

Holbrook School for Autism

Holbrook Centre 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 and young people who have autism and learning disabilities. The pupils' ages range from four to 19. It is a Derbyshire County Council local authority maintained residential special school, and is located in a rural suburb of Derbyshire.

The residential service operates from Monday to Thursday in term time. Seven pupils can reside at any one time. Each pupil usually stays for one night per week.

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 January 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 14 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children make excellent progress given their starting points, and enjoy a wealth of positive experiences. Staff are warm and nurturing. They speak about children with passion and pride.
- Work with parents is exceptionally effective. This enables all parents to access information, share their views and be involved in their children's care.

- Pastoral care across the whole school site is outstanding. The school's involvement in numerous initiatives and awards provides opportunities for children to grow, learn and develop independence.
- Safeguarding is a high priority at this school. All staff have an excellent awareness of national and regional perspectives relating to safeguarding.
- The school benefits from strong leadership, with an exceptional head of care.
- An excellent staff team benefits from a wide range of training and support resources. This includes a 'well-being initiative' that helps to build up their resilience.

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

- Ensure that the governor with responsibility for the residential unit routinely records their visits and makes reports available to staff and governors as appropriate.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make excellent progress. Their residential experiences clearly enhance this progress by providing a range of opportunities that they otherwise would not have. One parent commented: 'The residential service has produced excellent outcomes for our son and has served as a reminder to us as parents that he is capable, and should be given as many opportunities to develop his independence as possible.' Parents speak positively about the residential unit, recognising the positive impact that it has on their children's confidence, capabilities and life skills.

Children take part in, and benefit from, a number of community initiatives and national programmes. Staff tailor these programmes to the individual child, enabling all children to participate successfully. One such programme is a sustainable transport project. This helps children to learn about their environment, and creates opportunities for them to improve their independent travel skills. Children's progress on this programme has been so successful that they have won a number of awards. One child spoke about his achievements to a large audience of adults at a national conference.

Children enjoy excellent relationships with each other and with staff. Group activities encourage children to interact with others and help them to develop their social skills. Importantly, these skills transfer to the child's own home environment, benefiting the whole family. One parent said: 'One night a week has changed our lives. With the social skills he has learned, the family dynamics have changed in such a good way.'

Staff use a range of resources to promote discussions on topics such as current affairs, citizenship, human rights and British values. This helps children to develop a social conscience and an understanding of the wider world.

Children continue to successfully operate their small business enterprise scheme. They make and sell products to fund their activities and trips. Recent sales helped to fund a trip to Blackpool that the children greatly enjoyed.

Staff encourage children to lead healthy lifestyles. They support them to improve their personal hygiene, and to cook their own healthy meals. Staff access specialist health training as required. They are supported by a range of professionals who provide holistic health care for children. A new well-being project enables staff to address emotional health and well-being with the children.

Medication practice is excellent. Staff have taken on board learning from the previous inspection, resulting in improved auditing and monitoring of medication. Staff encourage children to be confident about recognising their own medication and some children are able to self-medicate.

Some children have completed two elements of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme at bronze level. They are now planning the residential element of the award. This is a massive achievement for these children.

Children who access the residential unit do better in school. Evidence shows that most children have made improvements against their targets. This is because core targets are duplicated across the school and the residential provision. All staff understand the children's individual targets, and provide opportunities for constant learning. Seemingly small targets, such as learning to peel a carrot, are seen as a way of teaching an array of skills, including accessing a kitchen safely, fine motor skills, patience and concentration. Such skills can lead to bigger achievements. For example, one child progressed from this activity to being able to prepare a whole meal, and is now using these skills to access work experience.

The monitoring and analysis of children's achievements are excellent. Staff use reports, observations, photographs and video to record children's progress towards their targets. Achievements outside of set targets are also captured using 'wow' moments. These help to identify every aspect of the progress a child makes.

All children can share their views and opinions using a range of communication tools and forums, including the student council. Their ability to make choices is excellent because staff continuously encourage them.

Children usually stay in the residential provision for one night a week. In order to ensure that each new child feels safe and settles quickly, the staff organise visits by parents, observations of the child in school, social stories, and teatime visits. A follow-up questionnaire with children helps staff to identify any aspects of the transition process that they could improve.

Work with parents is exceptional. Regular communication, joint target setting, training opportunities and events for parents help to build excellent relationships. This, in turn, provides a consistent approach. For example, the head of care worked closely with other agencies to develop a whole-day event to support parents to discuss difficult topics with their children. Parents were provided with information and resources to help them discuss a range of issues, including:

- eating disorders
- housing benefits
- online safety
- depression and anxiety
- self-harm
- mindfulness.

This approach to working with parents helps to improve the lives of families.

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

The school builds on its outstanding safeguarding practice every year. Last year, staff worked with a national charity to trial new material for a course on safety. This has since been reviewed and developed further by staff. As a result, a range of safeguarding resources are now available.

Various projects, including those aimed at reducing bullying, raising awareness of internet safety and understanding relationships, have been adapted by staff. This makes them accessible to children who have different needs and abilities.

Training in safeguarding for all staff and governors is excellent. Training includes topics such as female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation, domestic violence and extremism. This ensures that all adults are aware of emerging safeguarding issues. Staff benefit from training that is delivered in a variety of ways, including online resources, external speakers and workshops.

Staff work closely with other professionals, ensuring the ongoing protection of children. This includes attending core group and team around the family meetings, working with child and adolescent mental health services, and regular communication with social workers. Effective liaison with the local authority's designated officer ensures that there is effective management of any allegations or concerns.

Careful risk management is balanced with a willingness to allow children the freedom to experience new things, develop new skills and take appropriate risks. This is achieved through careful risk assessment and staff vigilance. There are no concerns about the misuse of alcohol or drugs. Children do not go missing from this environment.

Governors responsible for safeguarding and members of the senior leadership team regularly monitor the residential unit. They talk with children, ensuring that they are safe and well. The independent visitor also monitors their safety, providing further scrutiny.

There have been no complaints since the last inspection. Children know how to complain. They can also identify trusted adults who they can talk to. Clear and simple communication tools, which are available throughout the school and the residential area, mean that children can easily express their feelings. Non-verbal children are given the same opportunities to express themselves.

Behaviour is extremely well managed. Staff support children to understand and manage their own behaviour whenever possible. Positive behaviour is encouraged and the response to any issues is supportive rather than punitive. Behaviour is monitored using a computerised system, enabling detailed review and analysis.

Restraint is very rarely used.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The head of care is exceptional. She is very experienced and highly motivated, and is committed to improving the lives of children. She continues to make numerous changes and improvements that enhance children's experiences. These include an improvement in the staff's awareness of mental health issues, through increased training and resources in this area. This is particularly relevant in addressing the wide-ranging needs of a new cohort of children. The staff have developed a communication sheet for parents to use when they take their children to the doctor's. This sheet replicates the communication method used by the child in school, enabling the child to communicate with the doctor and helping a parent who may struggle with their child's communication method. The head of care identified a particular child who required a positive male role model. She sought additional funding for a male member of staff. This has helped this child not just in the school and the residential provision, but also in the community and at home.

Support for staff is first-rate. Regular supervision for all staff, including night staff, provides an opportunity for them to share their views and discuss their roles. It also provides a forum for learning and development. For example, staff routinely focus on their understanding of a particular topic, such as care planning. They then undertake activities to increase their knowledge in this area prior to their next supervision. The mental health and well-being of staff is of great importance. The head of care has undertaken specialist training in order to support her team. This has helped to build up the staff's resilience. A counselling service is also available for staff, as well as a range of activities for 'mindfulness'.

Termly team meetings provide a forum for learning, discussion about safeguarding, and sharing new initiatives. Daily teatime meetings provide a more informal opportunity for staff to share any concerns and celebrate the achievements of children.

New staff benefit from an in-depth induction programme, ensuring that they are well equipped to work alongside the existing team. This includes access to a range of training opportunities and the support of a mentor.

Staff undertake a range of mandatory training courses, which are delivered in varied ways. They also choose a particular topic they would like to pursue, for example mental health, and engage in a longer-term training programme. That member of staff then disseminates their learning to the rest of the team. All residential staff have the required qualification, meaning that children benefit from skilled and experienced staff.

Monitoring is very good. Joint observations of practice, with the head of care observing school and the senior school staff observing care, ensure that good

practice is shared. The independent visitor monitors the provision throughout the year, offering healthy challenge and rigorous questioning to the school and the residential provision. Governors with responsibility for safeguarding carry out visits and complete safeguarding audits, helping staff to continuously improve. The governor responsible for the residential provision visits regularly. However, their reports are not always available to the head of care. Regular feedback would enhance the monitoring processes.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children. They watched how professional staff work with children and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: Mr Julian Scholefield

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01332 880 208

Email address: headteacher@holbrookautism.derbyshire.sch.uk

Inspector

Judith Longden, social care inspector (lead)



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018