

Hamilton Lodge School

Hamilton Lodge School, 7-9 Walpole Road, Brighton BN2 0LS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Hamilton Lodge School is a non-maintained co-educational residential school which caters for children between five and 19 years of age who are deaf, and some children who having additional complex needs. The main form of communication used is British Sign Language. English and Sign Supported English are also used. Children board Monday to Friday in residential houses which are adjacent to the main school site. At the time of this visit, 27 children were resident.

The head of the residential provision has been in post since September 2012.

The inspector only inspected the residential provision at this school.

The last inspection of the residential provision took place in March 2022.

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 March 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 previous inspection: 22 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from attending the residential provision. They make progress with their communication skills and, in turn, develop their self-esteem and confidence. Children and parents highlight how this progress has had a positive effect on their lives beyond the school gates. Academically, children's aspirations have grown. They make particular progress in deaf studies. Deaf culture is celebrated, and children's families are supported to engage successfully in the hearing world.

Children who are new to the residential provision settle in well. Parents report a thoughtful and considered approach to new children moving in, which helps to reduce anxiety. This helps new children to feel comfortable with peers and staff.

Children are supported by staff who understand their communication needs. Children say that staff listen to them and are available and approachable. Regular consultation and participation happens in the form of weekly school council meetings. Children have confidence that their views are valued and result in changes.

There is sufficient staff to meet the children's needs. Leaders and managers are alert to the emerging needs of the children who use the service. They have commissioned relevant training to help equip staff appropriately.

Children enjoy their time in residential and they generally get on well with one another. Children have access to a range of activities. In particular, several children spoke with enthusiasm about basketball.

Children make progress with their independence as they have planned independence programmes in place. Staff support children well to take acceptable risks to help develop their independence.

Children's health needs are well managed. There are good relationships with specialist mental health services. Managers have good oversight of medications and they ensure that there is effective scrutiny and appropriate responses to address any errors.

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

Children feel safe in the care of the staff and can identify people they can go to if they wish to share concerns. Children said that issues between peers are rare, and that staff intervene appropriately if there are incidents.

Safeguarding concerns are managed effectively. Weekly safeguarding meetings take place where low-level concerns are discussed and relevant information is shared. This ensures that staff in school and residential are aware when there is an issue that may need monitoring, or a child that may need additional support.

When online safety concerns arise, leaders manage these well. Effective partnership working has led to good support for children in terms of educating them to be safe online. This includes focused work and research that considers the best available solutions to help prevent further issues. Consequently, leaders and managers achieve an effective balance between education and prevention.

Appropriate risk management strategies are in place. Sleeping arrangements are now appropriately risk assessed. The assessments contain sufficient information to make safe decisions where risks of sharing are known. Managers consider any individual risk factors and vulnerabilities. Children's preferences are also considered.

Physical interventions are rarely used. When they are, these are proportionate and receive the necessary scrutiny and oversight.

Safe recruitment records are not consistently clear. Staff needed to make further enquiries during the inspection to ensure that full employment histories were fully noted. When references are verified, it is unclear what has been verified. In addition, the school's policy does not provide staff with clarity on the use of overseas checks or online checks for shortlisted candidates. This risks inconsistency in approaches to statutory expectations.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A qualified and well-respected manager with substantial experience leads the residential provision. He models a calm and reflective approach for staff. The leadership provided has led to the progress children make and the positive experiences they have in the residential provision.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the needs and experiences of individual children and of the group of children more broadly. Managers maintain oversight of documents that capture progress. These are a work in progress and managers are exploring how these can be more bespoke for individual children.

Feedback from families and professionals is positive. The school's multi-disciplinary team provides good, well-informed assessments and interventions to meet children's needs and help them make progress. There is a sense of partnership between the school, families and professionals.

Leaders and managers actively challenge and advocate on behalf of children and families when necessary. They respond to and challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

Permanent staff benefit from a range of training opportunities. These are relevant to the needs of the children. For example, leaders and managers have commissioned training on language deprivation from an external source. Staff receive regular

supervisions. However, despite some agency staff being used regularly over several years, these training and support opportunities have not been extended to them.

Leaders and managers had failed to ensure that an independent person visited the residential provision monthly. However, they took prompt steps to address this and did so with safe recruitment principles. A new person is in post and has begun to visit. As such, the provider has already taken the action necessary to address the issue.

The separate monitoring by an independent visitor offers challenge. If used effectively, this could contribute to improvements. However, until the most recent visit, leaders and managers did not ensure that the visitor had access to contact families. Therefore, this process did not include conversations with parents. This limited the range of evidence that informed the subsequent reports and means that pertinent information may be missed.

Health and safety information is now well ordered and available. Fire drills take place. However, these have not consistently captured data about who has been involved. Therefore, leaders and managers are uncertain about which children and staff have participated in a fire drill and when. This could compromise the safe evacuation in the event of a fire.

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

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure that the school's recruitment policy offers sufficient clarity for managers on the use of overseas checks, online checks for shortlisted candidates, and that recruitment records are well organised and clear.
- School leaders should ensure that agency and third-party staff receive supervision and relevant support for their roles proportionate to the frequency and nature of their roles.
- School leaders should ensure that views of parents inform standard 3 visits.
- School leaders should ensure that they are aware of who has participated in a fire drill and who has not.

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: SC050400

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Billy McInally

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

Ashley Hinson, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Lee Kirwin, Social Care Inspector

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