

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	11 March 2010
Inspector	Anne Bannister
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	30 September 2009
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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 practise 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, interim inspection. It assessed the key national minimum standards (NMS) associated with how young people are enabled to stay safe. The inspection also assessed whether the registered persons had met the five recommendations made at the previous inspection.

As this was an interim inspection, it did not assess all of the key NMS. Consequently the overall outcome judgement made at the previous inspection remains in place.

The Registered Manager and the care staff team are very good at promoting the safety of young people. The staff promote young people's need for privacy, they enable young people to raise concerns and they deal with such concerns effectively. The staff are fully aware of how to safeguard the welfare of young people and how to respond appropriately to any allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. When bullying does occur staff respond effectively to address it.

Staff are also effective at promoting positive behaviour. There is an ethos of focusing on positive rather than dwelling on negative behaviour. Nevertheless, there are appropriate consequences for any significant negative behaviour. Any sanctions or restraints are recorded appropriately and young people are encouraged to reflect on the behaviours which led to them being necessary.

There are clear procedures for the recruitment of staff. Records generally confirm robust and safe recruitment practice is in place which ensures that only people who are deemed suitable to work with the young people are employed. However, two of the seven staff files viewed evidenced that the organisation's procedures had not been fully implemented.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Five recommendations were made following the previous key inspection. These all related to staff failing to adequately document their good practice. All have been addressed and documentation now adequately reflects staff good practice. They have all been commented on under the outcome headings.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Management had responded to two recommendations made at the last inspection. The school nurse now ensures that her monthly checks on the procedures in place for the administration and storage of medicines is documented. As part of the young people's preparation for independent living, a risk assessment is undertaken as to whether they are able to self-administer prescribed medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Overall, the arrangements to safeguard and promote the safety and welfare of young people are good.

Staff show a good regard for the privacy of the young people and for maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality. The majority of young people benefit from having their own bedrooms. However, there are some shared bedrooms in the two junior houses. Young people are consulted about whom they would like to share with and individual risk assessments confirm whether or not sharing a double room is appropriate.

Young people are fully supported to raise concerns, either formally or informally, and any concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. Young people indicate most issues are sorted out informally. They are able to raise concerns in a variety of ways. For example, there are regular house meetings and one-to-one sessions with key workers; there is also an open door policy that allows them to approach any member of the senior management team about issues causing them concern.

The staff are fully knowledgeable about how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. All the staff, including the ancillary staff, receive mandatory training in child protection. They also receive training about associated matters such as safety on the internet. Young people confirm that the Registered Manager and staff respond effectively to any bullying, should it arise. Incident sheets have been reviewed to ensure they fully reflect support given both within the home and in education when bullying occurs. Young people indicate that they all feel staff work hard to ensure their safety. One indicated 'it's the only place in my life I have ever felt safe'.

The staff team are skilled at promoting positive behaviours. All physical interventions and sanctions that have been imposed in response to unacceptable behaviours are recorded and are monitored by the Registered Manager to identify trends in behaviours. All staff are trained in behaviour management techniques and are skilled at diverting the young people's negative behaviours into a more positive activity. When physical interventions are necessary documentation now indicates that both the young person and staff involved in the incident are encouraged to reflect on the circumstances which led to it being used. Young people are encouraged to look at more positive ways to handle their emotions. The Registered Manager oversees the effectiveness of all sanctions given to young people. This ensures that challenging behaviours are responded to appropriately.

Young people rarely go missing from the home. If this does happen, the staff implement robust procedures including effective recording of such incidents.

The home itself is maintained as safe premises. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. The staff have also worked with all young people on a one-to-one basis to ensure they fully understand how to respond if a fire should occur.

Two of the staff files examined showed recruitment procedures had not been fully implemented and staff had taken up post prior to all checks and references being completed. Both staff members were professionals who were well known to members of the senior management team. However, this practice does not conform to the safe recruitment guidance and is contrary to the home's previous good practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

A recommendation from the previous inspection that the Registered Manager review the manner in which care staff evidence how they act as a 'good parent' in supporting young people's education has been addressed. Placement plans now reflect all the ways care staff support young people's educational attainment.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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
27	obtain for all staff, before they start work at the home, all the information set out in Regulation 26.	30 April 2010

Recommendations

There are no recommendations.