

Horton Lodge

Staffordshire County Council, Horton Lodge Special School, Rudyard, Leek,
Staffordshire, ST13 8RB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Horton Lodge is a local authority-maintained residential special school for 59 children aged from two to 11 years who have physical disabilities and/or associated learning difficulties. Some of the children have additional visual, hearing and/or speech language difficulties and medical needs. The school's education is based on conductive education.

The residential provision operates from Monday to Wednesday, with up to seven pupils residing at the school on any one night. The residential provision is called 'Kiplings' and is in a separate wing of the school. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 December 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: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

As a direct result of their residential experience, children make very good progress in the important areas of their lives. Children build good and trusting relationships with staff and their peers. The head of care and staff understand children's complex needs extremely well and celebrate their achievements. As a result, children benefit from consistent and personalised care, which helps them to feel valued.

Children's parents speak positively about the school and the experiences it provides to their children. One parent said, 'I can't explain how amazing it is, [the child] absolutely adores Kiplings' and staff have 'helped [the child] to develop their independence.' Another parent said that 'Kiplings is a safe, happy place. The children can make friends and be independent away from home. The staff are a credit to the provision and the environment is magical.'

Children's communication skills improve considerably at this school. This is because of the joined-up approach that exists between school and the residence. Staff are passionate in their approach to supporting children. The school plans to continue to develop this area so that children continue to benefit. Consequently, children's views are captured regularly, and their views contribute to the care that they receive.

Staff work hard to ensure that the time children spend in residence is filled with fun and laughter. Children enjoy each other's company and engage in a wide range of exciting activities. This includes playing, singing, sensory play, and arts and crafts. Children also participate in offsite activities regularly. For example, during the inspection, staff took children offsite to see the local community Christmas lights, where they also met Santa. These opportunities help children to create memories and broaden their experiences.

Staff promote and support children's complex health needs well. There are clear health plans in place for children, which help staff to understand each child's specific health needs. In addition, staff receive specialist training to support children's complex medical needs. Medication is stored safe and securely, and clear records are maintained of all medication dispensed.

Children's transitions between residence and school are carefully planned and supported. For example, staff record daily updates in children's handover books and this information is shared with teaching staff. When in residence, staff provide children with a predictable daily routine which adds stability to their experience. This supportive approach allows children to feel safe and secure.

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

Children said that they feel safe and enjoy being in residence. They are well cared for by skilled and trusted adults who they know well. Staff use a calm and quiet

approach, which children respond well to. Staff encourage children to use their manners and ensure that there are clear boundaries and expectations for children. Children have individual risk assessments as part of their care plans. These risk assessments are regularly updated and reviewed. As a result, children feel settled and significant incidents are rare.

Child protection and safeguarding is well managed. Staff receive regular safeguarding training, and the safeguarding lead uses quizzes to test out their understanding. Leaders use an electronic information-sharing system effectively to track and monitor the progression and impact of potential concerns. In addition, the headteacher takes allegations about staff seriously. She uses her professional judgement, works well with external professionals and investigations are carried out effectively. These actions help to reassure children and protect their welfare.

Staff understand children's complex needs and manage their anxieties well. Children requiring additional support have support plans in place. These provide school and residential staff with specific guidance to follow. Children respond well to these supportive interventions and make progress. However, some staff do not consistently follow or apply strategies from children's plans in their work with children. On one occasion, this has led to a child suffering an injury. On other occasions, while children have not come to harm, inconsistent practice has left children potentially vulnerable. Failing to follow children's plans has the potential to leave children confused and vulnerable.

Safer recruitment systems for vetting new staff are effective. Thorough records detail all necessary information on new and existing staff. As a result, children are cared for by adults who have been appropriately vetted.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A child focused, organised, and experienced head of care effectively manages the residential service. She is a strong and enthusiastic leader who focuses on supporting staff and working with children's parents to meet children's individual needs. This support ensures that children enjoy their time in the residential provision. One parent said, 'My relationship with the [head of care] is amazing, I can call and contact her at any time, and she will do something.'

The head of care is part of the senior leadership team and is supervised by the school's head teacher. The senior leadership team is united in its commitment to providing good experiences for children, and for them to make progress. Children's well-being and safety are central to the school's ethos and senior leaders model a child-centred approach. Residence is a well-integrated part of the school, where children are provided with opportunities to extend their learning and develop their independence skills.

Supervision, training, and appraisal systems for staff are particularly strong. The head of care ensures that the systems used support staff development and enable

them to reflect effectively on their practice. Staff are appraised annually and attend weekly team meetings. As a result, staff feel valued, and they continue to strive to improve the care that children receive.

Leaders have a good oversight of the residential provision. In addition, the school's governing body monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management, and delivery of the residential provision. Monitoring systems include self-evaluation, quality assurance visits from the local authority, and regular governors' visits. Consequently, management monitoring systems develop and improve the residential provision.

However, while two separate independent persons visit regularly, the visits and reports do not ensure that parents' views are gathered. In addition, the independent persons do not always review safeguarding incidents that have occurred with children. This has the potential to limit the independent oversight of the provision.

Leaders review their statement of principles regularly. As a result, the school is providing experiences to children in line with its stated aims.

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 standards for residential special schools:

- The school's leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities consistently and effectively so that the standards are met. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.4)
- The school should ensure that all staff are aware that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility throughout the school and its residential facilities. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 13.2)

Recommendations

- Leaders should ensure that the independent visitor evaluates the quality of the provision, the effectiveness of the care provided to children, whether they are safeguarded and seeks feedback from parents/carers where relevant.

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: SC038727

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mrs Lucy Bloor

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector (Lead)

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