

Lower Lee School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Julia Toller
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Head of care	
Head / Principal	
Date of last inspection	12 September 2007

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Lower Lee is a Residential Special School owned and managed by Liverpool City Council offering education and residential facilities to boys only. The school is able to take up to 22 day pupils, some of whom make use of the residential facilities.

In addition, a number of children who attend Hope School, another City Council special school, utilise the residential facilities, and some children enjoy extended days, staying at school for their evening meal and participating in the activities.

Accommodation is offered in four separate houses, one of which concentrates on developing the semi-independence skills of the boys who are preparing to leave school.

Summary

At this unannounced key inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is a satisfactory service overall.

Young people benefit from positive relationships with staff, they are afforded a range of facilities and opportunities to encourage and support a healthy lifestyle, to develop their life skills and to reach good outcomes from education. However, staff recruitment procedures and safeguarding procedures are not sufficiently robust to fully safeguard young people.

Staff benefit from a good level of training and support, they work well with other professionals to meet the complex and holistic needs of young people and demonstrate a commitment to the education of young people.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were nine recommendations made at the last inspection regarding controlled drugs, standards of food, communication systems between residential and teaching staff, incentive schemes, key working systems, health care plans, pre-admission assessments, care plans and semi independence assessments.

All young people now have a health care plan that identifies any health issues being experienced by young people. This shows that their health care needs are identified monitored and met. All units have separate, suitable, locked facilities for the storage of controlled drugs. There are suitable stock taking procedures in place and staff administer these safely to young people. This promotes the health and well being of young people.

The school has appointed a new contractor for the provision of meals at the school. Although there are some ongoing minor issues being addressed by the head of care, young people and staff say that the standard and choice of food is much improved and healthier options are now available at all meal times.

Residential and teaching staff are not always given full details of the needs and behaviours of young people prior to their admission to school and residence. As risk assessments are not

completed prior to their stay on residence, this does not fully safeguard all young people. However, care plans and risk assessments are developed for all young people based on the information that is known. Everyone has a key worker, these sessions are planned in line with the needs of young people and take place regularly, ensuring that identified care needs are addressed and where appropriate relevant professional help is sought.

Young people who are working towards independence have additional assessments to look at the skills they have and highlight those which they need to develop. This assists young people to be prepared for adult life.

Each unit has their own incentive scheme. Young people are aware of what they need to do to achieve rewards and are also aware of the consequences for inappropriate behaviour.

Residential and teaching staff meet throughout the day to discuss the behaviours of young people and discuss any concerns they may have. Time is taken to ensure that spare time in the evening is planned and that young people and staff are aware of what they have to do, this ensures that young people are able to make the most of their spare time and enjoy positive experiences as part of their stay on residence. However, discussions between child protection co-ordinators at the school are not always clearly logged and documented to show the steps that have been taken to safeguard young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Each young person has a health plan, that is used effectively to ensure that their health care needs are identified and appropriate action taken to alert parents/carers so that health issues can be addressed.

Staff are aware of the specific health care needs of young people, and appropriate professionals are involved in this process. This ensures that young people's health care needs are identified and met.

The home has effective policies and procedures for making sure that medicines are stored and given when needed. There are facilities for medications to be stored safely at the home with suitable recording systems. All staff are trained to ensure that they are competent to give medicines safely.

Young people are provided with a choice of foods at mealtimes with healthy eating being promoted effectively. Healthy meal options and a choice of fresh fruit are available at all meals and in young people's units. Staff liaise with catering staff to discuss menus and to promote the opinions of young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding, and are aware of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding young people. Although systems are in place to address allegations or serious concerns regarding the welfare of young people, these do not always demonstrate the actions taken by the school to safeguard young people.

Individual care plans and risk assessments outline the steps being taken by staff to keep young people safe and minimise risks to their individual welfare. There is a range of risk assessments in place with regard to the premises and activities that young people participate in, these assist in minimising risks to young people and staff.

The residential and school staff work well together to promote positive behaviours with young people. There are clear reward systems in place and young people are clearly achieving regular rewards for their positive behaviours. Similarly, where inappropriate behaviours are displayed, young people are clear about sanctions they may receive from staff.

There is a policy and procedure in place with regard to bullying within the school. Young people said that they feel safe at the school, when bullying does take place teachers and staff act to stop it. This shows that young people are listened to and enables young people to feel safe.

Staff are trained in physical restraint as part of their induction training, regular refresher training is provided annually. Records of sanctions and physical restraint are in place, however, staff are not always completing these records following a restraint. This does not safeguard young people or staff.

The safety of young people and staff is promoted through the regular testing of fire safety equipment at the school. Regular health and safety checks of the premises also promote the safety of young people and staff at the school.

Recruitment procedures are in place, but these are not sufficiently robust enough to fully safeguard young people, for example, staff have started work before Criminal Records Bureau clearance has been obtained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Regular meetings are held between residential and teaching staff throughout the day to discuss behaviours of young people, discuss any concerns that staff may have and plan suitable activities for young people.

Staff are clear about homework that young people need to complete and ensure that time is set aside for this to be completed, staff provide help where necessary. Study facilities are provided on each unit including individual study space, learning materials and access to computers. Some young people who have demonstrated sustained positive behaviours in school have been provided with lap tops, these are an additional resource for young people both educationally and socially.

Children have access to school facilities of an evening and are also able to access local amenities including the local park and sports centre. Risk assessments in relation to activities that young people enjoy are in place, such as football, IT, swimming, cricket, painting and cooking. Young people also enjoyed a Christmas night out at Laser Quest and bowling. Dependant on behaviour, young people are able to choose an activity that they want to take part in, these are discussed prior to young people coming home from school.

Each young person is allocated a key worker, key worker sessions are planned in line with young people's placement plans. Sessions are planned, and are recorded in line with every child matters outcomes. This ensures that care needs of young people are identified, monitored and met.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Risk assessments are not completed before young people are admitted to the residential unit, this does not fully safeguard young people. However, young people see staying on residence as something positive, this creates an atmosphere of calm on the residential units, young people feel involved in the decision for them to stay and therefore display more positive behaviours.

Staff have developed positive effective relations with young people. Although incidents of challenging behaviour are dealt with appropriately by staff, records of physical restraints are not always recorded, this does not fully safeguard young people or staff.

Regular meetings between young people and staff provide opportunities for young people to discuss any concerns they may have or ideas they may have for improving the unit they are staying on, for example, the range of evening activities available for young people. This ensures that the views of young people are sought and acted upon.

Young people are able to use their own mobile phones to maintain contact with families and friends and can earn extra 'top ups' as part of incentive schemes. Where young people do not have any credit, they can access the office telephone to contact family and friends. Computers and laptops are also available for young people to contact their friends and family via email and electronic messaging services, these are monitored by staff to ensure that they are being used appropriately. This ensures that young people are safeguarded.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The standard of residential accommodation at Lower Lee continues to be an issue. The fabric of the building is poor and does not meet the needs of young people who stay there.

However, the school and residential units are being replaced with a 'new build'. Building works are underway and it is hoped that it will be ready for the new school year in September 2009.

Young people and staff are looking forward to this being ready and of the new opportunities it will provide for young people.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The cultural and individual care needs of young people have been identified. Quality assurance systems are in place within the home, to ensure that these needs are promoted and met.

The Statement of Purpose is a clear and accessible document that is updated to ensure it is an accurate account of the service provided at the school. This means that young people their parents and social workers where appropriate, are provided with appropriate information about the school and opportunities it will provide for young people.

Staff are appropriately trained, skilled and competent within their roles. Staffing levels ensure that there are sufficient numbers of staff to meet the needs of those staying on residence. Training records demonstrate a good commitment by the local authority to provide on going development for employees to aid professional growth. Joint training between teaching and residential staff promotes an overall team approach to care at Lower Lee school.

Full staff meetings and smaller house meetings take place on a regular basis, this helps to promote a consistent approach for young people. Similarly, staff are provided with regular planned supervision to ensure that their personal development needs are being met.

The Head of Care is part of the board of governors and reports to them regularly about progress on the residential units and also how specific safeguarding issues are being addressed. The board of governors meet and visit the school on a regular basis with copies of these reports available for inspection.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the health care plans hold details of medications needed by young people and information about possible side effects (NMS 14)
- ensure that all staff recruitment checks are completed and verified before staff commence employment (NMS 27)
- ensure that safeguarding procedures provide clear evidence of steps taken in response to allegations and disclosures made by young people (NMS 5)
- ensure that risk assessments are updated following incidents of, or concerns about bullying (NMS 6)
- ensure that all incidents of physical restraint are recorded in the relevant record (NMS 10)
- ensure that risk assessments are completed prior to admission to the residential units (NMS 17).