

# 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 conditions and learning difficulties. The age range of the children is from four to nineteen years. The school has an academy status since 2018. The residential service (Hawk and Falcon) operates Monday to Thursday in term time. Currently, there are 147 children on roll of which 28 children use the residence provision. Seven children can stay at any one time in the residential provision. Each child stays for one night a week.

There is a head of care who leads residence. She is well established in her role and is suitably experienced and qualified.

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

### Inspection dates: 14 to 16 November 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:** 31 January 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Staff work hard to form relationships with children who value the staff who support them. Children feel able to approach staff and ask for their help. Staff ensure that children understand what is being asked of them. They are nurturing in their approach and are patient with the children. Therefore, children who attend residence thoroughly enjoy their overnight stays and have lots of fun.

There are clear targets for children's attainment. Staff and parents work closely to support the children to achieve their goals. Parents told inspectors about many examples of how their children have made significant progress because of staff support. In one instance, a child has become increasingly independent. They have transferred their newly developed skills into the family home which has enabled the child to become more independent in preparation for adulthood.

Children have opportunities to access a range of activities in the community. These include going to shops to buy items and going out for a drink or food. In turn, they have been able to work towards doing these activities with their families. The children's progress in residence often impacts on their wider life very positively. For example, one child, has been out for their first meal on holiday together with their family which was a positive experience for them. In addition, the varied opportunities help improve children's confidence and support them to develop social skills and lasting friendships.

Partnership working is a strength. Staff work effectively with families, education professionals and external professionals, all with the aim of improving outcomes for children.

Staff have extensive knowledge of children's communication needs and tailor their support to each individual child. For example, staff are being trained on a new electronic device that will allow a child to better express his wishes and views. Furthermore, social stories are used effectively to support children to cope with changes and to help understand significant events.

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

Staff have a good understanding of children's safety needs and risk assessments contribute to keeping children safe. However, risk assessments do not always provide staff with clear guidance on how to manage all of the identified risks. For example, one child's risk assessment identifies that the child may self-harm in the form of banging their head. However, specific action staff should take is not clear. This has the potential to leave the child vulnerable.

Staff monitor and track children's progress. Staff are alert to any behavioural triggers and respond accordingly when children's behaviour becomes concerning. This has led to positive outcomes for children, such as a reduction in some behaviours and in the use of physical interventions. However, when physical intervention has taken place, records are basic and do not always contain detailed information about the event. This prevents rigorous oversight of incidents to ensure the intervention was required and undertaken in accordance with guidelines. It is also a missed opportunity for learning to be taken from the incident.

Children's needs are such that they require close supervision. Therefore, they do not go missing or become involved in any form of exploitation. Children's safety online is understood by staff. There are appropriate safety mechanisms in place that can alert staff to any worries. When concerns have arisen, appropriate action has been taken with a multi-agency response. Therefore, children are supported by staff who know them well and can ensure that the children remain protected.

Children are educated on topics that relate to everyday life such as road safety, online safety and fire risks. Staff work with children to help them understand the risks posed and what they can do to keep themselves safe. Staff use worksheets to aid the children's understanding of what is being explored. Children's learning is captured and shared with others who support the child.

Medication systems are robust and there have not been any errors. Storage is safe and the policy has been reviewed. Trained staff follow processes and understand the risks. This helps children stay safe.

Safer recruitment checks are undertaken on any new staff. There has been one occasion where checks were not undertaken in accordance with safer recruitment guidelines. Immediate action was taken to rectify this.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The manager is very experienced and has worked in this home for several years. She has a solid commitment to the children and staff. She is held in high regard by children, staff, their families and involved agencies.

The staff are extremely dedicated to the children in their care. Most staff have worked within the provision for several years. This has allowed the team to form strong and supportive relationships with each other as well as with the children.

The manager has a detailed understanding and awareness of each child's histories, and their individual changing complex needs. She is clear about children's progress and how staff support them to continue developing.

Supervision has taken place but is basic. Staff are not always given the opportunity to discuss their role, the support they may require or their personal development. In addition, the quality of recording in the supervision notes is poor and lacks reflection.

When an issue is identified, these are not discussed in supervision so the progress of staff cannot be determined.

There is an established process in place for families to request time for their child in the residential provision. The manager seeks to match the children's needs and interests to support the development of friendships and peer relationships. Upon children being accepted, the manager undertakes child centred placement planning that leads to weekly overnights being provided. Parents recognise the benefits of this provision not only for their child but how it positively impacts on the whole family. One parent told the inspector: 'This has been a lifeline.'

The head of care is scheduled onto shifts in residence every week. This has at times taken her away from her management responsibilities and she and her team would benefit from her having greater oversight. This would enable her to identify staff's learning needs and better support them in their role. The management team are reviewing recording processes. They wish to decrease the time staff spend on paperwork and enable them to focus on supporting the children.

The staff team is highly experienced and knowledgeable. A large proportion of the staff are either qualified or enrolled on suitable qualification pathways to enhance their knowledge. Training and development opportunities are detailed and thorough. Bespoke training focuses on the direct and specific needs of children.

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

### **Points for improvement**

- The registered person should ensure that risk assessments contain sufficient detail so staff understand the actions they should take to keep children safe.
- The registered person should ensure that staff have access to ongoing supervision, support and advice from the head of care.
- The registered person should ensure that when staff use physical intervention techniques on a child, that records consistently contain detailed information about the event.

### **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:** Mr Samuel Bayliss

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

**Telephone number:** 01332 880 208

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## **Inspectors**

Lizette Watts, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Zoey Lee, Social Care Inspector

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