

Hebden Green Special School

1 Hebden Green Special School Grounds, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 4EJ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Hebden Green Community Special School is a local authority-maintained school for children who have physical disabilities and associated medical and/or sensory needs. The school provides education to children aged between two and 19 years. The residential provision caters only for those from Year 10 upwards.

The residential provision can accommodate up to 20 children, but currently a maximum of 14 children can stay each night. Twenty-eight children are accessing the residential provision. The residential provision is staffed by care staff employed by the local authority and supported by a team of qualified nurses employed by the NHS.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2021. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 2 to 6 December 2021

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: 3 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff provide high-quality individualised care that enables children to make significant progress from their initial starting points. The residential provision provides children with an extremely positive learning environment that promotes their growth and development. Parents highly value the quality of support and recognise the progress that their children are making. One parent said: 'My daughter has grown in confidence and is doing so much for herself now.' Another parent said: 'This is a bespoke service that should be offered to every child in England.'

Children, including those who cannot communicate verbally, are actively supported to participate in their daily routines. Children use tools such as pictorial systems, Makaton and British sign language. They use them to talk about their day in school, to give their views, wishes and feelings and to choose what activity they want to do or what food they want to eat. Parents are very positive about their children's experiences. Their comments included: 'He can now tell us what he wants,' and 'The focus on getting my child to communicate her views is excellent.' As a result, communication with all children, no matter what difficulties they may experience, is not a barrier and does not impinge on their ability to make decisions about themselves. This is enhanced with ongoing consultation between themselves and staff.

Children build trusting and secure relationships with the adults who care for them. Staff know the children exceptionally well and work proactively with their parents and health professionals to promote continuity of care. Equality and diversity are celebrated. Throughout the inspection, all staff were observed to be continually encouraging and praising the children. Children's achievements are recognised, and their disabilities are not seen as a barrier to their participation or experiences.

Prior to the COVID-19 restrictions, children took part in a wide range of activities in their local and wider community. The head of care is working with staff to build these links back up. In the interim, staff have made full use of the on-site recreational facilities, such as the swimming pool, extensive gardens and play areas and the independence kitchen area. On the day of inspection, a charity presented the residential children with a new minibus. The children excitedly posed for photos and were discussing all the places that they could go.

Children have complex health and developmental needs. Care plans highlight all children's medical and health needs. Staff promote the health and well-being of the children extremely well. They liaise with the internal nursing professionals so that the children receive the specialist support they require. School nurses oversee the safe administration of medication. Nursing staff and residential staff are well trained to manage medication safely and the head of care regularly audits the process to monitor safe practice.

Comprehensive care plans are highly personalised to meet the needs of each child. Staff work closely with teaching staff, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and physiotherapists to ensure that children make progress against their individual targets, as well as those set out in their education, health and care plans. Children's files give a true sense of the child, their personality, achievements, views, dreams and wishes.

Developing children's life skills is integral throughout the school's curriculum, including the time they spend in the residential environment. Care staff support them to become confident young adults at a pace and level appropriate to their ability and vulnerability.

The residential accommodation is of a high standard. Children can share bedrooms or stay on their own. Children and parents talked about the experience of staying in residential as having a sleep-over with friends. This was very poignant for one child, who said: 'At home, my brother is able to spend time with his friends outside and I cannot. I love coming here and experiencing everything he does, like going out for a coffee and staying overnight with my friends.' Communal areas are spacious and specialist equipment helps staff to support children with their personal needs. The residential provision features a wraparound outdoor area. Every aspect of the outdoor area has been designed with children as its focus. For example, there is a reflection/quiet area and gardens, a fort for climbing, an exercise area with gym equipment, a football/basketball pitch, a cycling path, swings, and a forest area with tepees. Children excitedly showed the inspectors these areas and discussed their enjoyment of using these facilities.

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

Highly effective safeguarding measures ensure the welfare and safety of the residential children. All staff clearly understand their individual responsibilities regarding keeping children safe. All staff are well trained in safeguarding statutory guidance, including the recent updates, and they use this well to inform their practice with children. The children's welfare and well-being are central to all staff practice. Staff implement strategies to promote children's development and protect them from harm. As a result, children are happy and enjoy their residential experience.

The designated safeguarding lead has a good relationship with external safeguarding agencies and reports any concerns accordingly. The designated safeguarding officer for the local authority confirmed that there are no concerns about the school or the children. Leaders and managers meet regularly to discuss practice and any potential concern. Effective joint working between the senior leadership team and governors means that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.

Children feel safe and flourish within their living environment, which is very homely and well adapted to meet their differing needs. The aids and adaptations that children need to be increasingly independent are regularly reviewed and staff are well trained

in their use. The care staff team contributes to robust risk management assessments for the physical environment, which all staff follow to keep children safe. Parents spoken to confirmed that their children are safe and secure.

High levels of supervision promote young people's safety and security. Staff understand young people's risks extremely well. Children's risks connected to their complex needs and health needs are addressed extremely well by collaborative practice across the education, care and health teams. Staff manage children's personal care needs with the utmost sensitivity. This promotes their privacy and dignity. Children are not overly restricted by the risk management measures in place. This means that they are supported to develop their independence according to their individual needs, while being protected from unsafe situations. As a result, they are developing confidence and self-esteem knowing they are valued as unique individuals.

Positive behaviour is consistently promoted. Clear structures, routines and boundaries promote children's sense of security and well-being. A thorough handover of information takes place between school and residential staff. This means that information on children's changing needs is shared with all staff.

There have been no incidents involving children leaving the residential provision without permission. Appropriate measures are in place to protect children who are at high risk if they leave the premises without staff support, including liaison with the local police in line with local authority protocols.

Children readily approach care staff with any worries or concerns, and adults, including the school's independent visitor, are proficient in each child's level of communication, so they easily understand what is being passed on and act on information promptly to support children.

Children receive consistent and well-planned help and support from adults to manage their behaviour and feelings safely. Care staff understand what triggers behaviour, for example when a child may become overstimulated in a noisy room, and take discreet steps to reduce the triggers and support the child to feel more comfortable.

The school operates careful recruitment of staff, including agency staff employed for waking night staff cover. This means that all adults caring for children are assessed as suitable people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The residential setting has been through a restructure due to reduced funding. This, alongside the COVID-19 restrictions, brought some challenges to the leaders and managers. However, they have not stood still and have adapted quickly. The head of care and the senior leadership team worked together to formulate a plan that would ensure that the residential setting and the staff team could continue to provide support. As a result, they are now focusing on the needs of children who are

preparing for adulthood. Overnight stays have been reduced to two days a week and care has been taken to allocate children to groups using friendship and/or abilities as criteria. Children and parents were consulted throughout this phase. Some children said that they were sad and would like to stay more frequently. Parents expressed their concerns to the inspectors, as they felt that it was a valuable service to them and their child, but they understood the constraints that the school was under.

Similarly, due to the restructure, the residential setting was overstaffed. Staff were offered equitable redundancy packages or alternative hours in different roles within the school, or a mixture of residential hours and a supporting role in school. As a result, no staff left and they have seamlessly been incorporated into their respective roles. The head of care said that this has further enhanced the residential staff's and the education staff's ability to mirror each other in each setting, thus giving consistency across the board.

The residential provision is an integral and valuable aspect of the school. The care staff team supports the work of education staff in implementing specific strategies to support residential children. Children benefit enormously from this truly multidisciplinary approach to their education and care.

The head of care, senior leaders and staff put the children at the heart of all that they do. They are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children. They are passionately committed to providing children with high standards of individualised care and support. They continuously seek to refine and improve the service that they offer. This means that the residential provision continues to build on its strengths. Therefore, the residential provision is achieving and exceeding its aims and objectives. It is well staffed and resourced.

Staff morale is very high. Staff are suitably experienced and qualified to deliver high-quality services to children. All members of the residential staff team, including waking night staff, have completed a recognised childcare qualification. Staff are well supported through regular care meetings, individual/group supervision and appraisals. This enables staff to be confident, reflect on their practice and identify any further training requirements. Training and development of staff are prioritised to ensure that all staff understand the children's complex needs, learning disabilities, health needs and communication needs. As a result, they have the necessary skills and knowledge to support children effectively and promote positive outcomes.

The governing body provides support and effective challenge to the head of care and senior leaders. Governors conduct unannounced visits to the residential provision and produce reports that focus on areas to improve. These reports are circulated, shared and discussed at board meetings and subgroup meetings. As a result, there is excellent oversight of the residential provision.

An independent person also regularly visits the residential provision. The independent person meets with staff and observes the children. He produces detailed reports on

the quality of care, which helps to ensure that high standards of care practice are maintained and that there is continuous improvement.

The head of care welcomes any suggestions or recommendations made from these monitoring systems. She incorporates them into her self-assessment of the residential provision. The board of governors reflects on the action she has taken. This seamless approach means that the leaders and managers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the residential provision. Clear and measurable development plans are under continual monitoring and review.

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: SC006614

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Type of school: Residential special school

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