

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: 18 to 20 September 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: 17 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy their time spent in residence. One child said: 'The best thing about residential is I can have a sleepover with my friend.' Staff value children's wishes and feelings. They regularly seek their views. Inspectors observed staff supporting children to make choices, using their preferred means of communication.

The staff know the children well and create a relaxed and happy environment where children can learn and thrive. Staff place children at the centre of their practice and ensure that they have everything they need to meet their needs. They offer warmth and encouragement. Care is delivered in line with children's individualised needs. One parent said: 'The staff are aware of his complex needs and encourage him to try new things.'

The experience of staying in residential contributes to children making progress. In residency, the children gain a wide range of skills that prepare them well for the future. Targets are set from the children's education, health and care plans. The implementation of new recording and observation sheets ensures that the skills children learn and develop, such as in setting the table, dressing themselves, cooking and preparing snacks, are captured. This is a key strength of the provision and is worthy of wider dissemination.

Children who are new to the residential provision are welcomed sensitively and in a planned way. They have opportunities to take part in extended stays. This means they can make themselves familiar with their new surroundings and get to know staff before they stay overnight. However, appropriate consideration is not always given to children's rights to privacy, with regard to their age and individual needs when considering where they sleep. Additionally, thought should be given to the risks associated with children sharing bedrooms recorded in line with their risk assessment.

Children benefit from the seamless way of working across the school and residency. There are good links between the residential staff and therapy teams. Feedback from professionals is positive. They said there is good planning and communication in place.

Children enjoy a range of activities on site, such as games and arts and crafts, and recently enjoyed a visit from the RSPCA to learn about wildlife and animals. However, since the last inspection children have not had the opportunity to take part in off-site activities. This is a missed opportunity for children to spend time in the local community.

Parents are complimentary about the provision. Comments include:

- 'Excellent school and excellent residential provision.'

- 'Since September 2023, we've been offered weekly stays, instead of fortnightly, with a broader range of companions – which is great for his learning, progress towards independence, personal development and socialisation.'
- 'My child is unable to have sleepovers with his friends in a "normal" everyday environment, so loves going to residential to have some time after school with his friends. He is encouraged to make food choices and to assist in the clearing away after a meal.'
- 'Our daughter loves everything about school, and we admire and appreciate the staff who support her needs. She absolutely loves the residential experience and attends clubs during school time but would also benefit if there were extra-curricular clubs after school, although I appreciate transport is a big issue when organising this provision.'
- 'The staff are so friendly. It's like one big family.'

Children are in good health and support is provided to children to help them manage lifelong conditions. The nurses ensure that there is effective communication with the residential staff through daily handovers. There are clear medication procedures and processes in place. Since the last inspection, there have been some changes to medication handover processes. This has resulted in more robust procedures being in place.

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

The understanding of safeguarding concerns in the school is good. The designated safeguarding lead takes quick action when issues arise. They work closely with the residential staff. There are plans in place to further embed safeguarding practices through the implementation of learning walks to develop staff's knowledge.

Risk assessments are of good quality. They are regularly updated with new and emerging risks. These assessments demonstrate how the children's voice is captured with regard to who they share a room with. However, it is unclear as to how these decisions have been reached and how this is assessed in terms of age, gender and individual need.

Staff know the children well. This enables them to recognise when children are upset or distressed. Inspectors observed this in action. Staff use effective strategies in a sensitive way with one child to help to calm her. This demonstrates that children are supported to manage their emotions in a positive way. As a result of these positive approaches to behaviour support, there is no use of physical restraint in residency.

Parents said that their children are safe and well cared for in residence. Children take part in learning how to stay safe online. This is done through enjoyable games and worksheets. As a result, children are helped to have a greater understanding of the risks the internet may pose.

The management and oversight of health and safety in the residential provision are good. Each child has their own personal emergency evacuation plan. These are discussed on a nightly basis. The environment is in good order. It is bright and clean. Children are encouraged to bring items from home to personalise their bedroom space.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and a new head of care have been appointed. They worked previously as deputies in the school and therefore are suitably knowledgeable and experienced regarding the children's needs. Leaders across the school and in residence have high aspirations for the children who stay.

Staff work well with parents, seeking their views. One parent said: 'Residential is a lifeline.' However, some parents stated that some information has not been shared effectively regarding what targets their child is working towards and the activities they have taken part in. Leaders and managers shared ideas about how this can improve.

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the school, by using good-quality monitoring systems and working hard to ensure continuous improvement.

There is a new independent visitor in place. They clearly record their opinion about the safety and welfare of children. This information supplements the reports made by the parent governor and the residential manager to the governing body. This ensures that robust review and challenge of the residential service are being provided. The head of care demonstrates effectively how she takes learning from any recommendations, which she embeds into the residential development plan.

Staff enjoy working in residence and feel well supported. The provision is adequately staffed, and they provide a good level of consistency to all the children. Staff benefit from regular supervisions. This gives them opportunities to reflect and receive guidance about their care practice. Team meetings provide a good forum to discuss and share important information. The head of care ensures that staff receive training in mandatory learning. Additionally, staff have had recent training opportunities in multisensory approaches. This enables them to have up-to-date knowledge to meet children's individual needs. This enhances the experiences for children in the residential setting.

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

Points for improvements

- School leaders should ensure that where children are sleeping, appropriate consideration is given to children's rights to privacy, taking into account their age and individual needs. Additionally, where children are sharing bedrooms, consideration should be given to the risks associated with this and recorded in line with their risk assessment.
- School leaders should ensure that all children can take part in off-site activities, including time spent in the local community.
- School leaders should share information effectively with parents regarding what targets their child is working towards, and activities they have taken part in.
- School leaders should ensure that children's health plans are written in line with overnight provision.

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

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Inspectors

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