

Mount Tamar Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Michelle Oxley
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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 residential special school provides education and care for children and young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The residential provision operates as a support for educational needs. The building is situated centrally on the school site. The hostel is open four nights a week during term time. Pupils attend from one to four nights according to need. A highly structured routine is offered. A variety of on and off site activities is available.

Summary

This announced inspection is conducted by two inspectors. The purpose of the visit is to assess the function of the schools' hostel facility against key national minimum standards.

The team at the hostel provides an outstanding level of care to a diverse and energetic group of young people. Effective leadership, the stability and commitment of the staff team, the consistency of approach and the support systems between house and school are excellent.

Following this inspection there are two good practice recommendations to make.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were six good practice recommendations made following the previous inspection, these have all been addressed and are met as follows:

Documents now contain Ofsted details rather than CSCI

The team are aware of the need to report significant events

The book to record physical intervention now contains all the required details

The time that fire drills take place is now recorded

Parental permission for the use of door alarms has been obtained

The service is now monitored frequently and in line with the standards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Health needs are identified promptly and support given when it is needed. The team take action to ensure that health needs are met. Although in most cases parents retain the responsibility for meeting health needs, the team go the extra mile and work in conjunction with parents and carers to support them in ensuring that young people attain good health.

Physical exercise through sports is encouraged and promoted as part of a healthy lifestyle. Young people learn about a healthy diet, the dangers of taking drugs and smoking, through the curriculum at school. Staff promote and extend learning through general discussions and by supporting individuals.

Mealtimes are well ordered occasions, young people are well catered for in terms of a healthy diet and the quantity and quality of the food provided. Young people receive help with cutting up food or reminders about table manners when they need it. The dining room is used by the whole school, juniors and seniors have separate sittings at lunch time but in the evening all those who stay over sit together. Young people are provided with two good cooked meals a day. These include two or three choices and a vegetarian option. Desert is available after each meal. There is a choice of fresh fruit, yogurt or a hot desert. Young people can have seconds on request. Young people say they really enjoy the food.

Robust systems are in place to ensure that the potential for errors occurring when dealing with medication are limited.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The approach to safeguarding is well coordinated across the school including the hostel. Staff provide a stable and safe environment for young people. The team's approach to safeguarding is excellent. Staff are familiar with the schools systems, they know how to respond to allegations or suspicions of abuse. The team know each child well and are vigilant and responsive to any potential concerns. All staff at the school receive comprehensive training this is updated annually. New staff receive an introduction to safeguarding as part of their induction. Key staff across the school have responsibility for dealing with safeguarding matters including the hostel manager. The schools designated safeguarding officer keeps abreast of new legislation related to child protection, she refers on any concerns promptly.

Young people say that they feel safe at the hostel. A series of risk assessments are in place in relation to particular needs, activities and lone working. Privacy is well respected and staff understand the importance of confidentiality.

The complaints system is well known to young people. They feel able to speak informally to staff about their concerns or use the post boxes in the hallway to raise suggestions, complaints or bullying incidents. All matters raised are taken seriously by the manager and dealt with promptly.

Bullying incidents are dealt with efficiently. Staff vigilance and the level of staff supervision means that staff are well placed to intervene in any potential incidents. Young people's time is well structured and they are engaged in activities they enjoy. The behaviour management systems are effective in maintaining good order and helping young people to understand the importance of developing positive and respectful relations as well as the negative impact of bullying. All this means that bullying is less likely to occur.

Young people are protected by the hostel's absences procedures. There are two recorded absences without authority since the last inspection. In both cases staff dealt with the matter according to procedure. This means that relevant agencies and individuals were contacted.

The team's approach to behaviour management is impressive and outstanding. Young people enjoy sound relations with staff based on honesty and mutual respect. They have a clear understanding of expectations through consistent boundaries set by the team. Positive behaviour is promoted through a series of short term incentives. Young people participate with enthusiasm and respond well whilst gaining insight and understanding of their own behaviour. This means

that the service enjoys a good deal of success in terms of maintaining a well ordered and happy home from home.

Appropriate sanctions are used by the staff team within the context of the behaviour management system. This usually involves a loss of rewards, young people feel that the sanctions are fair. Staff are trained in physical intervention although these are only used in very extreme circumstances. This is because the team are able to manage behaviour effectively without resorting to physical contact.

Procedures to vet staff and visitors to the home are in place. Staff are vetted before they commence work at the hostel including obtaining a Criminal Records Bureau check. One staff file did not contain the same level of information as those of the other hostel.

There are systems in place to protect children, visitors and staff from risks and hazards. These include fire drills and safety equipment checks, gas and electrical safety checks, health and safety risk assessments. The building is covered by CCTV and security checks are carried out daily.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The transition between school and hostel is seamless and purposeful. Staff across the site work in conjunction with each other in order to facilitate optimum opportunities at school for each and every young person. Communication between staff at school and in the hostel is excellent. Links between the two are well established and well organised. Staff have a good understanding of each others remit and are respectful and supportive of the role that they each play in providing holistic care and education to young people. Staff in the hostel value educational attainment and take time to praise individuals for their participation and achievements, Teaching staff recognise the importance of the hostel in supporting care and educational attendance and attainment.

Excellent leisure opportunities are available to young people. Many of these occur within the context of the behaviour management system and some may act as an incentive especially activities within the hostel such as pool, table football, table tennis, games console, computers and DVD's and art and crafts. Young people have the opportunity to go on an annual holiday in the summer which they very much enjoyed. Staff support young people in clubs and activities off site. The time of the evening meal has been moved forward to 6pm to give more time for leisure. This worked particularly well in the summer months when everyone could head for the beach straight from school.

Young people are provided with individual care and support in line with their needs and wishes. Staff know children well. They take time to understand their specific circumstances. In turn young people feel that they can talk with staff and will turn to them if they have a concern. The team will seek out appropriate outside professional support for individuals when it is required.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are systems in place to ensure that young people are listened to. Young people participate in group feedback. This gives each young person the opportunity to express their feeling and to be listened to by the whole group. Young people all have a key worker whom they can have time with during their stay. A suggestion box is available. Overall young people say that they like the staff team and that they feel able to approach them and that they are listened to. Parents and carers are made welcome at the hostel and their views are valued. The manager keeps in regular contact with significant people and takes a consultative approach to providing care.

Staff are provided with pertinent up-to-date information about young people's care need. Placement plan's are created for each young person. These set out young people's assessed needs and direct staff in how to provide individual care. Placement plan's are updated in line with need and there are systems in place to ensure that staff are made aware of changes.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are assisted to develop skills for adulthood. There is one-to-one work carried out with young people to help them to learn to shop and cook a meal for friends. Young people attend work and college placements and are helped to develop budgeting skills and use public transport.

The team have made the building homely and communal areas and bedrooms are domestic in style. The building remains problematic in terms of a layout which is not conducive to managing the group's behaviours. All bedrooms are single occupancy unless siblings request a twin. Shower and washing facilities are sufficient in numbers to meet young people's needs. Bathrooms are in reasonably close proximity to the sleeping accommodation. On site facilities for leisure are good, there is a games room and a computer room. School facilities including the sports hall are also available. In general the property is well maintained, decorated to an acceptable standard and clean. However there was an obvious stain on the curtain in one bedroom that had not been cleaned from the occupant the previous night.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The management and staffing arrangements at the hostel are excellent. The manager leads by example working on shift with the team. She is a well respected leader whose consistent approach to providing care is mirrored by the team. There is a strong emphasis on team working. The six team members are close knit and work very well together. The lack of staff turnover means that the team have developed a good deal of knowledge about each young person and because of this, are able to provide care in an insightful and informed way. On the whole the team offer a stable, efficiently organised and consistent environment that is so crucial to these young people. The enduring commitment, consistency and enthusiasm offered is outstanding. This is demonstrated through an approach that requires energy and dedication. This continues to underpin the successful outcomes for young people achieved by this service.

An ongoing programme of staff training is in place, this includes NVQ's and all mandatory training such as child protection, first aid, fire safety. A system is in place to induct new staff. The manager supports the team through the supervision process, staff meetings take place.

The service is monitored by a new visitor who has produced reports in line with recommendations.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Policy documentation in relation to recruitment and care practice is adhered to. The equality and diversity policy has been updated. A system of monitoring and addressing racist bullying has been implemented. Young people get to try and to prepare world foods. Overall the team do not allow the needs of young people to exclude them from mainstream activities and will support this diverse group of young people to participate as fully as possible.

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 staff records for classroom staff who also work in the hostel are held in line with the standard (NMS 27)
- ensure that all parts of the building are clean by extending the cleaning routine to check on vacated rooms (NMS 24)