

# Holbrook Centre for Autism

### Inspection report

Unique Reference Number131323Local AuthorityDerbyshireInspection number341128

Inspection dates6-7 October 2009Reporting inspectorDavid Muir HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

**Type of school** Special

School category Community special

Age range of pupils5–18Gender of pupilsMixedGender of pupils in the sixth formMixedNumber of pupils on the school roll52Of which, number on roll in the sixth form6

Appropriate authorityThe governing bodyChairMrs Margaret Reeve MBE

**Headteacher** Mr David Heald **Date of previous school inspection** 1 February 2007

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 Age group
 5-18

 Inspection dates
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Boarding provision

Social care Unique Reference Number

Social care inspector

The Holbrook Centre SC058960
Joanne Vyas

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### **Introduction**

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, a social care inspector and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited thirteen lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and other partners. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation form, other relevant documents and 33 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how the school tracks the progress of all pupils in the school
- the extent to which the school is effectively meeting the needs of all of its pupils
- the effectiveness of the curriculum at all key stages of the school including post-16
- the quality of the school's work on personal outcomes for the pupils
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at monitoring and evaluation

### Information about the school

Holbrook is a residential special school that caters for pupils with autism and additional learning difficulties; many also have identified behaviour needs. Currently, six students attend the school's post-16 provision and sixteen are in the primary age group. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Six of the pupils are girls. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic circumstances. 23% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school provides an outreach service supporting staff and pupils in mainstream schools as well as providing advice to parents.

The school has a number of awards including Investors in People and National Healthy Schools Status. A building programme has been completed since the previous inspection.

# **Inspection judgements**

### Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

## The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

## **Main findings**

Holbrook Centre for Autism is a good school with many outstanding areas. The school meets the needs of all pupils very effectively and many of their personal outcomes are outstanding. The management of the school has worked hard to create a positive ethos where every learner is valued and enabled to achieve well according to their starting point and their capabilities. Pupils make good progress in key stages one to four, but only satisfactory progress in the post-16 department due to inadequate accommodation, which has not improved since the previous inspection nearly three years ago.

Due to their special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school are well below average and they leave the school with attainment still well below average. However, evidence shows that during their time in school, pupils make good progress relative to their needs and their starting points. Pupils love coming to school. They enjoy their learning and feel safe and confident. The school and the residence very effectively promote healthy lifestyles for all members of the school community. The school is now opening up its newly built facilities to the wider community who are, in turn, happy to have the school in its locality. There have been no incidents of bullying or racism reported in recent times and no exclusions.

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers use their understanding of autism and their knowledge of pupils' levels of attainment well to inform their planning for lessons and to ensure that every pupil has their needs met. In key stages one to four, the curriculum meets the needs of pupils. Nevertheless, the school is aware that there are limitations within the post-16 provision. The care and support for pupils in the school are outstanding due to the wide range of partnerships used to support pupils' needs. All staff play a significant part in raising aspirations for all pupils in the school by their care and understanding of the pupils' needs. Transition arrangements for students moving in to the school and on to the next stages of their lives are very well planned and parents and students are extremely well guided through this potentially unsettling time. Pupils have targets for their improvement in all aspects of school, including targets in the different subjects as well as behaviour and social targets.

The school's ethos is supported by the good and often outstanding work of the boarding provision. The care staff provide valuable input to reviews of pupils' targets and provide consistency for pupils, through the twenty four hour curriculum.

A considerable strength of the school has been the way in which the headteacher has engaged the whole school community in raising aspirations. His leadership has been valued by parents, pupils and staff who all feel that their views have been heard and considered in the work of the school. Due to developments since the last inspection and

an accurate awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development, the school has demonstrated that it has good capacity to make sustained improvement.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop teaching and the use of assessment to ensure that more pupils are able to make even better progress in their lessons, by consistently:
  - ensuring that work set is of a level which engages and challenges all pupils in all classes.
  - providing pupils with opportunities to evaluate their own work
- Develop the post-16 provision so that it is able to meet the needs of any future students in an appropriate way by:
  - ensuring that the building is able to accommodate a range of activities and resources to support an effective curriculum

# **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

2

All of the Every Child Matters outcomes are good and most are outstanding. The level of attendance is high. These outcomes are due to the high level of commitment of staff, governors and parents to put the pupils at the centre of everything they do. Pupils develop good attitudes to learning in all key stages. They enjoy their time in the school and this is supported by parental feedback, in which 100% of questionnaire responses showed that parents are confident that their children enjoy school. All pupils who completed the questionnaire said that they felt safe in the school and had adults they could rely on to help them when needed. The school's data, and evidence from the inspection, shows that all groups of pupils make good progress irrespective of their special educational needs, medical needs, gender or ethnicity. The recent changes to the student council, show that pupils are keen to be involved and that the school is ensuring it is as representative and inclusive as possible.

Extremely strong links with the local community, local colleges and local businesses provide a wide range of opportunities and genuine work experience placements for the older students. One example of this is a link with a local 'business champion' which resulted in a project called 'Perfect Pots' where the pupils produced hanging baskets. One of these was presented to 10 Downing Street. The school also has strong links with a local charity which supports pupils in their transition to adulthood, by providing additional training and support. These opportunities are supported by impressive developments within the school's use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning and the school's partnerships with other organisations. Together with a consistent focus on the pupils' social and personal development and basic skills, pupils are extremely well prepared for life in the workplace. Due to the excellent and consistent behaviour management by all staff, pupils' behaviour is good. This is also the outcome of the skills that pupils develop in managing their own behaviour, often from very challenging starting points on entry to school.

The school ensures that pupils are involved in a wide range of activities and curriculum opportunities in school and residence, which contribute very effectively to their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. These include visiting a local synagogue and a mosque as well as a high level of importance attached to developing pupils' affinity and empathy with those around them. Pupils also help to raise money for a range of good causes, nationally and globally, and the school works hard to raise their awareness and understanding of these causes.

#### These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning		
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2	
The extent to which pupils feel safe		
Pupils' behaviour		
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles		
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community		
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being		
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		

# How effective is the provision?

Overall, teaching is good in all key stages and promotes good achievement for all pupils. Staff know the pupils well and in the best lessons, teachers plan activities which provide pupils with appropriate support but also with opportunities to work independently when they can. This ensures that in the majority of lessons, the pupils are well engaged and

The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

<sup>\*</sup> In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

make good and sometimes outstanding progress. The less effective lessons observed lacked sufficient challenge and pupils only made satisfactory progress. In these lessons, opportunities were not presented for pupils to evaluate their own work, although there is increasing evidence of self evaluation at all key stages as pupils develop their skills. Staff have a good awareness of academic levels as well as an exemplary knowledge and understanding of the pupils' social, personal and medical needs and this contributes well to the progress made. Opportunities are sought to provide pupils with chances to interact with each other. Teaching assistants provide excellent support for learning and for teachers. They are highly valued by pupils, teachers and parents.

In the main school, the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well, and as a result, good progress is made in all key stages up to key stage 4. The school has developed and implemented a very strong autistic spectrum disorder core curriculum. Personal, social and health education and other cross-curricular areas of the curriculum have been developed to make them relevant and topical. An example of this is the recent work on the Paralympics which is a subject of relevance to the pupils. There are many educational visits, which give pupils good opportunities to gain experiences outside of their normal lives. The limitations within the post-16 accommodation have prevented this area of the school curriculum from developing as effectively as the other areas. Progress in this area has been disappointing since the last inspection.

The school uses partnerships and the skills and experience of the staff very effectively in all aspects of its work to provide outstanding care, guidance and support throughout the school. The very successful joined up working between the school and the residence ensures that there is valuable continuity between these areas allowing pupils to gain as much as they can from their nights in residence. The outreach service also provides outstanding support and advice to pupils in mainstream schools and to parents.

#### These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
	T

# How effective are leadership and management?

The impressive senior leadership team, which is led very effectively by the headteacher, alongside a very experienced and dedicated staff has developed a strong ethos and vision for the school, which is fully supported by parents and governors. There is a clear focus on continually improving outcomes for the pupils. Questionnaires show that the vast majority of staff are proud to be associated with the school and feel that their contribution is valued.

The senior leaders have a very good understanding of how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to improve further. They are acutely aware of the physical restrictions on the further education department which has caused it to be graded lower than the rest of the school and are attempting to address this with the help of the local authority. Throughout the school, the senior leadership team have developed an extremely effective and robust system for the accurate tracking of pupils' progress. The data is used to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils and to compare the progress of the centre's pupils against a range of local and national benchmarks. There is an outstanding partnership with parents in which their views are valued. The overwhelming majority of parents responding positively in all areas of the parents' questionnaire. Governors provide satisfactory support and challenge for the headteacher and satisfactory support in the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's performance. Governors are increasingly involved in visiting the school and are well known members of the school community. They know the school well and contribute in an informed way to discussions about the quality of education in the school. The leadership of the school tackles equality of opportunity outstandingly and is proactive in ensuring that there is no discrimination in the school. The school promotes community cohesion well, but is aware that evaluation of the impact of this area on outcomes needs to be more finely focused. The school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. They are outstanding due to their robustness and detail.

#### These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account:  The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

#### Sixth form

The accommodation for the school's post-16 department is inadequate as it is housed in

a formerly residential bungalow within the school's ground. This is very restrictive and significantly impacts on the quality of the provision. Due to this, there is an over reliance on the use of the outdoor area and off-site facilities. Despite this restriction, the management has worked hard to ensure the students within the provision receive a curriculum which is suitable to their needs. The school has designed an accredited horticulture course, endorsed by the Open College Network, which all students participate in. Despite this innovation, the provision remains limited due to the lack of suitable accommodation. The teaching within the post-16 department is satisfactory and this leads to the pupils making satisfactory progress during their time in the department.

#### These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

### **Boarding provision**

The quality of the boarding at this school is good with many outstanding features. The majority of the national minimum standards (NMS) are met, with a significant number exceeded. The school has taken appropriate action to address the recommendations contained in the previous report. These included recommendations regarding medication procedures and safeguarding training for all staff.

The school's ethos and underpinning philosophy is strong throughout, ensuring pupils who board are in a supportive and caring community within which they are valued and safe. Boarders develop good relationships with each other and with staff. They are happy in residence. A parent said, 'You looked after him as you would your own and this has given him confidence to move on and trust in other carers.'

Staff are focused and committed to ensuring a good quality provision of health care for all boarders. All staff are suitably trained in first aid and accidents are few and far between. However, treatment provided is not always recorded. Staff have some good procedures for the safe management of medication. However, administration procedures can be chaotic which may result in errors being made. Also, the school does not have written authorization from the prescribing doctor for pupils who are prescribed 'as required' medication like Buccal Midazolam. There are lots of opportunities for pupils to partake in physical activities, both on and off site. The school provides a varied, healthy regime that caters for individual needs and specialist diets. Pupils take an active role in the purchase, choice and preparation of meals.

The safety and rights of both staff and pupils are protected. Staff are competent in their knowledge of the school's safeguarding procedures. Boarders know who to talk to if they are unhappy and are provided with a variety of communication aids to enable them

to express their feelings. Staff take them seriously and resolve issues where possible. The privacy of boarders is respected. Staff are clear about procedures if pupils go missing. There are no incidents of absconding from the school. The school's recruitment procedures are robust, ensuring all safety checks are carried out. All visitors sign in to the school and must show identification. Staff have a good knowledge of the bullying policy and bullying is rare. Staff work with pupils to develop their understanding of the diversity of their community and the importance of tolerance of others.

Staff view pupils positively and there is a relaxed, family atmosphere in residence. There is a minimal amount of physical intervention carried out and all staff have received appropriate training. However, the central record used to record physical intervention does not detail all the points as stated in the NMS 10.14. Sanctions are not used as they are not seen as appropriate. Behaviour management plans are comprehensive and include the way a pupil prefers to communicate.

Staff are able to provide a high standard of care for boarders and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. Individual support is comprehensively detailed in each boarder's file and observations and discussions with staff showed that staff ensure each boarder's individual needs are met. Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for boarders. There is communication each morning and evening between care and education staff as well as regular meetings to discuss a pupil's progress with their targets. Older boarders complete accredited, evidenced-based schemes of work while in residence. Staff provide significant opportunities for pupils to present their views, make choices and decisions. Pupils are encouraged to complete a Reflections book and an All About Me book which ask the views of the pupils on their likes and dislikes with regards to activities, food and what makes them happy, sad and angry. There is also an active school council.

Boarding accommodation although small is friendly and welcoming. A parent said, 'It's a fabulous resource and a great benefit to our son and to us.' Boarders' rooms are single, afford appropriate levels of personal space and are well maintained. However, bathroom and toilet doors cannot be locked therefore providing little privacy for pupils, although staff encourage them to close doors when using the toilet or bathroom. The school grounds are spacious with suitable provision for recreational activities. The school has comprehensive risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds, including fire. However, serious actions highlighted in a fire risk assessment carried out in June have not all been completed. The Head Teacher stated that they are waiting for the local authority to carry out the work. All staff are given fire safety training during their induction and then annually. Fire drills are carried out on a regular basis. Fire safety equipment is checked regularly but a record is not kept. The testing of electrical equipment is not carried out at least every three years. All other health and safety procedures are carried out routinely.

There is a strong senior management team who have a commitment to improving practice and ensuring the quality of the service provided. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Pupils receive an individual service in residence which

is designed to meet their personal needs. A parent said, 'The staff recognise our son's individual needs and requirements and deal with these appropriately. Staff work in partnership with parents, carers and other professionals to ensure a high quality service where the ethos is centred around meeting the individual needs and aspirations of pupils.

The staffing levels in residence are sufficient to meet the needs of the boarders. Staff are qualified, caring and competent. They feel well supported by each other and the senior management team. There is a clear and comprehensive induction process for new staff, which includes guidance on safeguarding procedures as well as other school policies and procedures. A parent said, 'As parents of a child with autism we are lucky to have access to professionals such as yourselves who clearly have the skills and empathy to both manage and care for our children's needs.

#### National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- ensure there is a policy and written guidance, implemented in practice for administering and storing medication (NMS 14.17)
- ensure there is a written record of all treatment and first aid given to children (NMS 14.20)
- ensure the record of the use of physical intervention on a child by an adult, that is kept in a separate and bound book, includes all the information as stated in the standard (NMS 10.14)
- ensure the senior management team regularly review the implementation and effectiveness of action identified as a result of risk assessments carried out. This specifically refers to deficiencies highlighted in the most recent fire risk assessment (NMS 26.4)
- ensure electrical installations and equipment are checked at least every three years (NMS 26.2)
- ensure the regular testing of emergency lighting, fire alarms and fire fighting equipment in accordance with Fire Regulations. Any deficiencies identified from such tests are noted and action taken to remedy the deficiency (NMS 26.6)
- ensure bathrooms, showers and toilet doors can be locked but staff are able to open them from the outside in case of an emergency; such doors are not easily opened from the outside by other children (NMS 25.5).

This is the grade for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	2
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# Views of parents and carers

All parents, who responded to the questionnaire agree or strongly agree that their child enjoys school, that they are safe while they are there and that they are happy with their child's experience at this school. In all other areas of the questionnaire, a very large majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the school was a good provision for

their children. A very few parents disagreed that their child was making enough progress, that the school helps them to support their child's learning or that the school makes sure that their child is well prepared for the future. This represents a very small number of negative responses. A comment made by one parent that exemplifies the feelings of the vast majority of parents and carers: "I couldn't wish for a better school for my child to go to, and it takes a lot for a parent of a child with special needs to have that confidence in any establishment."

#### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holbrook Centre for Autism to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 52 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		s   Agree		Disa	Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
My child enjoys school	23	70	10	30	0	0	0	0	
The school keeps my child safe	26	79	7	21	0	0	0	0	
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	70	10	30	0	0	0	0	
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	64	9	27	1	3	0	0	
The teaching is good at this school	26	79	6	18	0	0	0	0	
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	64	10	30	1	3	0	0	
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	73	9	27	0	0	0	0	
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	63	8	25	1	3	0	0	
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	85	5	15	0	0	0	0	
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	73	8	24	0	0	0	0	
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	73	8	24	0	0	0	0	
The school is led and managed effectively	26	79	6	18	0	0	0	0	
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	79	7	21	0	0	0	0	

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

# **Glossary**

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description	
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An oustanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.	
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.	
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.	
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.	

# Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

# **Common terminology used by inspectors**

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.
	<ul> <li>The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>The quality of teaching.</li> <li>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 October 2009

**Dear Pupils and Students** 

Inspection of Holbrook Centre for Autism, Belper, DE56 0TE

I am writing to you on behalf of all of the inspectors who visited your school recently. Thank you very much for making our visit very interesting and enjoyable.

We found that Holbrook is a good school and is outstanding in many areas as well. The headteacher and all your staff, including teachers, teaching assistants, residential staff and midday supervisors, all work very hard to make your time in school very happy and successful. You enjoy coming to school and you make good progress while you are there. Your parents are very happy with how well the school educates and looks after you all. They all agreed that you enjoy coming to school. Your personal development is a particular strength of the school and you work very hard to improve your personal skills and to manage your own behaviour when you have difficulties. You all have very good attitudes to learning and you should all be very proud of yourselves. I know that the staff are all proud of you.

We have asked the school to improve two things to make the school even better than it is now:

Improve teaching by making sure that staff always challenge you so you can make even better progress in lessons and encourage you to think about how well you are doing in your lessons.

Develop the provision for post-16 pupils so that it is able to meet the needs of all future students in the best way by improving the building.

You can all help with this, by using the student council to tell the teachers what is good and what makes you interested. You can also make it clear what you enjoy and what helps you learn.

Best wishes

David Muir

Her Majesty's Inspector

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