

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 have 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 inspection, 20 children were resident.

The inspectors only inspected the residential provision at this school.

Children are referred to in school as learners and this is reflected in this report.

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 November 2023

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| Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account | good |
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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 effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 21 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Learners say they feel safe, are happy boarding and enjoy learning and spending time with their friends. Staff are attuned to the learners' needs. They support them to communicate, develop independence skills and explore the world around them. Issues between learners occasionally occur due to miscommunication or different levels of understanding. Staff are quick to address this and support learners to resolve any quarrels. Learners feel comfortable expressing their identity. They are confident in giving their pronouns and the describe the residential environment as accepting and respectful of differences.

Educationally, learners experience progress and success. A wide range of specifically tailored education pathways are provided to learners. This enables learners of every level to achieve qualifications ranging from functional skills, going to college and passing the driving theory test. Learners also access a wide range of work experience that they are well prepared for. Learners are encouraged to think about some of the challenges they may face when carrying out their work experience and have the chance to review how it has gone once completed.

The school have developed their own progress tracking system, and this allows all leaders and key staff to contribute and evaluate how learners are progressing. Subtle changes are made to targets so that learners can see and celebrate their achievements.

The health and medication of learners is managed well. Staff understand learners' specific needs and learners say they feel well cared for if they are unwell. Some minor medication errors have occurred. The internal investigations that followed resulted in changes in practice that sharpen up the processes of managing the medication that learners bring to school from home.

Learners have access to a wide range of activities and clubs daily. This includes basketball, boxing, art, hair dressing, crafts, developing independence skills and cooking. Learners can choose what they want to do and make suggestions of other activities. To help learners have a voice in the school there is a student council group who meet fortnightly.

If there are emerging concerns in relation to learners, there is a dedicated 'team around the child' that includes representatives from different disciplines across the school. This group make effective decisions about the needs of the learner and either identify support from the school or external support where needed. Due to the positive working relationships the school has with key external partners, such as deaf mental health services, support for learners is identified when needed.

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

Risks for learners are well understood by staff. There are clear plans to support staff knowledge of how best to care for learners. To ensure that learners feel safe, there is a dedicated safeguarding team including a designated safeguarding lead and several deputies. This team meet weekly to ensure that they review and have oversight of all incidents in a timely way and identify any actions that may be needed. Previous actions are also reviewed.

This safeguarding team have been particularly effective when it has come to managing behaviour between learners. Any issues of bullying are immediately discussed and plans to resolve them are made. This considers who the best person is to communicate with individual learners. These detailed plans are immediately shared with the wider school colleagues and are well followed. Leaders have full oversight of this team and the work that they do.

Physical restraints are infrequent due to the skill and knowledge of staff. When restraints have occurred, they are well managed, and learners' reflections are considered in any follow up. All restraints are discussed in the weekly safeguarding meeting. However, there is inconsistency in the guidance and recording of incidents. For example, records include the name of the technique used to de-escalate and calm a learner. Significantly, guidance and records have been designed for both school and the residential setting and show that it is permissible to restrain a learner due to causing a disruption in the residential accommodation. Leaders made changes to the guidance and record templates during the inspection and shared this with the staff team. However, they had not identified themselves that this is not a permissible reason to physically restrain learners and had been used in practice.

When allegations or significant events have occurred the communication to external safeguarding professionals is immediate. There are good levels of consultation and advice is always followed. Records show that the needs of learners are the focus of referrals, ensuring that their safety is paramount.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders have high aspirations for all learners. They have oversight and an intricate working knowledge of all learners in residential. Leaders have a variety of monitoring systems, daily engagement with staff and regular and detailed communication systems.

Staff have a comprehensive training plan that is led by a dedicated training lead. If learners show emerging changes in their behaviour additional training is identified and delivered to staff. This helps staff to consistently meet learners needs and further enhances their skills and practice. All mandatory training is up to date. Staff receive regular and effective supervision that supports them in their role and enables them to continue their professional development.

A dedicated independent visitor and safeguarding and care governor, who is a proficient British Sign Language user, regularly visits the school and report their

findings to leaders. The reports from the independent visitor would benefit from further exploration as to how they have reached their conclusions in terms of reviewing records. This would better support leaders to continue to improve the school.

The use of temporary staff in the school is minimal. When temporary staff are used, the same agency staff members are used for consistency. They are trained to meet learners' specific needs and are confident that they are part of the team and feel as well prepared, supported and valued as permanent staff.

Leaders advocate for learners well. They are clear to recognise when there is a need that is not being met and make sure external professionals are alert to this. This has resulted in many changes. Specifically, recognising that some learners have needed to extend their school time to complete an additional year. The outcome of this is that those learners will leave the school with additional qualifications.

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

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard for residential special schools:

- 20.4 Methods to understand triggers for behaviour that challenges, and to de-escalate situations that may result in restraint, are used to avoid restraint wherever possible. Restraint should be used only to prevent injury to any person including the child involved, or to prevent serious damage to property and cannot be used to maintain good order. Restraint should only be used in exceptional circumstances.

Recommendations

- School leaders should ensure that records of restraint are explicit in terms of actions that staff have taken when restraining a learner.
- School leaders should ensure that reports from standard 3 visits fully explain how conclusions have been reached in terms of assessments the independent visitor has made, and how this links with the national minimum standards.

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:

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

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