

Holbrook School for Autism

Holbrook Centre for Autism, Port Way, Holbrook, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 0TE

Inspection dates

14/03/2017–16/03/2017

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding **1**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding 1

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding 1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- The residential provision has been judged as outstanding in all areas for the fourth consecutive year, and there are no failures to meet national minimum standards or recommendations for improvement. Leaders have continued to build on the previous outstanding judgement making numerous improvements in all areas.
- Young people make excellent progress because of the residential experience. The development of independence skills is a real strength. The transference of these skills across varied settings including school, residential provision, home and community is central to the aims of the provision. One parent said, 'The impact is remarkable. He has embraced his increased independence. It has helped us identify what he can do, [and] reminded us that he has a lot of capability there.'
- The work with parents is highly effective. School staff embrace technology, ensuring widespread accessibility of information. This includes websites directing parents to important safeguarding resources.
- Safeguarding is excellent, especially concerning the use of technology and staff training. All staff have an excellent awareness of national and regional perspectives relating to safeguarding and leaders have established very positive links with other agencies and organisations to promote safeguarding throughout the school and community.
- Motivational and inspirational leaders ensure that the residential provision is at the very heart of the whole school. Governors have an extensive range of skills and experience, bringing expertise in many areas.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

There were no areas identified on this inspection.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced on the morning of the start of the inspection. The inspector visited the residential accommodation and spoke to the young people and staff, including key staff with responsibility for the residential provision. The inspector also observed practice in the residential provision and scrutinised school policies and records. The inspector gathered information from Parent View to inform the inspection. In addition, the inspector spoke to parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Judith Longden

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Holbrook School for Autism is a Derbyshire County Council local authority maintained residential special school. There are 118 mixed gender pupils on roll, whose ages range from four to 19. Pupils have autism and learning disabilities. There is a hub for primary aged, average ability pupils who have autism. The residential service operates from Monday to Thursday during term time with seven pupils residing at any one time, usually for a night per week. The school is located in a rural suburb of Derbyshire. Pupils access facilities within the community using the school's own transport. The residential provision was last inspected in January 2016.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

The residential experience clearly enhances the excellent progress that young people make and provides them with a range of opportunities that they otherwise would not have. Progress is evident in education, social skills, confidence and independence. Crucially, this progress is transferable across the school site to the home and community settings. One parent commented, 'Our child has benefited greatly. He mixes with peers and interacts with staff. He is learning new and independence skills like meal preparation [and] loading the dishwasher. His confidence has grown tremendously around these skills and he is transferring them to our home.' Monitoring of young people's achievement is excellent, with extensive use of reports, observations, photographs and video. Individual achievement is widely celebrated, further promoting young people's confidence and self-esteem.

Young people have excellent relationships with each other and with staff and enjoy the residential experience and the range of exciting activities and projects available. Activities include going to the park, swimming, shopping and sport. Young people take part in community projects such as a supermarket-backed healthy eating programme and a greener transport project. They also support charities including those for the homeless and animal charities. They operate a small business enterprise scheme making dog biscuits to sell. These activities and project engagement provide excellent social interaction opportunities and continuous learning of independence skills in addition to providing lots of fun.

Monitoring of educational attainment identifies the difference that the residential provision makes. Recent data shows that in writing and numeracy there is at least a 10% increase in progress for those pupils who use the residential provision. This is because the school and the residential provision share targets for progress and work collaboratively to support young people to achieve their potential. One parent commented, 'It is a great school. The excellent residential provision greatly enhances our son's learning opportunities and options for development.'

Staff encourage young people to lead healthy lifestyles. Staff support young people to take responsibility for their personal hygiene, implementing routines and praising their efforts. They enable young people to choose and prepare their meals, enjoying a healthy range of foods. Some young people participate in a programme delivered by an external provider, helping them to understand safe and appropriate relationships. These activities reinforce independence skills in addition to promoting good health.

All young people have a voice and can share their views and opinions using a range of communication tools. Their ability to make choices is excellent because staff continuously encourage them by using the appropriate tools for the individual.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Young people have the opportunity to stay in residence usually for one night a week. Excellent planning, including visits by parents, observations of the young person in school and teatime visits, ensures that new young people settle quickly on their first residential experience.

A key strength of this provision is staff respect for the individual. Staff fully understand the needs of each individual young person and their development targets, ensuring that activities and daily routines enable young people to reach and exceed these targets. This understanding is underpinned by clear, detailed care plans, compiled with young people and their parents. These are intrinsically linked with education and individual education plans, ensuring a 'whole school' approach to the care and progress of each young person. Each activity in the residential provision provides individual learning opportunities, increasing independence skills. For example, in meal preparation, for some young people, learning may be using hand-over-hand techniques to spread butter on a slice of bread, while for others, it will be chopping a range of vegetables independently.

Work with parents is highly effective. Regular communication, joint target setting, training opportunities and events for parents help to build excellent relationships and provide a consistent approach for supporting the young people. Parents comment, 'Staff are fantastic, friendly and approachable. They have a great understanding of our son's challenges and the support he requires. They keep us fully informed.'

Medication is managed by confident and well-trained staff. Records of the administration of medication identify two staff present at all times. A regular audit by the head of residential care provides a further level of scrutiny to this process. Staff liaise with the appropriate medical professionals when required, ensuring a holistic approach to the physical and emotional health and well-being of young people.

Recent improvements to the residential provision include substantial redecoration and refurbishment and this continues with new kitchens being fitted. The dining area presents a warm family environment and the personalisation of young people's rooms is excellent. Each evening, young people choose their individual bedding and then make up their beds as part of their independence learning. Some young people can successfully put a duvet cover on as well as a fitted sheet. Symbols and pictures used throughout the unit encourage independence, enabling young people to continuously make choices, express their views, raise any concerns and complain if they wish to.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

The school continues to build on its outstanding safeguarding practice. Work with a range of external providers including charitable organisations brings additional opportunities for staff and young people to learn how to keep young people safe. This includes helping to pilot a course on safety, producing age-appropriate resources for children with autism. The school website now provides a wealth of information and resources for parents and signposts them to additional support to help keep their children safe in the home environment thus providing consistent safeguarding practice. Fire safety procedures have been recently updated providing clarity for all staff and ensuring the individual evacuation plans for young people are understood. This includes recording the individual's response to the fire alarm, enabling staff to support them appropriately.

Young people know who to turn to if they need support. Clear and simple communication tools available throughout the residential area mean that they can easily express their feelings and can seek support from a range of adults, not just the staff. Non-verbal young people are given the same opportunities to express themselves regarding their safety.

Training for leaders, governors and staff in mandatory areas, such as safeguarding and

around topics such as female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation and extremism, ensures that all adults are aware of the risks posed in society. A broader range of training is now implemented through induction, ensuring that new staff receive extensive training in areas relating to the safety of young people.

Staff also know the individual vulnerabilities and potential risks of each young person. These are clearly identified in a comprehensive range of individual risk assessments for every activity and for the environment. This ensures that any individual behaviours or risks that may affect an activity are clearly identified and extremely well managed. There are no concerns regarding the misuse of alcohol or drugs, and young people do not go missing from this environment. Staff are aware of what to do in the event of any such incident and detailed protocols and procedures provide the relevant information for staff.

Staff clearly understand the process for reporting any safeguarding concerns and demonstrate professional curiosity. Good use of body maps and reporting of any concerns ensure that swift action is taken if required. The use of a central recording system ensures that all essential information relating to child protection concerns is readily accessible and provides a clear picture of the concern and the support for that child. Safeguarding practice is reinforced in staff supervisions with the use of scenarios. This ensures that staff knowledge remains up to date.

Governors and members of the senior leadership team regularly monitor the residential unit and engage with young people to ensure that they are safe and well. The independent visitor also monitors their safety. This provides further levels of scrutiny. A regular audit of safeguarding practice ensures that practice remains of the highest standard.

Behaviour is extremely well managed, positive behaviour is encouraged and the response to any issues is supportive and not punitive. Staff support young people to self-regulate their behaviour, encouraging understanding and learning about their actions. Behaviour is monitored using a computerised system, enabling a review and analysis of patterns and trends with intervention plans and risk assessments updated if required. Restraint is very rarely used.

Premises are well maintained. Managers recognise the changing needs of young people and the need to adapt the premises accordingly. For example, some young people present an increased risk of running away so new fencing has been installed to the boundaries of the grounds. Regular health and safety and fire checks ensure that young people remain safe. Recruitment checks are very robust and include thorough checks on postgraduate students, governors, volunteers, catering staff and regular contractors in addition to care staff. This ensures that young people are protected.

Staff work closely with a range of professionals to ensure the ongoing protection of young people. This includes attending core group and team around the family meetings, work with the child and adolescent mental health services and regular communication with social workers. Effective liaison with the local authority designated officer ensures effective management of any allegations or concerns. An on-site clinic enables staff to speak to psychologists about pupils where they need further advice.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers Outstanding

The residential provision is managed exceptionally well, with excellent communication and joint working with the school. The head of residential care now sits on the senior

leadership team, further strengthening the links with school. The headteacher, head of care, senior team, staff and governors are passionate about the residential provision and the role that it plays in enhancing and improving the lives of young people.

In a culture of continuous improvement, a number of changes have been made. These include establishing the parent support group, the implementation of a shared assessment system, improved monitoring across the site and a performance management procedure in care that replicates that used in school.

The new assessment system allows for videos and photos to be used as evidence of young people's progress as well as written assessments and observations. This progress can now be shared across the school and in care, informing all staff of progress towards targets for each young person. Parents can also see how well their child is progressing.

The new monitoring format includes joint observations of practice with the head of care observing school and the senior school staff observing care. This enables sharing of good practice and highlights any improvements that could be made. Governors and the independent visitor continue to regularly visit and monitor the provision. Governors also attend mealtimes with the young people prior to their meetings, helping to forge positive relationships and providing a highly effective informal approach to monitoring.

The governing body is a real strength, with individuals bringing a wealth of experience, expertise and range of skills. They attend a wide range of training, continuously developing their skills and knowledge.

Staff supervision is regular and robust, affording appropriate challenge and assessing the developmental needs of staff. Performance management is undertaken annually and follows the same process as school, further strengthening the 'whole school' approach.

Staff induction and ongoing training are excellent. Staff undertake a range of courses in areas such as safeguarding, health needs, communication, bullying and behaviour management. Training is provided online and in workshops, providing different learning environments for staff. The school utilises a range of organisations and local community groups to deliver training, including multi-faith centres and health professionals. Staff also choose a particular topic that they would like to pursue, for example mental health, and engage in a longer-term training programme, providing more in-depth information. Key points are then disseminated by that member of staff to the rest of the team.

Staff and leaders work effectively in partnership with an extensive range of other professionals and maintain excellent links with other schools, sharing ideas and resources and undertaking joint research, enabling continued learning and development.

This inspection has found no failures to meet national minimum standards and there are no recommendations for improvement made.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	1023320
Social care unique reference number	SC058960

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.

Type of school	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	118
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	4 to 19
Headteacher	Mr Julian Scholefield
Date of previous boarding inspection	12/01/2016
Telephone number	01332 880 208
Email address	headteacher@holbrookautism.derbyshire.sch.uk

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