

Holly House School

Holly House School, Church Street North Old Whittington, Chesterfield, Derbyshire
S41 9QR

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Holly House School is a maintained residential community special school for children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school provides education for 44 children aged seven to 14. The residential provision is in an annex to the main school and provides accommodation for up to eight children each night from Monday to Thursday during term time.

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

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 March 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	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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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: 13 July 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children thoroughly enjoy their residential experience. They form trusted and warm relationships with staff who know them well. A parent said: 'The care is like I would give him. He loves going. It's like a home from home.'

Children make exceptional progress. For example, a child who was being restrained regularly in class was not exhibiting the same behaviours of concern in the residential provision. As a result, the residential team shared their understanding of the child with teaching staff, and a proactive plan was agreed, ensuring good communication and consistency between class and residential teams. There have been no further incidents for three weeks. Previously, incidents were occurring at least daily.

Children have opportunities to experience things they would not normally experience in their home lives. For example, children were taken on holiday last year, fully funded by the school, to the coast. A child wanted to know what the sea was because he had never seen it before. A parent said about the holiday: 'He had the time of his life and didn't want to come home. He said it was brilliant.'

Children make exceptional progress in building their confidence, self-esteem, resilience and self-worth. For example, a residential child saw a new child with their parent while viewing the residential provision. The child was nervous, so the residential child asked him if he would like a drink and proceeded to tell him about all the exciting activities they do in 'resi'. This helped the new child to settle, and he asked if he could come straight away to the school.

Children love the creative, enjoyable activities they participate in. For example, children will walk a dog in the park, do cookouts in the woodland, jump over streams and learn forestry skills. They did a monster hunt at Halloween, sang Christmas carols with a brass band and visited a fire station. Children go bowling, ice skating and to the cinema. The children have asked to have a Harry Potter-themed night and so staff are arranging this to take place in a few weeks' time. The activities that children enjoy are not only fun but also educational. Children not only learn about respect, empathy and kindness, but they also gain a sense of worth and achievement.

Leaders prioritise the mental health and well-being of both children and staff. Residential staff are leading the school staff to ensure better health and well-being for all children and staff. This initiative has also been extended to parents. The impact of looking after the staff's well-being on the children is evident. Children are polite, helpful and respectful. Relationships between staff and children are warm and nurturing. During the inspection, a child enquired after the well-being of the inspector. Staff said that it is usual for children to ask after the well-being of the adults around them because staff provide positive role models that children emulate.

A parent said: 'When I asked my son what he thinks about the staff on 'resi', he said they are 'my resi family'. He's created amazing relationships with the other students as well, which has helped him in the classroom and taught him about other's feelings, how to manage his own feelings and how to help the others.'

Incentive schemes for children are imaginative, child-centred, bespoke and non-shaming. The incentive scheme is well understood by children. Children choose an activity they would like to work towards. The scheme is linked to the school's ethos of the three Rs: respect, responsibility and relationships. When children demonstrate these attributes, they gain pirate coins. The more pirate coins they collect, the closer they get to their goal. The whole of a kitchen/dining area is pirate themed, with a giant pirate map painted on the wall so that children can easily see their progress. Children are excited when they achieve their goals. Activities are not always cheap but are funded by the school. The activities children participate in would not be possible if the school did not fund them.

Children are significantly involved in the day-to-day running of the residential provision. For example, they have designed, costed and built a well-being garden, which they have called 'Escape', and a well-being room in the residential provision. These are safe places where the children can relax in.

Children's school attendance improves because they enjoy the residential and extended-day experience. For example, a child who is not currently attending school will attend the extended-day provision. The plan is to slowly reintroduce him back to school.

Children like their individualised, themed bedrooms. For example, bedrooms may have themes such as boxing, dinosaurs, the jungle or superheroes, among others. Children choose which bedroom they would like to stay in, and this is their room until they leave, unless they choose to move rooms.

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

The school has a large, well-trained safeguarding team that includes three residential staff. This means that there is always a designated safeguarding officer in the school when children are staying overnight. The safeguarding team works closely with external agencies and parents to ensure that children are safer. Good planning and a proactive approach help to keep children safe. Staff receive effective training and have a good understanding of their safeguarding role. However, on one occasion, staff did not follow appropriate procedures robustly enough. While this did not put children at risk of harm, it did not protect staff from future allegations.

Residential staff and the family liaison officer work closely together. They visit children in their homes if they are not in school. They also work closely with the designated safeguarding lead, who is a member of the senior leadership team. The designated safeguarding lead understands that forming positive relationships with parents is key to keeping children safe. Residential staff and the family liaison officer

work hard at this and, as a result, know the children's families as well as they know the children.

Staff make referrals to other agencies such as school nurses and social care, and to healthcare professionals such as the dentist. They will attend healthcare appointments with children and their parents. Parents find this supportive. This has meant that children get appropriate healthcare.

Children's behaviour in the residential provision is exemplary. This is because staff consistently implement strong rules and boundaries. Children understand the residential routines, which helps them to feel safe and secure.

Staff are trained in physical intervention but have not restrained a child for many years. This is because staff know the children well and have built secure relationships with them. Staff know the triggers for children and have plans to negate any negative choices children may make.

The maintenance team clearly responds to any health and safety issues quickly. However, several concerns about fire doors were identified during the inspection: fire doors were shutting too quickly, door guards were not working and staff were using a door wedge to prop a door open. These issues have all now been resolved but should have been identified sooner. Health and safety checks are, therefore, not robust enough.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The head of care is a member of the senior leadership team. This clearly demonstrates the importance the school places on the residential provision. Residence is a key part of the school offer. The head of care is very experienced and appropriately qualified. He is ably supported by a strong, experienced deputy and staff team. Leaders, managers and staff are passionate about providing bespoke, child-centred care for children.

There is an established team of staff who are supported well in their role. Staff have access to a wealth of training. This helps staff to provide excellent care to children and ensures that children have fantastic experiences and make exceptional progress. Staff thoroughly enjoy working at this school and supporting the children.

Governors provide appropriate support and challenge. There is a dedicated residential governor who has a strong understanding of the residential provision. There is also a well-being governor who, staff say, provides effective support to them. A review of governance is underway.

The independent visitor carries out in-depth visits to the residential provision and has done so for some years, before the new national minimum standards were introduced. She is insightful and provides clear and effective oversight of the residential provision. During her last visit, she recommended that a record of an

incident needed to be more detailed. This relates to one incident in which a child made an allegation against a member of staff. Staff did not follow the procedures relating to allegations against staff robustly enough. Nevertheless, staff usually use the safeguarding reporting system effectively and appropriately. A social worker said: 'School reports any concerns to us promptly and communicates with us frequently.'

Parents appreciate the help and support staff provide them. A parent, whose son has had a prolonged stay in hospital, said: 'Their support has been out of this world. I couldn't have done it without them. They were someone to talk to other than nurses.'

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

Points for improvement

- School leaders should consider revisiting whistle-blowing procedures with staff to ensure they have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities when allegations are made against staff. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 13.1)
- School leaders should consider strengthening the health and safety reporting system to ensure staff report hazards quickly. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 14.2)
- School leaders should strengthen management oversight of records to ensure that potential safeguarding concerns are appropriately managed and recommendations from the independent visitor are acted on. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.3)

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: SC056234

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Marc Hughes

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Inspector

Joanne Vyas, Social Care Inspector

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