

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Shaun Common / Gwen Buckley
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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 home is a secure unit, managed by a local authority and is located in a small town in the midlands. It comprises three purpose built separate living units, providing a total of 18 secure places, catering for children and young people aged between 10 and 17 upon admission.

Two of the units provide care for six boys and the other unit caters for six girls. The home has education on site and internal and external play recreation areas are available. The home also has a large gymnasium, and a range of other accommodation, for example, offices, kitchens, medical, and meeting rooms. High levels of security are maintained within the building, and outside where there is access to a BMX track. Mobility away from the unit is provided subject to risk assessments and agreement with the placing authority.

Three of the 18 places are for children placed on welfare grounds and 15 are commissioned by the Youth Justice Board for those serving sentences or remanded by the courts to a secure setting.

There were 15 young people resident at the time of the inspection and all those present had the opportunity to talk to inspectors and their views contributed toward the findings.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection to evaluate the quality of care and security at the secure children's home. The inspection has the purpose of informing the Secretary of State on the continuing suitability of the secure unit to restrict children's liberty along with ensuring compliance with the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. All key national minimum standards and additional licensing standards under each of the Every Child Matters outcomes were inspected. The formal education provision at the unit was inspected on this visit. An architectural advisor also visited the centre to conduct an inspection of the premises.

This secure children's home has a number of strengths. Holistic health care arrangements for young people are excellent and demonstrate individualised care and support. Food provided is varied, healthy and caters for young people's individual, cultural and religious needs. Care planning and associated quality assurance processes are in place that ensure the best outcomes for young people. Effective support, advice and guidance is available and provided to young people. Overall, education provision is outstanding. Interventions work is tailored, individualised and focused. External professionals are highly complimentary about the very good levels of care provided to young people.

Areas identified for improvement are: Ensuring kitchen and utility areas and medication fridges are kept clean, and that all taps and sinks are upgraded. Ensuring all staff receive required supervision, that single separation and training records are accurately maintained and increase opportunities for vocational and work-based learning. Other areas for improvement include ensuring that the independent living programme and resettlement work focuses on the identified needs of all young people and that reports from Regulation 33 visits are provided in a timely manner.

As a result of the inspection, a recommendation will be made to the Secretary of State for a three year approval to be given for the centre to operate as a secure unit.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The registered persons were asked at the last inspection to make three improvements in the home. Two improvements have been met ensuring all complaints recorded are dated and consistency in single separation records.

The third improvement was to ensure all staff receive formal appraisal, supervision and training. This matter has not been fully addressed and a further statutory requirement will be raised in this report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Very good arrangements are in place to provide meals at the home. Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious food that meets their individual preferences and dietary needs. The meals provided enable all the young people to experience food from a variety of cultures and the young people are consulted on special organised themed days to celebrate cooking from around the world. Young people have adequate quantities and choices of food each meal time and have ready access to a variety of fresh fruit.

Meals are taken in the living units in small groups and these periods are used to help the young people develop confidence and social skills. Staff are aware of the needs of the young people and individual support is provided. For example, those wishing to fast for cultural or religious reasons or follow a specific healthy eating plan are given the assistance, advice and information required. Opportunities provided by teaching and care staff help the young people develop their skills in preparing and cooking meals.

Health care arrangements for young people are excellent and demonstrate the highly individualised care and support provided. Health care needs are regularly reviewed to ensure young people access health professionals.

On arrival, all young people are assessed for vulnerability and initial needs. The GP undertakes a medical examination shortly after a young person is admitted. A nurse meets with all young people to complete a medical assessment within 24 hours of admission. An initial health care plan is developed from information provided through E-assessment by the Youth Justice Board. Mental health assessments also take place routinely on admission.

The home has recently increased the nursing services available. There is a nurse from the local GP practice, a male or female GP and school nurses who visit to undertake admission assessments and looked after children medicals when required. Dentist and optician services are provided as needed.

Physical exercise in the gym and outside areas regularly takes place. Health education provides young people with information to keep themselves safe. This is facilitated through key-work discussions, individual work programmes, unit meetings and social and health education in school and in sexual health groups.

Health care arrangements for young people are excellent and demonstrate the highly individualised care and support provided. Health care needs are regularly reviewed to ensure young people access health professionals. For example, drama and other therapists work with individual young people.

Effective support is available to staff helping them look after young people who can at times present with challenging behaviours. Weekly consultation sessions take place with a consultant psychiatrist and registered mental nurse to look at the emotional health needs of each young person and any presenting behaviours. The support provided to young people is discussed to ensure health plans are amended when needed. Staff take appropriate action to help young people according to their needs, for example anxiety management and relaxation work before court appearances. Drama and other therapists also work with individual young people. Young people reported this has helped them.

Guidance, advice and support from external health care professionals are focused and meaningful, helping staff meet the particular physical and emotional needs of young people in their care. The consultant psychiatrist and nurses provide information sessions for care and education staff on various topics. Topics covered include sex education, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, eating disorders, depression and Aspergers syndrome. Visiting consultants state that staff manage young people presenting with significant mental health needs and a high level of risk very well. Visiting professionals stated that the staff care about young people and young people are helped to turn their life around while at the home.

Substance misuse and abuse as well as sexual health and relationships programmes are provided for young people. They take account of young people's learning styles and are delivered in groups or individually by specialist substance misuse workers or the home's staff. This is determined by each young person's needs.

Medication administration, recording and monitoring systems are robust. Records of all medication given to young people are well maintained and medication is securely stored. Young people receive information to take with them when they leave that helps them understand what medication they have been prescribed and why. A member of staff trained in first aid is always on duty to help young people in the case of an accident.

The home enables young people through appropriate risk assessment to gain experience in managing some of their own medication, such as creams and inhalers. However, staff acknowledge that this process does not enable those taking medicine in tablet form to take responsibility for these medications in their preparation for adulthood.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The promotion of the privacy and dignity of young people is seen by staff as important and they take action to maintain a young person's dignity. Young people agree that they are routinely respected by staff.

An effective complaints procedure is in place, which young people are made aware of from the time of admission. Young people receive a prompt response to any complaint made and they are encouraged to sign and comment on the outcome. If they are not satisfied with the outcome they can take their concerns to the next stage in the process. Young people regularly make use

of an independent advocate who supports them throughout the process and if required translators ensure young people understand how to make a complaint.

Staff actively promote the welfare of young people and good links are maintained with external professionals concerned with safeguarding children and young people.

There is a clear policy to tackle bullying at the home, including racial bullying. Young people are clear bullying is not acceptable and it is dealt with when seen or reported. Those who bully are at times separated from the group while staff help them to understand the negative impact their actions have on others.

Any significant events are notified to relevant professionals and authorities following a clear policy and procedure. The home has not had an escape from within the secure perimeter since the last inspection. Clear systems and risk assessment processes that minimise opportunities to abscond when out in the community are in place.

Behaviour in the home is well managed. Young people report the incentive scheme is fair and they can achieve their goals, which helps to shape their behaviour positively. Senior staff routinely monitor the use of single separation, restraint and disciplinary measures. They review practice to ensure the young people are kept safe and get the help they need to change their behaviour. The frequency of restraints used in the home fluctuates depending on the needs of the young people accommodated at any one time. Good and transparent recording processes for single separation help protect the young people. However, in one case the observation sheet record did not cross reference accurately with the main log of single separations.

Staff have a good awareness of fire procedures. Frequent fire drills help to ensure the young people know what to do to stay safe.

The staff team effectively supports the young people at risk of deliberate self-harm and regularly consults with external professionals on how to ensure young people's welfare is safeguarded. Comprehensive monitoring of a young person's progress considers the effectiveness of the health and care plans in place and if any further support is required to keep young people safe.

A robust recruitment process is in place, which ensures the right people are employed to work with children. Young people at the home take part in the recruitment process for new staff and their views on a candidate's suitability are given equal consideration in the scoring system used.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are provided with good personal support. For example, interpretation services are provided for young people whose first language is not English, enabling them to communicate their needs, wishes and concerns. Individual health, social, sexual health education and information is provided to young people. They can also access gender specific groups. This promotes their health, well-being and development. Young people are able to approach any staff member for support, advice and guidance as well as having an identified key worker with whom they have regular individual time. One young person said 'I can talk to my keyworker about anything.' Young people have access to an advocacy service from which they can attain additional advice, support and guidance if needed.

Young people are provided with a good range of activities and enrichment opportunities. Young people's meetings occur daily on each unit and they discuss and plan activities together. Activities available include the use of a gym, football, arts and crafts, trampolining and fitness suite, which enable young people to enjoy themselves and undertake exercise. Enrichment opportunities are also provided for young people. External providers offer events such as African Fusion where young people learn about African history and culture and an arts project which engaged young people in the design and production of a mural.

Given the young age of children, achievement and standards are outstanding. The skills and knowledge gained by young people during their stay prepares them extremely well for a return to mainstream education upon their release. Young people's progress in the key subjects of mathematics, English and science during their time at the home is outstanding even for those on very short lengths of stay. For example, in English, young people who are at the home for between two and six months achieve nearly a whole national curriculum level of improvement during this time and those resident for a year achieve between two and three national curriculum levels of improvement.

Young people achieve very well in GCSE examinations. One young person has gained 9 A* to C grade GCSEs during his time at the home and a significant proportion of young people gain good grades. Most young people also gain other qualifications to recognise their achievements, although there are a few opportunities missed to accredit work via qualifications.

Standards of work are very high and are outstanding in art, where many prestigious national awards have been achieved and also in English where young people write skillfully and with great confidence and enjoyment. Some poetry and story writing is easily as good as that found in mainstream education. In design technology young people use information and communication technology (ICT) and technical equipment safely and confidently to achieve some outstanding outcomes.

The home deals with some very challenging young people, many with severe behavioural difficulties. Nevertheless, behaviour in lessons is at least good and often outstanding. Relationships with teachers and support staff are excellent and based on mutual respect. During the inspection, inspectors heard very few instances of swearing or the use of inappropriate language.

Attendance at education, taking into account unavoidable absences such as legal visits is very good at nearly 98%. Punctuality to education is good with young people arriving promptly to nearly all lessons, enabling a crisp and purposeful start to learning.

Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding features. In some exemplary lesson plans, such as those in English, young people's individual needs, abilities and learning styles are taken into account thoughtfully and purposefully when devising activities for the lesson. This leads to some outstanding progress and attainment in these lessons. However there is some inconsistency in lesson planning and some plans are less detailed. Most lessons contain individual tasks for young people which they enjoy carrying out and they achieve well. They work hard, are keen to do their best and rightly, are very proud of their achievements. In the most effective lessons, teaching focuses clearly on challenging young people to achieve to their full potential, which they do. Expectations are high, both in terms of behaviour and what young people can achieve. The young people enjoy being stretched by the activities; they

remain focused and engaged throughout the lesson and often continue with their work in their own time so as to improve the outcome. This teaching is also very effective in enabling young people to become independent learners.

In the few less effective lessons, tasks are less challenging and on occasions the lesson lacks pace. Young people lose concentration and as a result do not make the progress they are capable of.

The very small group sizes sometimes inhibit discussion.

Young people are on average significantly younger than those resident in other Secure Children's Homes. The curriculum therefore focuses appropriately on the key aspects of the national curriculum. The curriculum is planned well, both strategically and operationally. The timetable provides young people with a very good variety of subjects and topics during their very busy day. As a result they do not become bored and they perform well. Physical education (PE) lessons take place every day. Young people enjoy these and they make a significant contribution to young people's healthy lifestyles as well as helping them to develop skills such as teamwork and communication.

Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) is provided through an innovative range of practical and enjoyable activities involving life skills, cookery, employment skills and money management. These all make a very good contribution to successful resettlement. Many aspects of citizenship are covered in weekly assemblies, which are relevant, fun and enjoyable. Assemblies are also used to celebrate young people's considerable achievements.

A range of options are offered in addition to the core curriculum, such as music, expressive arts, cookery, additional PE and media. History and geography require more prominence in the curriculum.

Vocational provision is limited. Some young people gain valuable work skills by working in the kitchen and this could be extended into other aspects of the centre's operations such as maintenance and gardening. Every effort is made to cater for young people who express particular interests and aspirations in a particular subject. For example one young person attended a local college to study for a diploma in performing arts. Another attended the academy at a local semi-professional football club. Excellent links with a local hairdresser are used well to enable young people to gain valuable work experience in a high quality salon.

The curriculum is also enhanced by inputs from a range of external partners for things such as African dance and drama. In addition, an innovative "Artsaward" project is managed jointly by education and professional services staff which contributes well to the high standards achieved in art and design.

Young people benefit from outstanding support. This takes the form of both formal and informal processes and procedures that result in excellent outcomes for young people. Staff know the young people very well and work across the centre to help them achieve their full potential.

Initial and baseline assessment is excellent. The outcomes of these assessments are used extremely well to inform teaching and learning and outcomes are shared with residential staff to inform complementary work such as homework work done on the units. This work also enables the rigorous monitoring of young people's progress to take place. The initial assessments

also identify any learning difficulties and/or disabilities which are then provided for very well. As a result, young people with additional needs achieve as well as their peers and many achieve above expectations, especially the significant proportion with behavioural difficulties, some of which are very severe. Support for young people with dyslexia is very strong.

Young people are aware of their targets and these are used well to encourage progress and attainment. The majority of the individual learning plans (ILPs) that have been introduced recently are of very good quality. Some targets are a little vague in a few plans.

Young people with very low levels of literacy and numeracy benefit from outstanding individual support and make outstanding progress particularly with their reading and writing. One young person who could not recognise letter shapes when admitted some six weeks ago was now able to read short words with confidence and enjoyment. Young people whose first language is not English also receive excellent support which includes interpreters enabling them to access the whole curriculum. For example, one young person whose first language was not English received excellent support from an interpreter during a PE lesson, enabling him to make as much progress in the lesson as his peers. The excellent support provided by the Imam is valued greatly by young people as is the individual support they receive from learning support assistants (LSAs) in lessons.

The well managed tutorial system enables young people to work with pupils other than those in their teaching groups and provides good opportunities for review and reflection.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders and managers have established a clear vision and a mission, shared by all staff, to provide the best possible opportunities for all young people to achieve to their full potential.

The management structure is clear and highly effective. Teachers are clear about their responsibilities and accountabilities. Teamwork between teachers and residential staff is outstanding and communications are highly effective. Staff are well qualified and experienced and professional development is used well to enable staff to keep up to date. Equality and diversity are promoted well through the curriculum through for example the successful fund-raising project for the recent disaster in Haiti.

Managers receive support from the Local Authority School Improvement service in the form of reviews and lesson observations. There is agreement between managers and the LA that some joint staff development with other schools would be beneficial.

Resources are managed well. Classrooms are clean and tidy and contain no graffiti. Young people's work is displayed in classrooms and this helps to make for inspiring environments in which to learn.

Self evaluation is thorough and largely accurate. In a very few areas the report could benefit from less description and focus more on impact.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Assessment and other background information are used to plan effectively for young people. Plans set out young people's holistic needs and how these will be met. Plans and files are

thoroughly reviewed through an internal case management monitoring meeting every three weeks. Managers closely scrutinise care plans and other relevant information as part of their monitoring processes to ensure all elements are being progressed in the best interests of young people. The system is robust and rigorous and ensures the best outcomes possible are achieved for young people.

Effective work by the homes staff with external professionals has developed a wide range of interventions and delivery of individual packages of work to meet specific needs. These packages address the offending behaviour of young people admitted by the Youth Justice Board or issues that brought young people into secure care for welfare reasons. Interventions used are delivered in groups and or individually, depending on the identified needs of each young person. These sessions, including work with young people who have committed sexual offences, are carried out by staff or by external experts with specialist knowledge. Substance misuse workers engage with young people where this is an identified need. In addition, staff deliver a wide range of individual and group work interventions. For example, risk taking, smart thinking, offending is not the only choice, identity work, causes and consequences and animal assisted therapeutic activities. The strengths of this work is that it is tailored to identified need and it takes into account race, religion, gender and the learning styles of young people.

Formal reviews take place and outcomes are clearly recorded. Young people are encouraged and enabled to contribute to their review. Contact arrangements are recorded on young people's files and young people can make and receive telephone calls. Young people are therefore supported to keep in touch with people important to them.

There is a very good induction programme in place to orientate young people and give them information about the home when they first arrive. Identification of resettlement plans and needs takes place at an early stage.

Young people and professionals are consulted regularly about the care provided and the operation of the home. Young people have regular keywork sessions and they can approach any staff member to discuss any aspect of their care. Young people attend daily unit meetings with staff and are afforded the opportunity to attend regular young people's council meetings with managers, which enables them to give their opinions and ideas.

Professionals are consulted about the care provided at the home, through discussions with staff and questionnaires. Staff have been consulted widely and actively about the new business plan for the home. This sets out how the service will be provided to improve the delivery of care to young people.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are helped to prepare for leaving the home and to develop skills for adulthood. However, this work is not always specifically focused on individually identified needs. Enrichment activities broaden a young person's experience of life and wider world issues in general. Health services provided help them cope emotionally and to develop as individuals. Key-workers ensure that through activities and education, young people learn life skills such as budgeting, cleaning (hygiene), cooking and care of their own clothing. A new resource package has been prepared and is ready for keyworkers to use. This provides more focus on individual needs and will help

them obtain the skills needed. Young people will receive information about resources in the area they are returning to, which they can take with them when they leave.

Discharge planning starts when young people arrive at the home and progress is monitored through the case management meetings. Health care professionals give advice on the suitability of future placements to provide additional support to young people where needed.

Young people receive allowances and are encouraged and enabled to choose their own clothes and toiletries. Staff purchase items of clothing young people request or young people are taken out shopping through planned and assessed mobility programmes, where possible, so they can purchase clothes and toiletries themselves. Young people have access to a tuck shop and are encouraged to consider healthy options from the items on offer.

The home is subject to regular health and safety and fire risk assessments and holds appropriate up to date certification of checks such as electrical, boilers and fire equipment.

The home provides a good environment that is well decorated, furnished and conducive to the positive secure care of young people. The units are clean in most areas; however there are some areas such as a cooker, a medication fridge and an area behind washer and dryers that were not as clean as they could be thus increasing the risk of infection. The home provides an improved level of safety and security for young people with a newly installed CCTV system and all en-suites now have sensor activated water supplies. One part of the home is not fully covered by the new cameras, however action is being taken to rectify this matter. Some bathrooms still have tap fittings that could be used as ligature points. Risk assessments are carried out and implemented to ensure young people using these rooms are kept safe.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Good information is provided for young people, parents and professionals about the home and the services it provides. On admission young people receive good information about the home and what to expect and this is in different formats such as DVD.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are treated fairly and equally and their individual needs and choices are met and provided for. Young people have access to the complaints system and an independent advocacy service which promotes and protects their rights. Sanctions used are fair and help to shape young people's behaviour positively. Young people's religious and cultural needs are considered in planning and met. Individualised needs are clearly assessed, recorded, planned for and met. Excellent support is provided to all young people and their personal choices are respected. Young people are provided with opportunities to give their views and they are included in important decisions that affect their lives. Staff have received training in equality and diversity matters to help them understand and meet young people's needs. A diversity group has been established that reflects on work across the centre. However, staff attendance is at times sporadic and young people are not yet part of these meetings.

Staff are qualified, with a good mix of experience, understand their job well and have undertaken a range of appropriate training. However, the system in place for monitoring staff training to ensure it is up-to-date and has been undertaken is not clear or effective. Young people speak positively of staff at the home. There are a sufficient number of staff on duty at all times to

ensure that young people receive good quality care and their needs met and their choices are valued.

The staffing policy set out in the Statement of Purpose determines there are always at least 10 staff on duty for the three units, but more often than not there are four or five staff on duty on in each unit. Deputy managers are experienced and provide good support to the Registered Manager of the home. They contribute effectively to monitoring processes, which help to deliver good quality care for the young people.

Staff support is satisfactory. Not all staff are receiving formal supervision to the level required. Records of supervision do not cover the matters set out in national minimum standards. Systems are in place to monitor the frequency and quality of supervision; however these are not sufficiently effective in improving the quality. Satisfactory levels of staff retention exist and a more robust approach to attendance is seeing sickness levels reduce.

The home has in place a written business development plan that identifies future planned changes and resourcing. Staff were widely and actively consulted in the development of the plan.

Internal and external monitoring of the home takes place and covers all required matters helping to improve the quality of care provided to young people. Effective leadership is exercised in the home by the manager and deputies to ensure that the home is organised, managed and staffed to deliver the best possible care to young people. The systems put in place by managers ensure quality care is provided to young people accommodated with positive outcomes. However, reports from visits that take place under Regulation 33 are not provided to the home in a timely manner so that any shortfalls can be addressed quickly.

Young people's files are well organised and contain all required information so young people can make sense of their history. Electronic records are kept up-to-date.

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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
24	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean; specifically, kitchen areas, utility areas and medication fridges (Regulation 31)	31 July 2010
28	ensure all staff receive appropriate supervision; specifically to the levels set out in NMS 28. (Regulation 27)	31 August 2010

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

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- ensure records of sanctions and single separations are accurately maintained (NMS 22 and LS 3.10)
 - increase the opportunities for vocational and work-based learning (NMS 14)
 - ensure the implementation of the planned independence living programme and resettlement work focuses on the identified needs of all young people (NMS 6)
 - consider upgrading all taps and sinks to modern anti-ligature specification (NMS 24)
 - revise and maintain the system for recording staff training so it shows all up to date training undertaken by all staff. (NMS 31)
 - ensure that any person carrying out visits under Regulation 33, provides a written report on the conduct of the home within two weeks of the visit taking place (NMS 32)