery of the care in the residential provision. There is a sub-group of governors that visits the residential provision termly. All quality assurance information is routinely considered at the governors' meetings. This ensures that high standards of practice are maintained. However, the governors recognised that the board has been in place for a long time and therefore two new

governors have been appointed. One governor said, 'This will bring fresh eyes to overseeing the service.'

The strong and effective leadership team ensures that the residential provision is making a real difference to children's lives. Leaders and managers act as role models who promote an ambitious vision and have high expectations about what children can achieve. They have a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to be improved. Another governor said, 'The care manager and staff continually strive to improve and put forward new developments.'

There are excellent relationships with other agencies. The managers and senior leadership team challenge them, when appropriate, to ensure that the child is at the front and centre of everything that they do.

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: SC006614

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Alison Ashley

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Pam Nuckley, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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