

The Harbour Hostel @ Tipner

Inspection report for residential special school

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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

The Harbour School is a new multi-site special school that became fully operational in September 2007. The Hostel @ Tipner is the school's residential facility. The aim of the hostel is to provide a safe and stimulating environment that will support young people in their educational development. While most of the hostel's residents attend the Harbour School, placements can be referred from any Portsmouth school. The hostel is a self-contained unit attached to the Harbour School @ Tipner. Staff and young people can access many of the school's facilities. The hostel operates with a dedicated residential staff team. Young people can be accommodated up to four nights a week. The hostel operates on a Monday to Friday basis, with young people returning home each week-end. At the time of the inspection the hostel was accommodating seven young people. The Harbour School @ Tipner occupies a somewhat isolated coastal location that is not directly served by public transport.

Summary

This announced inspection was the first the Harbour School's residential hostel has received. However, prior to September 2007 the hostel was part of Waterside School and was subject to annual inspections. The inspection aimed to assess the school's commitment to providing good outcomes for children in relation to the National Minimum Standards and best practice guidance. It also provided an opportunity to determine the role the hostel now occupies within the new federation that constitutes the Harbour School. The Harbour School has been created by amalgamating five special educational facilities within Portsmouth. One of the Harbour School's primary aims is to help and support young people access mainstream educational placements. Young people are normally referred to the school for a limited period of intensive work that will enable them to return to a mainstream placement. The majority of young people attending the school do so as day pupils. However, if it is felt that a young person's education would be enhanced by a residential placement a referral will be made to the hostel. The hostel is a resource that can be accessed by young people in both mainstream and special educational placements. At the time of the inspection the majority of the hostel's residents were attending one of the Harbour School's five sites.

Evidence obtained during the inspection indicates the hostel plays an important role within the school and that a well motivated group of staff provide quality care and support to a vulnerable group of young people with special educational needs. Staff are pro-active in encouraging young people to pursue healthy lifestyles by providing a healthy eating programme, good personal care and regular opportunities for physical exercise. The safeguarding practice is satisfactory and staff are aware of their individual responsibilities in regard to reporting any issues or concerns. There are security features to protect young people on the premises and risk assessments developed for off-site activities. There is good care planning practice and care plans are regularly monitored and reviewed. Staff are conversant with the specific care needs of each individual and have developed strategies to ensure they are appropriately met. All young people spoke in positive terms about the hostel and special mention was made of the support received from staff, the recreational activities on offer and the educational progress they had made since settling in. The interaction between young people and staff was observed to be spontaneous and based on mutual respect.

Given the Harbour School has only been operational since September 2007 staff are to be commended on the way they have adjusted to the inevitable changes associated with bringing together five organisations. New policies, procedures and working practices are still clearly bedding down. Though the hostel now accommodates a younger group of young people from a wider area, its function as a resource to support young people with their education has not changed. While hostel staff have adapted well to accommodating both males and females from a younger age group, they have clearly experienced difficulties in establishing effective channels of communication with staff from all the educational settings their residents are drawn. While there are a number of recommendations arising out of this inspection none directly relate to the quality of care within the hostel.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection since the new school became operational.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Hostel staff promote the concept of healthy eating. Young people are provided with breakfasts and evening meals in the hostel and have lunch in school. Young people requiring a packed lunch can exercise a choice over its contents. Staff use fresh produce to provide wholesome nutritious meals from a range of cultures. Young people are encouraged to assist in the preparation of meals. Staff and young people eat together and meals are clearly social events that play an important role in the daily life of the hostel. Young people spoke in positive terms about both the quality of and quantity of food on offer.

While the primary responsibility for the health of each young person remains with their parents during their placements, staff closely monitor their well-being. Any young person who becomes ill in the hostel returns home. The health needs of each young person are identified prior to admission and signed consent forms obtained from parents or guardians. If staff identify any areas of concern they will initiate referrals to specialist services. A written record is kept of all accidents and illnesses. Medication is kept in an appropriately locked facility and a written record kept of all medicines dispensed by staff. Staff receive first aid training and a member of staff has recently completed a four-day first aid at work course.

Guidance advice and support in relation to health and social issues is provided by both teaching and hostel staff. Issues relating to alcohol and substance misuse, sexual health, smoking, sex and relationships are often discussed informally with staff in both a group and individual basis. Posters and leaflets relating to health issues were observed on the notice boards.

As the hostel now provides for young people who attend educational placements throughout Portsmouth, staff now have to liaise with staff from a number of different educational settings. Hostel staff reported that while standard policies and procedures have been developed throughout the Harbour School, the process of obtaining confidential information on young people from other schools can be difficult. It is acknowledged that these are early days in the life of the new school and that some staff from other schools within Portsmouth are still unaware of the role and function of the hostel within the new Harbour School.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people reported that staff respect their privacy. On admission each individual is assigned their own room that they can personalise with their own posters and pictures. For safety reasons, young people are not allowed to enter each other's rooms. There is a policy for room searches and all young people are made aware of it on admission. Staff are clearly sensitive to the needs of young people who are used to sharing bedrooms with other siblings and experience difficulties in being alone at night. Staff talk to individuals about confidential matters in private and personal information relating to each young person is kept in an appropriate locked facility. The recently refurbished toilets and bathrooms have appropriate locks.

The hostel has a written complaints policy that is detailed in the guidebook provided to each young person on admission. The procedure requires complaints to be first registered with hostel staff, however, if any complainant is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint the policy provides redress to the head teacher. By the use of one-to-one sessions and informal group meetings, staff are pro-active in seeking out the views and concerns of young people before they develop into complaints. Young people reported that they would have no difficulty in raising personal issues or concerns with any of the staff.

The hostel accommodates a number of vulnerable young people and clearly provides a degree of safety and security that can be lacking in their home lives. Staff have received training on child protection and are aware of the indicators of risk. While the well-being of each young person is monitored on an on-going basis, staff are especially vigilant on their return to the hostel at the beginning of each week. While staff are aware of their individual responsibilities in regard to reporting welfare concerns, one member of staff was unclear about the specific documentation that was required to report concerns about the vulnerability of a young person while at home. No protection issues have been reported since the new school has been operational.

The hostel operates a policy of zero tolerance towards bullying and all young people are made aware of it on admission. Young people indicated that bullying was not a problem within the hostel. By careful monitoring and the use of behaviour management programmes staff aim to minimise opportunities for bullying.

The hostel has a policy and procedure for reporting young people who are absent without authority. Hostel staff will liaise with teaching staff if a young person has a history of absconding and putting themselves at risk. Records demonstrate that all incidents of young people absconding are recorded and the action taken on their return noted.

The hostel provides young people with a nurturing environment with clear boundaries. Behaviour management plans are developed out of individual risk assessments. Young people are encouraged to develop positive behaviour and respect for people, places and things. A token system is used to reinforce positive behaviour. Though sanctions are used they are normally accompanied by some form of reparation. Young people feel sanctions are applied fairly. While all staff receive training in the use of physical restraint, restraints are rarely used. No restraints have taken place since the inception of the new school. One-to-one sessions provide staff with opportunities to discuss issues or concerns relating to behaviour. There is an open dialogue

between staff and young people about life within the home and their behaviour as a group. The behaviour of each young person is monitored and discussed by staff on a regular basis.

Risk assessments are used to ensure the safety of both young people and staff. Risk assessments are subject to regular review and updated in response to any incident or concerns. The home has a fire alarm system that is tested regularly. Evacuation exercises are carried out every term. Access to the building is restricted and all visitors have to report to staff on admission. A perimeter fence surrounds the property.

The hostel operates with an experienced and stable staff team. All staff are subject to a comprehensive recruitment process and all have undertaken the required references and checks. Agency staff are rarely used and additional staff, if required, are supplied from within the school and have been appropriately vetted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Hostel staff are pro-active in supporting young people with their education and through regular communication with teaching staff, keep abreast of the progress each young person is making. There is, however, recognition on the part of staff that liaising within the new multi-site school has created new challenges and that it has taken some time to identify key personnel in each of the sites. Staff reported that teaching staff do not visit the hostel as regularly as they once did.

The progress each young person makes during the school day is discussed with hostel staff on their return. All progress is acknowledged and rewarded. Staff run a very successful homework group that meets most afternoons to support individuals with their school work and in particular their literacy skills. It is evident that the hostel provides a stable and stimulating environment that is conducive to each individual's educational progress.

The hostel now operates with a younger age group than the past and as a consequence staff have had to introduce social and recreational activities that can meet their needs. Staff reported that active play is particularly popular. Hostel staff can access many of the school's resources including computers, playgrounds and the gym. Recreational activities, such as trips to the swimming pool, are nearly always undertaken on a group basis. The aspiration to get young people to engage with clubs and organisations in their local areas has, according to staff, proven logistically difficult with the present group. However, it is evident that staff encourage young people to develop interests that they can carry on beyond school and for example all young people are introduced to cycling. Young people are also provided with opportunities to experience new activities such as ice skating and rock climbing. All activities undertaken by young people are subject to a risk assessment process. Young people are asked to contribute their views to the development of weekly activity plans. The school has its own transport that is used to support social and recreational activities. Young people spoke in positive terms about the activities undertaken.

Hostel staff are clearly conversant with the physical, social and emotional needs of the young people for whom they are caring. If it is felt a young person requires additional support to meet their needs referrals will be made to the appropriate services. The religious and cultural needs of each young person are identified as part of the referral process. Themed evenings are regularly

organised to introduce young people to the food and customs of other cultures. A recent themed evening introduced them to the food and customs of Thailand.

Staff and young people were observed to be at ease in each others company and relationships appeared to be founded on mutual respect. Social interaction was both spontaneous and punctuated by much playful banter. It is evident the young people value the care and attention they receive from staff. While each young person is treated as an individual, the hostel operates on a communal basis and there is an expectation that all will undertake their share of domestic tasks such as setting the table for meals or assisting staff with the preparation of meals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff regularly consult young people about all aspects of their lives within the hostel. Consultation normally takes place, on an informal basis, when everyone is gathered together at mealtimes. The kitchen/dining area lies at the heart of the hostel and is the main meeting area for both young people and staff. It is clear that young people seek out the company of staff and they appreciate the attention they receive. Staff and young people address each other by their first names. Young people indicated they would have no difficulty in raising any personal worries or concerns with any of the staff. Young people felt that sanctions, when applied, were applied fairly.

Since the inception of the new school, hostel provision has been extended to include other schools in the Portsmouth area. Referrals are now made via a pupil placement panel that considers all referrals to the Harbour School. The hostel staff are represented on the placement panel by the school's head teacher. Hostel placements are only considered if it is felt that a young person will benefit educationally. There was some concern on the part of hostel staff that the amount of information they receive prior to a placement has, in recent times, reduced and that timescales for admission are now shorter and as a consequence the admissions process is less thorough. The head teacher explained that relevant information is available and that effective channels of communication are still being established within the new school. She also confirmed that the hostel will not take emergency placements and that its focus remains as a residential provision to support young people with their education.

On admission a placement plan is developed for each young person that identifies their health, social, educational, cultural and leisure needs. From the information obtained a plan is developed on how each individual's care needs can best be met during their placement. Staff involve young people in the development of their placement plans. Placement plans are good and provide key-information in an easily accessible format. All placement plans are updated on an on-going basis and subject to regular review. While parents are invited to attend reviews, staff reported that very few do. Young people can maintain contact with their families via the phone and in some cases e-mails. Staff maintain contact with parents via correspondence, telephone calls and in some instances e-mails.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are expected to wear a school uniform during the school day. On return to the hostel young people change back into casual clothes. The hostel will, if required, supply clothing

for young people who are in need. Young people are encouraged to maintain their clothing and are helped how to use a range of domestic appliances as part of their life skills training.

The school and hostel have a policy to assist young people make the transition into adulthood, that includes social and life skills training and for example all young people are expected to acquire some budgeting and cooking skills. The hostel now operates with a younger age group and it is hoped that many of the current residents will return to mainstream education. Transitional planning is implemented well in advance of proposed departures.

A full tour of the building indicated the hostel's location, design and size are in keeping with its purpose and function. Young people confirmed they have access throughout the building but that they are not allowed to enter each others rooms. Records demonstrate that the hostel is subject to regular health and safety risk assessments. Following a leakage in a section of the hostel's roof, a redecoration and refurbishment programme has been carried out. Young people are happy with their accommodation and feel they have ownership of their own rooms. Sleeping-in staff have their own dedicated accommodation with en-suite facilities. Bathroom facilities are all in close proximity to young people's bedrooms. The hostel's one female resident has been assigned her own bathroom. The hostel has a number of communal areas and rooms that can be used for private meetings.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school's statement of purpose is located within the school's aims and objectives document. The statement reflects what the school sets out to do for those children it accommodates and the nature of the residential care it provides. However, hostel staff reported that the role and function of the hostel within the new school is not yet clearly understood by some staff. As the school is new and operates on a multi-site basis, hostel staff are of the opinion that there are still staff who are not quite clear of its role and function. Staff have created a guide to the hostel that it is provided to young people and their parents prior to admission.

There is an extensive recording system that aims to ensure that the welfare of each young person is carefully monitored. Staff make a record of each individual's progress on a daily basis. Key information is discussed between members of staff on different shifts in order to provide continuity in the delivery of care. Staff are deployed at times when the young people are in the hostel. There is always one member of staff who sleeps-in. Staffing levels are planned to ensure that the needs of the young people are appropriately met. While the current staff compliment has been deemed appropriate to meet the needs of the current group, there is recognition that any further placements will require additional staff. The promotion of equality and diversity within the school is good and there is a robust recruitment policy and procedure. Any staffing shortfalls are met by school staff. Agency staff are rarely used. Staff, including the manager, are appropriately experienced and can access regular training opportunities. All staff are provided with job descriptions and there are well established lines of accountability. While the school has a new governing body, as yet no governor has been identified to undertake monitoring visits.

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 all staff are aware of all new documentation relating to safeguarding children and the reporting of welfare concerns (NMS 5).
- ensure that all key-information is available to hostel staff prior to any proposed placements (NMS 11).
- identify a member of the governing body to carry out regular monitoring visits (NMS 33)
- ensure that all staff within the school are aware of the role and function of the hostel (NMS1).
- develop a document, such as a 'home book' that could be used to provide a brief report to parents on the achievements and progress of their child (NMS 20).