

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 59 children aged from two to 11 years who have physical disabilities and/or associated learning difficulties. Some of the children have additional visual, hearing and/or speech language difficulties and medical needs. The school's education is based on conductive education.

The residential provision operates from Monday to Wednesday, 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.

Inspection dates: 31 January to 2 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 18 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Since the last inspection, children have continued to make exceptional progress from their individual starting points. This is because staff provide high-quality, individualised care and support to children. For example, one child's verbal communication has improved considerably, and the child is now able to verbally share their views, wishes and feelings with staff. In addition, staff have supported another child to have the confidence and skills to walk and take steps independently. This outstanding, child-focused approach significantly improves children's lives and experiences.

Children enjoy spending time with their friends. For some children, the residential provision provides them with the only opportunity to have fun with their friends outside of school. One child told the inspector, 'I like everything, it is a fun place to be.' Another child said, 'I love playing with everybody.' One parent commented, 'The school enables the children to spend time with their peers, which doesn't happen very often due to the complex needs of many of the children.'

The school and residential provision work well together and are viewed as being one community. The quality of the relationships between staff and children is excellent. Some school staff also support children in the residential provision. This helps to embed the school's approach to conductive education and maintain consistency and continuity for children.

Staff recognise and celebrate children's achievements and milestones. Before children leave the school, they are presented with memory books which capture their journey and memories in the school. Also, there are certificates to celebrate children's achievements on display throughout the residential provision. This helps to boost children's confidence and self-esteem. As a result, children feel valued and are proud of themselves.

Children's communication skills improve significantly because of the joined-up approach between school and the residential provision. Staff responsible for developing children's communication skills are passionate and tenacious in their approach. For some children, this approach has allowed staff to identify and signpost children to be further assessed by the relevant external professionals in line with their specific needs. This also means that children's views and wishes are captured regularly, which contributes to the care that they receive.

Staff meet children's complex health needs exceptionally well. Systems in place to manage medication regimes and children's additional needs are well planned and managed. During the inspection, the inspectors observed staff managing a significant medical incident with a child. Staff managed the situation in a calm, sensitive and skilful manner. Management oversight of children's health needs is effective. Staff

complete a wide range of training, including training in the administration of medication, to meet these specific needs. As a result, staff are equipped with the skills and have the confidence to manage children's complex health needs calmly and safely.

Staff ensure that they communicate effectively with parents and the important people involved in children's lives. They use an app to keep parents up to date on their children's progress. The school also creatively builds on its 'school for parents' network to improve parents' knowledge and understanding. One parent said, 'My son is very happy, and the teachers are lovely. They always make sure my child smiles when feeling down, I'm proud of that school.'

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

Staff understand the complexities of children's disabilities, behaviours and communication processes exceptionally well. This understanding informs effective organisation and operation of the residential provision. High levels of supervision and vigilance promote the safety and welfare of children.

The school has a strong approach to safeguarding children. There is an effective system in place for addressing all concerns. Staff know how to raise concerns or worries about children, and leaders ensure that they respond immediately. Staff receive safeguarding training that is regularly refreshed and updated. In addition, leaders ensure that staff's knowledge is tested through quizzes and scenarios, and weekly meetings are held to improve communication and information-sharing. This whole system approach enables children to flourish in a safe and supportive environment.

Children are extremely settled and there are very few significant incidents arising from their care. For example, there have been no incidents requiring physical intervention for several years and negative consequences are rarely used by staff. Staff provide clear routines and boundaries, which are understood by the children. Children's individual risks are assessed well, and the assessments provide guidance to staff. As a result, staff are incredibly attuned to children's specific risks and needs.

Staff recruitment and vetting procedures are effective. The physical environment is safe and secure. Children are protected from hazards by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and routine maintenance checks to ensure that the premises are safe. Regular fire drills ensure that all children and staff know what to expect if the alarm is raised and how to evacuate the school in an emergency. This organised approach helps to promote children's welfare and well-being.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders are inspirational, child focused and have high expectations for what children can achieve. They lead by example and provide a supportive platform which enables staff to change and improve the lives of children. The residential provision is an integral part of the school and provides a remarkable service that enhances the life experiences of all children.

Since the last inspection, the head of care has continued to develop her role. She is an active part of the school's senior leadership team and is also the lead for supporting staff and children's emotional health needs. The school uses a holistic model to support children and prioritise their needs. The head of care ensures that residential staff are fully engaged in this approach, and it makes a difference to children's lives every day.

The head of care makes good use of internal and external monitoring systems to ensure that the residential provision continues to grow and develop. Partnership working is a strength across the whole school and communication systems are highly effective. The head of care leads by example and ensures that children's needs are consistently met to a high standard.

The school's governing body monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the residential provision. The independent person regularly visits the residential provision and meets with the staff and children. Their reports ensure that high standards of care practice are maintained and there is continuous improvement.

Training opportunities for the residential staff are extensive and wide ranging. Also, staff complete training which is specific to the needs of the children. This enhances staff's knowledge, practice and professional development, which has a positive impact on the care children receive.

Staff feel motivated and supported by leaders. They benefit from receiving regular practice-based supervision. This enables them to reflect on their practice and identify areas to support children's overall development. Consequently, children receive outstanding care and support from a child-focused, highly motivated and committed staff team.

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: Lucy Bloor

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01538 306214

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Inspectors

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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