

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

Holbrook School for Autism is a specialist school for children and young people who have autism spectrum disorder and learning disabilities. The pupils' ages range from four to 19. It was a Derbyshire County Council local authority maintained residential special school until July 2018. The school now has academy status.

The residential service (Oak and Acorn) operates from Monday to Thursday in term time. Currently, 27 children are using the service. Seven children can reside at any one time. Each pupil usually stays for one night per week.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 November 2019

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: 9 January 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The school continues to be outstanding and is continually developing. This dynamic approach avoids complacency and ensures that the children receive the best care and education.

Communication is a strength of the school. Children have a range of additional and complex needs. Staff successfully use various therapeutic approaches to underpin their work. Staff know the children exceptionally well and are clearly fond of them. Professionals and parents spoke highly of the difference that is being made in the lives of children and families. Family members said that they trust the team to care for their children as they would themselves. This trust and rapport are achieved through a child-centred approach that ensures that all planning and target setting are conducted at a pace agreeable to children and their families. The person-centred coordination of targets is enabling children's progress to be seen and replicated at home and in school. This collaborative approach provides consistency and is enabling children to develop and progress from their starting points.

Staff are unquestionably ambitious for the children. This is demonstrated through children's increased participation in activities on and off site. Staff creatively adapt national programmes, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, to ensure that it meets the children's special educational needs. Impressively, children have achieved bronze and silver awards and have gold as the next goal. These adaptations are shared with other organisations, to enable wider dissemination. A professional stated, 'These major achievements are only possible through the dedication and input of staff.'

The targeted focus of the children's plans ensures that the children are continually developing the life skills that they will need as they mature. Their increased abilities include expressing their views, self-care and completing household tasks. Parents have been invited to visit their children during stays, so that they can observe these newly developed skills in action. These visits provide children with a sense of pride and give families confidence in allowing the child to complete these tasks at home.

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

The school's enhanced approach to safeguarding includes the introduction of a safeguarding curriculum. These changes are ensuring that the importance of safeguarding is embedded in all aspects of children's care and staff practice. The creation of a family support worker role provides a valued resource to children and their families. The team's work, along with the added support, is leading to children making continual and sustained progress and an increased ability to self-regulate.

The team's thorough matching process ensures that the children have the best time possible during their stays. These overnight stays are often the first time that parents have trusted anyone to care for their child overnight. Parents said that their children are safely cared for.

The staff work with children to increase their levels of independence. This, in turn, reduces their level of vulnerability. This is creatively achieved through increasing their self-care abilities and working with them on matters such as the changes they experience in their bodies as they mature.

Children do not go missing from school or while out on activities. This is due to the staff team's expert knowledge of them and meticulous planning.

Children's plans and targets now more clearly incorporate emotional well-being. Children and their families are involved in the completion of these. The computerisation of this process is enabling children to more readily participate in it. This immediately makes the plans and targets more meaningful.

The children's targets include assisting them, where possible, to better manage their emotions and responses to certain situations. This is done in a creative way that still provides them with exposure to groups, noise and other situations that they would usually avoid. This is conducted using strategies that are agreed with the child, their families and the professionals involved in their lives. The children's risk assessments are continually reviewed with consideration to these factors. As children have become more settled, their identified risks have greatly reduced.

The use of physical intervention is minimal. These events are monitored and reviewed along with other incidents, to identify triggers and patterns.

Safeguarding scenarios are used in staff supervision and team discussions. This is ensuring that staff can readily visualise how they would manage should the scenario occur in real life.

Each day, the children's bedrooms are personalised with their pictures, paintings and their choice of bedding. Homely touches such as the framed pictures of the children add to the personalisation.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The leadership team is well established and is making positive developments within the service and the wider team. It's comprehensive residential plan details ambitious targets, current projects and the increased community involvement and business enterprises that children are participating in.

The team is ambitious for children and sets aspirational targets. These targets and aims are achieved irrespective of children's starting points. This progress includes simple tasks such as taking turns, attending group activities and communicating

responses to queries or making requests. Parents stated that this is the first time their children have felt included and listened to. This bespoke, person-centred approach is enabling children to succeed in all aspects of their lives.

The leaders emphatically prioritise the children's needs. They and their team are passionate about their work. This is evident through their communication and interactions with the children and their enthusiasm about children's development. Several staff, many having worked here for several years, said that they still love their job. Newer staff are enjoying their roles and commend the support that they receive from their colleagues and managers.

Staff supervision and training are comprehensive and include specialist or specific areas as the need arises. This ensures that staff are always working with current knowledge.

The leaders use the feedback gained from children, families, professionals and the 'critical friend' approach of governance to enhance the children's residential experience. They continually evaluate and adapt the service offer. They conduct walk-throughs to identify changes that may be required, and their proactive and responsive approach ensures that they efficiently address any identified areas requiring review or development.

Feedback from professionals and families is positive and complimentary about the inclusive way the school works and the willingness and openness to explore new ideas.

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: Mr Samuel Bayliss

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Inspector

Sonia Hay, social care inspector (lead)



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