

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Anne Bannister
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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

This is a secondary aged residential school for boys and girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is also registered as a children's home. The school is located in a rural area, on a 24 acre site that has been developed to include an indoor sports facility and six small units where young people can practice their independent living skills. Young people living at the home come from local authorities, covering almost all geographical parts of the United Kingdom. It currently provides full time 52 weeks residential care for 75% of the young people in its care. The school's ethos is to create a centre of excellence for the education, care and personal development of young people with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties.

Summary

This was an unannounced, full inspection and so all the key national minimum standards were assessed. The inspection also confirmed that two recommendations from the previous inspection had been appropriately addressed.

The overall outcomes for the care of young people are good, with some outcomes exceeding the requirements of the national minimum standards. This overall judgement of good is given as systems are in place, which need to be developed further, to ensure the majority of the national minimum standards are exceeded. In addition, six recommendations have been made. These relate to the need to review the way documentation provides evidence all of the actions staff take to promote positive outcomes for young people. Currently not all documentation adequately reflects the high quality of care provided.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were raised following the previous inspection. One was to review risk assessments implemented to address specific behaviours presented by a young person to ensure the measures put in place were still appropriate. The second was for the complaints records to clearly indicate whether or not the young person was satisfied with the manner in which their concerns had been addressed. Both have been appropriately responded to by the home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The home successfully promotes the good health of the young people. Each young person has a comprehensive health plan which clearly outlines their health needs, and addresses them holistically. There is effective intervention and support from the school nurse who assists young people to attend doctor's, dental and optician's visits.

Young people are advised on aspects of healthy living, covering a wide range of topics, such as sexual health, smoking and the use of drink and drugs. Where specific needs are identified, staff ensure that young people are referred to appropriate specialist services. Staff receive first aid training and a first aid box is to hand.

The home provides healthy, balanced diets including fresh fruit and vegetables. Young people are consulted about their preferences. Some young people are of an age where they make their own decisions about what to eat, as part of their preparation for independence. Since the last inspection the school has gained the 'Healthy Schools Award'.

Young people are safeguarded with regard to the administration of medication. All medication is safely stored in a locked cabinet and any medication dispensed is fully recorded and there are suitable procedures in place for the disposal of medicines. All systems are carefully monitored by the school nurse who will inform the registered manager if there are any issues. There is no formal record of this.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Overall arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the safety and welfare of young people are good, with many outcomes being assessed as outstanding. The staff team are highly committed to ensuring that young people in their care are protected from harm.

Staff show a good regard for the privacy of the young people and for maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality and young people agree that this is the case.

The home has a clear complaints procedure and information about this is readily available. Young people say that they know about the complaints procedure and that any concerns they have are always listened to and acted upon.

There are systems in place to safeguard young people from abuse. The home has appropriate child protection policies and procedures in place. All staff, including support staff, have received relevant child protection training and are aware of actions to take in response to any allegations or suspicions of abuse. There is good liaison with the local safeguarding team. Documentation of referrals made is comprehensively maintained and concludes with an assessment as to whether there are any training implications on conclusion of an investigation.

Young people are protected well when bullying occurs and there is clear information available, explaining that this will not be tolerated in any form. Young people confirm that staff respond quickly and effectively when issues arise. Discussions with staff and young people indicates that at times documentation does not adequately reflect all the actions taken to address issues when they do occur. These may be addressed through out the 24 hour curriculum and may include actions such as special assemblies.

The home have suitable policies and procedures detailing action for staff to take in any instances of young people going absent without authority. The home notify all those persons and appropriate authorities of any significant events that have occurred and routinely makes personal contact with parents and other people who are significant to the young person to let them know about the event.

There is a clear and comprehensive behaviour management policy, which is consistently used by all staff. All staff are trained in behaviour management techniques and they are skilled at diverting the young people's negative behaviours into a more positive activity. Staff work hard to enable young people to learn how to keep themselves safe and manage their own behaviour. Each young person is on a reward system for good

behaviour and receives points for attending education and completing daily living skills. All physical interventions and sanctions imposed in response to unacceptable behaviours are appropriately recorded. Senior managers monitor this to identify trends in behaviours and to ensure staff consistency. However, the manner of reviewing of individual sanctions given to young people could be developed further to fully reflect how their individual needs are responded to. The records of physical intervention do not indicate whether both staff and young people involved have been encouraged to reflect on the incident and look at alternate strategies to help manage young people manage their behaviours. This is despite the fact that both parties inform inspectors this routinely occurs.

The home has regularly updated risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds including fire, and young people's behaviour and activities. These assessments are taken into account in the daily activities in the home. A similar process is followed for activities outside of the home, for example holidays, or trips out. There is a high awareness of fire safety among staff and young people. Fire drills are carried out on a regular basis and at different times of the day. At least one fire drill each year takes place at night and fire safety equipment is checked regularly and a detailed record kept.

There are clear procedures for the recruitment of staff. Records confirm robust and safe recruitment practice is in place which ensures that only people who are deemed suitable work with the young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive an excellent level of individual support based on their assessed needs. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of young people's needs and know how to support them. The home has well established links with a range of outside agencies that support young people in developing a positive view of themselves and others. Young people indicate that staff are approachable and that there is always someone on duty who they would approach if they needed help or advice.

Education is at the forefront of planning and is based on individual needs. Young people attend education at the organisations' school which is on site. Young people say they receive a good education and complete GCSE examinations to help them into their chosen career or college course. Young people progress well with their academic studies, and a significant number leave school with qualifications it had not been anticipated they would achieve in previous placements. Care staff have good links with the teaching staff and ensure that they act quickly to support young people if any difficulties arise. Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for the young people in their care. Staff routinely celebrate young people's educational achievements.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home has a number of care planning documents which, when read collectively, provide good information on young people's individual needs and how they will be met. The home has recently reviewed the format of its own placement plans and staff are currently adapting to the manner in which they complete the new format. These changes are being carefully monitored.

Additional training is booked to ensure that recording of placement plans continues to meet the requirements of the National Minimum standards for Children's Homes.

Young people are assisted to maintain constructive contact with parents, family and other people significant in their lives. Contact arrangements are discussed at the time of the young people's admission and are recorded in their placement plan. Staff in the home work closely with the young people's families and carers. When part of their care plan, young people have regular home contact visits and staff provide transport and escort facilities for them to travel home. Young people's views, and those of their parents/carers and placing authorities, are regularly sought and taken in to account.

There are procedures in place to support young people to move into and to leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. Consulting with young people, listening to them, discussing the plans for their care with them, talking to them about how the home is run and helping them to make decisions on matters that effect them, is part of the care practices at the home. Staff demonstrate that they value the views and opinions of the young people and they young people confirm this is the case.

Positive relationships based on respect exist between staff and young people. Staff are committed and

caring in their approach and young people are regularly praised for their achievements. Young people state that 'this home has turned my life around', ' they have stopped me ending up in secure accommodation' and 'I will leave here knowing how to manage my behaviour , keep myself safe and have qualifications'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

There is an independence programme in place for young people preparing to leave the home. The programme prepares young people for independent living and develops their life skills. The home liaise closely with parents, placing authorities and the connexions organisation in the formation of these programmes. The home has six semi-independent living units for young people sited separately in the grounds. The independence programme is designed to give young people accredited educational awards as well as develop life skills. Young people on the programme have the opportunity to open bank accounts, manage their own living budgets, purchase and prepare food for all their own meals, and travel independently using public transport. Young people in these units are given a budget to purchase groceries, and are encouraged to prepare and cook their own meals. Young people register for the educational award as soon as they are admitted to the school, so their independence skills are well developed by the time they formally commence the leaving care programme.

The home liaises closely with placing authorities who have responsibility for formulating Pathway Plans for young people. On many occasions they are having to take an advocacy role with authorities who are not fulfilling their statutory obligations.

The home is situated in its own extensive grounds, which are well maintained and provide excellent recreational facilities for young people. The residential units have a homely feel. They are decorated and furnished to a high standard. Young people in the semi-independent units,

benefit from single bedrooms. Most young people in the two large units share bedrooms, which they are encouraged to personalise.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home is well-managed and efficiently run, providing a safe and stable environment for the young people living there. The Registered Manager is well supported and supervised by the organisation. The care staff team demonstrates an awareness of their roles and responsibilities in meeting young peoples needs.

The home provides comprehensive details about the care it provides. A user-friendly guide for young people advises them of what it is like to live in the home and advises them of people they can contact both within and outside the home if they are unhappy about their care.

The Registered Manager and all other staff, are very committed to providing high quality care for young people and they monitor and review their practice, to improve the service they are providing. There is a competent and experienced core care staff team, with a good range of knowledge. The skills of the staff team are well matched to caring for the young people who are accommodated in the home. The staff training programme includes a comprehensive induction. New staff spoken to are very positive about the induction process, which they feel has enabled them to meet the needs of the young people in their care. All staff have a personal development plan, which is reviewed and updated, as part of their annual performance appraisal. Staff are positive in their comments about the training provided and state that any specialist training required, to ensure they can meet a young person’s needs is provided. These actions show that the home takes suitable measures, to ensure that they have an appropriately qualified and trained care staff team.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Young people receive an individualised service in the home which is designed to meet their personal needs.

The home's quality assurance systems includes feedback from placing social workers and parents or carers. Records show that regular monitoring of the home and its operation is being carried out by the Registered Manager and by the Responsible Individual. The organisation has good quality assurance processes in place.

Each young person has an individual and secured record of their history and progress. Young people's files examined contained all information necessary as detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children’s Homes Regulations 2001.

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, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 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 there is a more formal record of the monthly checks the school nurse undertakes on the procedures in place for storage and administration of medicines (NMS 13.9)
- risk assess whether young people are able to self administer medicines as part of their preparation for leaving the home (NMS 13.11)
- review the manner in which staff record the actions they take to address issues of bullying so that they fully reflect all the various venues in which this has been addressed (NMS 18)
- ensure that a written record of the effectiveness of individual sanctions used on young people is maintained (NMS 22)
- ensure that the records of instances where incidents of physical intervention have taken place clearly indicate both staff and young people's reflection on the incident. (NMS 22)
- review the manner in which care staff evidence how they act as 'good parent' in supporting young people's education so that documentation fully reflects all the ways they support young people's educational attainment. (NMS 14)