

Holbrook Centre for Autism

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Angela Hunt

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Holbrook Centre for Autism is a residential special school that provides specialist education and care for students with autism, aged between five and 19 years. The school is maintained by the local authority, Derbyshire County Council.

Residential students stay one night a week, between Monday and Thursday, in term time. There are seven single occupancy bedrooms in two separate, self-contained units. A total of 27 students currently use the residential service throughout the week. Students have their meals, except lunch, in the units.

Residential students can access facilities within the school and also use community resources in nearby towns; the school has its own transport. The residential provision was last inspected on 4 March 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness is good and there are a number of strengths in the provision of care afforded to residential students. The quality of the residential provision has made a positive impact on the progress and outcomes for students. This results in improved quality of residential students' lives and opportunities in life.
- The relationships between residential students and care staff are professional and consistently high. The extremely positive residential experience promotes students' personal, social, cultural and social development.
- The wide range of stimulating and purposeful activities and events outside of the school day meets residential students' needs and interests. The students enjoy the activities and routines on offer and as a result of this, they develop confidence and self-esteem.
- Residential students feel safe and secure. The safeguarding procedures and systems in place help to promote students' safety and welfare.
- The excellent links between care staff and academic staff mean that residential students are extremely well supported in achieving positive outcomes. The high emphasis placed on life skills work helps to prepare students for the next stage in education and for moving on.
- Good quality residential accommodation contributes to students' comfort and well-being. Well-established staffing rotas, combined with a strong key-worker system, ensure continuity of care and an environment conducive to supporting residential students to reach their full potential.

- Behaviour is consistently managed to good effect. This further promotes residential students' safety and well being.
- The high level of support and guidance given by care staff helps residential students to develop their skills and assists them in preparing for life once they leave the school.
- The residential facility is well organised and run for the students' benefit. Care is highly focused on the needs of individual students. There is a clear ethos of mutual respect which permeates throughout the routines and practice delivered. Regular and ongoing communication between parents, carers and the care team means that staff keep the best interests of the residential students central to their work.
- While there are a few minor weaknesses against parts of the national minimum standards, these do not weaken the overall good quality of care and provision and have minimal impact on outcomes for residential students.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential students are outstanding. The residential experience allows students to form highly successful, secure and stable relationships with care staff. Students are extremely well supported through the established systems in place to promote individual needs. There are excellent opportunities for students to develop personal and social skills through a wide range of purposeful activities. For example, students have opportunities to gain experience of independent living skills through appropriate delegation of responsibilities within the residential provision. Students have effective links with the community and receive guidance to help them to develop positive relationships.

Building up life skills is positively embraced in the routines and activities offered. This develops students' self-esteem, independence, and confidence. The stimulating routines assist in preparing students for transition to their next stage of education and for moving on. Students are extremely happy and thoroughly enjoy the residential experience. Parental surveys confirm that they are pleased with the progress their children make. Parents value highly the quality of pastoral care provided. The significant emphasis placed on ensuring an appropriate mix of residential students helps to encourage effective relationships, positive interaction and achievement to their full potential.

Residential students receive a considerable level of support from staff, which improves outcomes. Resourceful behaviour management strategies, together with well established systems of promoting and rewarding success, further help to prepare students for the future.

Designated staff manage residential students' health needs with care and precision. There are appropriate storage arrangements and excellent systems for the safe and

timely receipt and administration of medication. The robust systems and processes in place promote students' health and well-being.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. The quality of care afforded to residential students is exceptional. Effective links between residential and academic staff enable students to make considerable progress in their personal and social development. This is as a result of the nurturing environment and routines which successfully support students' academic and personal development.

Detailed care plans demonstrate each residential student's uniqueness and take into account their individual needs. These are closely monitored, regularly reviewed and updated as students' needs change. All students receive annual reviews and other professional based reviews and meetings where appropriate. Key workers and individual students actively engage in the review process. This endorses the strong emphasis the school places on inclusive practice and on improving outcomes for students. Residential students are extremely well supported by the robust key worker system and strong communication systems in place. The complex matching process of suitable students allocated per night, further supports the high priority the school places on supporting students to achieve their full potential.

The school provides outstanding arrangements for promoting and caring for students' health and well-being. There are strong health care arrangements in place; through the contribution of well-trained, knowledgeable care staff and comprehensive health planning. Records are clear, robust, well ordered and ensure a clear audit trail of medicines and first aid administered. This helps to promote safe practice.

Students are provided with varied, balanced and nutritious meals and every effort is made to encourage students to eat healthily. The school caters appropriately for students' religious and cultural needs, specific health allergies and individual preferences.

The residential accommodation comprises of two units within the main building. The accommodation is appropriately maintained, kept clean and meets the varying needs of students. Bedrooms are personalised with posters, colourfully painted walls and the students' favourite themed duvets. Communal living areas are homely and very pleasantly furnished. Photographs of the activities and trips in which students have been involved are displayed throughout the residential provision. Despite the limited scope of the residential accommodation, staff make the very best use of the facilities available. The school extends the opportunities available to students by providing a safe and relaxing outside environment for them to explore. The facilities available to students include a range of gardens, a hard-court area, trampoline, swings, and a sensory garden.

Residential pupils' safety

The safety of residential students is good. The evaluation of the students' surveys and communication with residential students indicate that they feel safe at school. The care team have a good understanding of the role of the school's designated child protection staff and of the procedures to follow should they have a concern about a student. The head of care and acting deputy head are the school's designated child protection officers.

While training in aspects of safeguarding has been undertaken, the school's designated staff members are currently awaiting updated training in this area as their certificated training has recently expired. The training has been booked and is due to take place within the next few months.

Records related to safeguarding matters are securely stored. All staff receive information about their child protection responsibilities as part of their induction. Staff records which include a check sheet listing the checks and references undertaken are appropriately kept. However, on one file examined, one reference was received a few days after the staff commenced work in the residential part of the school. The school took appropriate measures to monitor this arrangement so that students' safety was not compromised. In addition, the school has linked with another school to look at what further improvements can be made to enhance the procedures for vetting staff.

While residential students can experience difficulties in managing their feelings and emotions, staff are effective in utilising de-escalation techniques. Throughout the duration of the inspection, students' behaviour and attitudes were well-managed. Effective strategies are in place for managing any instances of bullying. Interactions between students and staff are constructive and appropriate. The general management of behaviour is good and results in a respectful and conducive culture that promotes students' wellbeing. The school has an established training programme, combined with a clear policy for the use of physical intervention. This is consistently implemented and monitored.

The high emphasis placed on working in partnership with parents and other professionals result in students feeling safe, well protected, valued and respected as individuals. The physical environment of the residential provision is safe and secure. Risk assessments identify any risks and how these are minimised. The premises are secure. There is appropriate monitoring and chaperoning of any visitors. These systems work well to ensure students' safety.

Health and safety checks are up to date and meet requirements. There is also regular servicing of the equipment and utilities. However, fire drills are not being carried out at least once per term in the residential accommodation. This potentially compromises the students' ability to evacuate the building safely.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership of the residential provision is good. Policies and procedures required by the national minimum standards are in place. A number of these are, however, in need of review.

The head of care provides inspiring leadership, resulting in an extremely dedicated and self-motivated care team. The consistency provided by the staff rotas and effective team work ensure continuity of care for residential students. Notwithstanding this good work, there has been limited support from the governors in monitoring and overseeing the quality of care residential students receive.

An independent visitor attends regularly to monitor the residential provision against the national minimum standards. Reports of these visits demonstrate the records viewed and that previous matters identified are followed up to ensure appropriate action has been taken.

The school is currently in a period of transition with recent changes to the senior management team. From January 2012, the deputy head has taken on responsibility as acting headteacher and an existing member of teaching staff has taken on responsibility as acting deputy head. As a part of these recent changes, a number of the systems and processes are currently subject to review. The senior management team has not yet been able to fully review the school's care and welfare provision. Notwithstanding this, the head of care runs the residential provision in a consistent way to meet the varying needs of the students. Well-established, clear and robustly-managed routines in the residential provision provide a secure environment for students. Regular handover meetings and other effective communication systems ensure continuity of care. The school delivers care practice which results in the very best residential experience for the students.

Staff communicate effectively with parents, social workers, and other professionals. This results in a highly integrated approach to care which promotes positive outcomes for students.

Staff are deployed appropriately. Those working with residential students are extremely enthusiastic, committed and driven to improve and enhance the quality of residential students' lives and experiences.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Care planning documents contain information on cultural, religious, racial or communication needs and appropriate efforts are made to make sure the care delivered take account of these. Complementary methods of communication involving sound, speech, body language, objects of reference, symbols and technology-based communication aids support residential students' communication needs. Care staff have downloaded a specialised pictorial communication system onto portable media players. This initiative has

helped empower students to take charge of their communication and consequently, enables them to regulate their behaviour.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- In addition, fire drills are regularly (at least once per term) carried out in 'residential time'. (NMS 7.2)

What should the school do to improve further?

- continue to review the school's staff recruitment and vetting procedures
- continue to conduct a review of policies to ensure they accurately reflect the arrangements in place and are fully compliant with the national minimum standards
- continue to review systems and processes to ensure the residential provision is appropriately supported and monitored by the school.

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.



21/03/2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Holbrook Centre for Autism

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed my visit. Thank you for the tour. It was nice to see where you sleep and eat your meals. I liked meeting you. Staff are very caring. They work hard and help you to learn new things. It was good to see you helping at mealtimes. I think your bedrooms are very colourful. I liked hearing about all the exciting things you do after school. I enjoyed going out in the minibus to Pizza Hut. I also enjoyed my tea in Acorns. Thank you.

I wish you all the very best.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Hunt