

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	21 January 2010
Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Shaun Common
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	25 August 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

The centre is set on a large secure site in a suburb of a large city in the north of England and comprises living accommodation, administration areas, education and recreational facilities. The centre is approved by the Department for Children, Schools and Families to provide accommodation which restricts the liberty of young people.

The centre is registered to enable up to 36 young males to be accommodated and provided with care and education in one of the four residential houses available. At the time of inspection 23 young people were resident at the centre.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection to monitor progress against the action and recommendations made at the last inspection in August 2009. All of the key standards in the staying safe outcome area were also looked at during this visit. A monitoring visit of the formal education provision at the centre was undertaken by an HMI with expertise in education. The inspection considered how much progress had been made on the education recommendations made at the inspection in August 2008.

A strength of the centre is the positive appropriate relationships which staff have with young people. A range of diversion and mediation techniques are used to minimise the occurrences of negative behaviours. Areas for development include ensuring risks to young people are assessed, complaints which may be of a child protection nature are identified and dealt with as such, and the development of formal education.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in August 2009, management at the centre was required to carry out one action and consider three recommendations. All of the recommendations have been addressed.

It was recommended that the centre's policy and procedures for administering medication were amended to ensure young people's health needs were met fully. A new policy is now in place which offers greater guidance to staff members and helps them to safeguard the welfare of young people. Health care plans for young people had previously been incomplete and did not clarify all the needs of a young person and how these would be met. A new system of assessment and collation of health care plans has been introduced which enables needs to be identified and addressed proactively. This means that young people's good health is promoted.

The need for greater consistency between the individual house units in the recording of single separations was recommended. Identical record logs are now in use in all four living units at the centre, thereby ensuring that relevant and comparable information is now recorded.

An action at the last inspection was that all of the recommendations of the HMI for education to address shortfalls in the educational provision at the centre were addressed. Progress in resolving the five areas for development has been insufficient.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The policy in place relating to administration of medication at the centre has been rewritten. This has been drawn together utilising the recently developed local authority policy for the administration of medication to looked after children. The policy has been made available to all staff members for guidance and assists them to safeguard the medical welfare of young people. Additional information is now available about the self administering of medication by young people, including guidance on storage and assessment of responsibility.

A new system has being introduced in conjunction with health care staff to undertake initial assessments of health needs when young people arrive at the centre. All areas of health are covered and this information is then transferred into a formal written health plan. Any appointments or needs are also recorded on these plans. The plans are reviewed on a regular basis and action recorded. This means that all staff working with a young person are aware of identified health needs and the plans to meet them.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The privacy of young people at the centre is respected. Staff knock on bedroom doors before entering and observation windows are curtained to enhance privacy further. All sensitive and confidential information is held securely in the offices of each house.

A complaints system is in place which is understood by young people. 'Can I have a word' forms which enable them to access the system are freely available without recourse to staff. Completed forms can either be given directly to a staff member or posted in an internal post box located in each house. Appropriate records of all complaints received, and details should they be referred to any external agencies along with the outcome, are kept. One complaint form was seen containing an allegation by a young person which should have been referred for advice from the local safeguarding services; the issue had been dealt with by the centre. All young people have access to an independent advocate who visits each living unit weekly. Young people are listened to and their concerns are dealt with appropriately.

The welfare of children is promoted. Good links exist with external agencies with safeguarding responsibilities and procedures are in place to enable incidents arising in the centre to be referred appropriately to the local safeguarding team. Safeguarding training, along with appropriate refresher courses, forms part of the ongoing staff core training programme. All staff have received training.

Anti-bullying messages are displayed around the centre and young people are regularly involved in active, ongoing anti-bullying programmes. There is a culture of zero tolerance to bullying and staff undertake mediation meetings where issues arise.

The centre has procedures in place should a young person be absent from the centre without authority. No incidents of unauthorised absence have occurred since the previous inspection.

The behaviour management of young people is good. Positive behaviour is promoted and there is a system of rewards and sanctions. The system actively promotes the positive behaviour of young people. Good appropriate relationships exist between the young people and staff

members. Restorative justice is also used to resolve conflict by means other than sanctions and there are a number of trained facilitators available. Young people understand the systems which they view as generally fair. Sanctions are used sparingly and those that are imposed are relevant to the behaviour. Records are kept of any sanctions imposed.

All staff have received physical intervention training and records of all incidents that take place are recorded and monitored by managers. The centre staff and management work to a restraint minimisation policy, and records indicate that some continuing success has been achieved in the reduction of incidents. Staff use a variety of negotiation and diffusion techniques to modify young people's behaviour.

There is now a consistent recording process in use in all four living units for monitoring single separations which may occur. The use of a template record across the centre enables comparable information to be available, aiding management evaluation. On some occasions, where a restraint situation has resulted in a period of single separation for a young person, this has not been entered into the separation records. This means that the length of separation and the monitoring of the young person during this time cannot be evidenced.

Health and safety issues related to the premises are identified by a range of risk assessments covering the whole of the site. Individual risk assessments are also completed for each young person. However, there are minimal risk assessments in place for the leisure activities undertaken by the young people and no risk assessments for some high risk activities which take place during formal education. This means that unnecessary risks for young people and staff cannot be identified and steps taken to minimise these. The centre has good fire procedures and well-maintained fire safety equipment. Fire drills take place regularly. Appropriate service contracts are in place for fire, gas and electrical equipment. Young people's health and safety is promoted well with the exception of risk identification for activities. Young people's safety and welfare are appropriately promoted by a consistently rigorous staff recruitment and selection process.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Insufficient progress has been made in resolving the five areas for development identified in the last inspection of education in August 2008. In November 2009 the school carried out an internal audit of the quality of education provision. This presents a detailed self-evaluation and action plan for improvement and has resulted in some very recent improvements to the management and organisation of the education provision. For example, the arrangements for allocating young people to school groups are now based appropriately on young people's age and level of ability; the timetable has been redesigned to provide time for a weekly tutorial and curriculum choices; and a new system for behaviour management was introduced before the inspection. However, progress has been very slow and the five recommendations from the last inspection remain.

Progress improving the quality of teaching and learning and the arrangements for setting young people targets for achievement is limited. As part of the audit completed in November 2009, external consultants carried out a programme of observations that provide a good analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching. The profile of grades awarded through this process show that there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection and that a high proportion of lessons are unsatisfactory. Observations carried out during this visit,

by the inspector, identified that there are good relationships between staff and young people and young people’s behaviour is satisfactory. However, not all lessons are planned to meet young people’s individual needs and in some lessons teachers do not follow school procedures for behaviour management.

Managers have made no progress in improving the provision of additional support for young people with learning difficulties. The school still does not have a qualified special educational needs coordinator. Unqualified learning support assistants provide in-class support for literacy and numeracy. This term the teacher for careers education has changed.

The internal audit identifies significant weaknesses in the senior leadership of the school. These have begun to be addressed. An acting head of education has been appointed. The acting head and the two deputies are committed to bringing about change and are beginning to implement the action plan for the school. However, arrangements for performance management have not improved sufficiently. The school does not have arrangements for observation of teaching and learning that are shared with teachers. While four new teachers took up post in September 2009 significant staffing problems remain that impact adversely on the quality of teaching and the range of subjects provided. At the time of the inspection a high proportion of teachers were absent and some subjects were being taught by non-specialists.

The range of accredited courses and the curriculum offered to young people have reduced since the last inspection. The motor vehicle, construction, and painting and decorating workshops were closed during the visit. Arrangements for health and safety are inadequate. No risk assessments have been carried out for design technology lessons, vocational provision, activities in the sports hall and generic classroom-based sessions.

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
16	ensure that complaints are appropriately identified such that they cannot be confused with child protection allegations (Regulation 24.2)	21 March 2010

26	ensure that unnecessary risks to the health and safety of young people and staff are identified and as far as possible eliminated (Regulation 23c).	21 March 2010
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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 where physical restraints have taken place which result in a period of single separation, the event and period of separation is recorded in the relevant log (NMS 22, Children's Secure Accommodation Regulations 1991, Regulation 17)
- ensure that the school action plan produced in November 2009 is implemented and the impact is monitored and evaluated (Education, Regulation 18.1, NMS 14).