

Holbrook School for Autism

Holbrook School for Autism, Port Way, Holbrook, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 0TE

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The Holbrook School for Autism is a specialist school for children with autism spectrum disorder and learning disabilities. The age range of children is from four to 19 years. The school has had academy status since July 2018. The residential service (Hawk and Falcon) operates from Monday to Thursday in term time. Currently, 28 children use the service. Seven children can stay at any one time in the residential provision. Each child stays for one night per week.

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

Inspection dates: 31 January and 2 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 29 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children thoroughly enjoy their residential experience. They make significant progress from their starting points. Children's communication improves. For example, a child who was non-verbal a few years ago can now engage in a conversation. Another child was unable to tolerate a bath or have their hair cut or brushed. This child can now do these things, both in the residential provision and at home. A parent said, 'He is such a different kid now.'

Children also benefit from staying in the residential provision because some children who do not sleep well at home sleep better in residence. This means they are better able to access learning when they go to school the following day. A teacher said, 'The parents have reported to us that at home things like sleep patterns and diets have improved since staying in residence.'

Staff value the children's views, wishes and feelings. Staff are competent at using a range of communication tools to support children with getting their views and choices across. For example, a child who felt ill was encouraged to use a symbol to say where he felt poorly. This helped staff to make decisions about the help the child required. He chose a symbol for toothache and staff gave him an ice lolly as a comfort while waiting for parents to collect him.

Staff use research-based practice by implementing a specific programme to help children with autism with their attention span and to extend their engagement. This supports the children to learn. Staff use this programme regularly with children and are passionate about the positive impact it has on them.

Children participate in a range of activities, from sensory activities and board games to going to a youth club, going swimming, or to a trampoline park in the community. Children learn to tolerate many different environments as well as noise and crowds. They are also encouraged to interact with each other. For example, one child started to sing happy birthday to another. Another passed a child their drink and used their name.

Some planning documentation, such as the personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEP) and placement plans, are confusing because they are contradictory or not detailed enough. For example, for one child, a planning document says she requires one member of staff when accessing the community, and another says she requires two. Also, a PEEP does not give the same detail as a child's placement plan and how she should be supported to evacuate the building in the event of an emergency. This could be confusing. However, staff practice in this area is well known and well established.

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

The school has good safeguarding processes that help to keep children safe. Leaders and managers take effective action to ensure the safety of children. However, records do not always include all actions taken by the school. For example, the reasons for bruising to a child were established but not recorded. A good chronology of action taken by the school will ensure a better understanding of how children are safeguarded.

The staff and managers ensure that children are safe and can have freedom and fun. For example, when children went to a local fun pool, staff were well placed so that all children could be seen, which meant children could thoroughly enjoy the experience, while remaining safe.

Staff and children have warm and nurturing relationships. They know how important relationships are to supporting children to remain safe. They know the children well and communicate with them successfully, which helps children to feel safe and secure. The children are mostly well behaved. Staff rarely need to resort to restraining children. When children have been restrained, this has been done competently and for the right reasons.

Children's views are sought in a variety of ways following any worrying or concerning incidents. This is dependent on the child's preferred method of communication. These discussions are not recorded well. Staff reflect on incidents, however, they do not reflect with a member of staff who was not involved in the incident. This would promote better objectivity and oversight.

Staffing ratios are high and these help to safeguard children. Staff have well-practised procedures that are understood by children. This means that at important times, such as transitioning between environments, moves are managed well and safely.

An allegation against an agency staff member was not reported to the designated officer for the local authority (DOLA). However, actions taken by managers were good and ensured the continued safety of children. The school has a good relationship with the DOLA, who said, 'From the contact that I have had with the school it has been appropriate, and any advice that I have given has been taken on board and implemented.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The newly appointed head of care is qualified and very experienced in the school, having been a deputy head of care for many years. She has made positive changes to the residential provision. These include making the provision more equitable by offering an extended day service. This means more children can benefit from the

activities in the residential provision. She has worked hard to establish the extended day service, adapting it in accordance with the views of children, staff and parents.

The head of care provides good direction and support for staff. She has a strong focus on monitoring the quality of the service. For example, she carries out audits of children's planning documents. She also works across both residential areas in the evenings and is therefore confident about the quality of the care provided. Also, leaders visit the residential areas during the evening so that they have a good understanding of what happens. However, there is no formal monitoring of the overnight provision. Although no concerns have been raised about the night-time provision, and managers regularly sleep overnight in residence, they do not have a good understanding of the quality of the night-time care.

Governors closely monitor and visit the residential provision, talking to both children and staff. They offer good support and challenge to managers and leaders. Additionally, an independent visitor also visits regularly, completing a report of his visit. Although the visitor carries out a thorough visit, ensuring he obtains the views of children and staff, his report does not currently evaluate the quality of the provision and effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded.

Staff are ambitious for children and want them to have good experiences. They are proud of the children's progress. They enjoy working at the school and work well as a team.

Staff are gradually rebuilding links with local businesses in the community after the COVID pandemic, to enable children to access community facilities. For example, children are now going to a local pool, a youth club and a soft play provision.

The head of care and her team work closely with school staff, parents and external professionals to ensure a consistent approach. This enables children to make significant progress in their learning and life skills in all areas of their lives. Parents appreciate the regular communication with them. A parent said, 'Daily updates are so heartwarming.'

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

Points for improvement

- Consider monitoring care during the night to ensure that leaders have a good understanding of the care that is given during this time. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.1)
- Ensure that the independent visitor report evaluates the quality of the provision and effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 3.2)
- Ensure that child protection chronologies are fully completed, detailing all action the school has taken to keep the child safe and that all allegations against staff are recorded appropriately and reported to the appropriate outside agency. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 13.1)
- Ensure that planning documentation is clear, accurate and does not contradict other documents for the same child. This specifically refers to placement plans and personal emergency evacuation plans. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 7.1 and 15.2)
- Ensure that records reflect that all children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult, who was not directly involved, incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by, when possible within 24 hours. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 20.5)

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: SC058960

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Samuel Bayliss

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Inspector

Joanne Vyas, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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