

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 aged between four and 19 with autism and learning difficulties. The school has had academy status since 2018.

The residential service (Hawk and Falcon) operates Monday to Thursday in term time. There are 150 children on the school roll, of whom 28 use the residential provision. Seven children can stay at any one time in the residential provision. Each child stays for one night a week.

A head of care leads the residential provision. 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: 25 to 27 June 2024

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 last inspection: 14 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and staff have excellent relationships. Staff know and understand the children very well. They talk warmly and positively about children's strengths and achievements. Children trust staff and seek physical interaction and affection from them. The home provides a calm, settled environment in which children are happy and relaxed and able to develop friendships and have new experiences.

The appearance of the home has improved since the last visit. It is now warm and inviting. Children's artwork and their photos are on display throughout the home, creating a personal and welcoming environment. Children have been consulted on the redecoration of the home and personalisation of the bedrooms. This promotes a sense of belonging for the duration of their stay.

Children make excellent progress in developing their life skills. Staff recognise and celebrate children's small but significant achievements, such as brushing their teeth, trying new foods or developing their communication. Some children's progress fluctuates, but staff quickly identify this and adjust the support to the child to get them on track. This helps children to make small but continuous progress.

Staff support children to participate in a wide range of activities, both locally and further afield. These activities provide lots of fun and laughter, creating wonderful memories that are captured in photos. The activities have included trips to the seaside, the park and Snowdome. This enables children to have different experiences that promote social inclusion in their wider community.

Children are cared for by a dedicated staff team. Staff morale is high and staff genuinely enjoy their roles. All staff spoken to said they love their jobs, and their caring attitude shines through in their interactions with children.

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

Physical intervention is rarely used to manage the children's behaviour. Staff are skilled at monitoring children's behaviours, which means they can intervene so that situations do not escalate. When there is an incident, staff support the child to explore their feelings about what happened in a way that they will understand. This helps the child feel safe, and staff gain a greater understanding of the child.

The children's individual risk assessments are of good quality. Risk management and support plans identify all known risks and provide detailed guidance to staff on keeping the children safe. They provide staff with the direction they need to manage identified risks and vulnerabilities.

Incidents of aggression from children are low. When incidents do happen, children are helped by staff to de-escalate and calm. Staff nurture children and show care

through their responses when children are upset or angry. As staff know the children so well, clear routines and structure have been embedded, enabling children to feel safe, which minimises incidents.

Staff safely administer medication to children. All staff who dispense medication have received the appropriate training and have had their competency assessed. There is clear management oversight, including daily and weekly audits. This ensures that children receive the medication prescribed to meet their health needs. As a result of the systems in place, there have not been any medication administration errors.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager and deputy are both motivated, nurturing and passionate about their roles and the care provided to children. Together with the staff team, they have created a warm, loving and nurturing environment where children feel safe and well cared for.

Staff feel well supported in their roles by managers. Staff receive regular reflective supervision meetings that consider children's progress as well as their own well-being and development. The quality of supervision has significantly improved, and staff appraisals have now been implemented to support staff to continue to develop in their roles. Team meetings provide a forum for staff and managers to discuss and plan for children. Practice is reflective, which helps staff develop their skills and knowledge and learn from incidents.

The manager continues to develop relationships with relevant professionals. This has recently included work with Derbyshire County Council youth network team who held a workshop with the children to explore growth and change, as part of the council's current area of focus. Furthermore, the manager meets with her social care peers from residential settings to share good practice and resources.

The residential and education staff work in partnership across both settings, with the aim of delivering good-quality consistent care. Objectives set in school are closely linked to the residential targets. This collaborative approach supports children to thrive and progress in education, alongside increasing and enhancing their social skills when they stay in residential.

The manager is continually seeking ways to enhance the delivery of support to children. Currently, she is in the process of embedding systems that will provide greater oversight of the work undertaken regarding the children. The focus is to improve practice and be a force for change.

The independent visitor undertakes bi-monthly visits to the home, offering professional scrutiny of the care being delivered. The reports are sent to the leadership team for their comments and oversight. However, no evaluation is undertaken by the leadership team. Furthermore, the headteacher has not completed their yearly report for the residential provision. These are missed opportunities to

reflect on what issues have been identified and hinders learning being shared with the team.

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

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure that there is a formal response recorded on the report completed by the independent visitor.
- School leaders should ensure that there is a written evaluation of the residential provision completed on a yearly basis.

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: Samuel Bayliss

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Zoey Lee, Social Care Inspector

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