

Inspection report for children's home

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC035409
<b>Inspection date</b>	22 July 2010
<b>Inspector</b>	Shaun Common / Malcolm Stannard
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

---

<b>Date of last inspection</b>	9 March 2010
--------------------------------	--------------

---

© Crown copyright 2010

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

## 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 secure children's unit is managed by a local authority and is situated in a rural location. It is registered as a children's home and approved by the Department for Education to restrict young people's liberty. There is living accommodation and facilities for administration, education and recreation available on the site.

The children's home in two separate units, can accommodate up to 12 young people both male and female, who are aged between 10 and 17 years upon admission. There were nine 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 home to conduct an inspection of the premises.

This secure children's home has a number of strengths. Overall, provision for young people's education, support from staff to help young people achieve their potential and to participate in a range of activities are outstanding. Health care arrangements are very good and external professionals are complimentary about the way the home work with them to provide the best possible care for young people. Relationships between staff and young people are excellent and based on mutual respect.

Areas identified for improvement are: ensuring robust recruitment information is in place for all new staff and that all staff receive required supervision; ensuring that medication audits are carried out in a timely manner, that monitoring reports show the quality of provision and that a specific service development plan is in place for the home. Other areas for improvement include extending opportunities for young people to learn in larger groups with lower levels of supervision; for young people to take part in activities that increase their understanding of the skills need for employment and to review and extend the learning resources and curriculum for those young people with low levels of literacy and numeracy.

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 home 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 two improvements in the home. Both improvements have been addressed. A policy and procedure is in place for young people to take and store their own medication. A system is in place to remind placing authorities of the need for young people to leave the home in a planned way.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Food provided for the young people is very good. Young people enjoy a balanced, healthy diet that takes into account their choices and any medical and health considerations. Fresh fruit is always provided at meal times. Mealtimes are enjoyable, social occasions and dining facilities are suitable for the number and needs of young people. Young people are enabled to experience food from different countries and cultures through themed days on a regular basis.

Advice from a dietician is utilised by the chef manager about the menu content. This ensures food provision is appropriate and nutritious for young people. Young people are consulted about the menu content and can have their say about what is provided. Young people stated that food at the home is good. They can also speak to catering staff and the chef manager each day if they wish to make comments on food or to discuss any issues they have. Young people are able to prepare their own meals and where appropriate can also shop for food as part of their mobility plan.

On admission, the holistic health needs of young people are assessed by a qualified nurse. A health care plan is developed from this assessment and any available background information. Contact is made with relevant health professionals to attain all health information, such as immunisation history and ongoing treatment and the health care plan reviewed and updated as required. Young people have access to a General Practitioner and through a mobility programme access wider health services, such as opticians and dentist in the local community. Young people have the opportunity to take part in regular physical exercise in outside areas and the gym to help them stay fit and healthy.

Young people are referred to, and assessed by, local community mental health services through a service level agreement. Young people receive individual consultation and intervention work where appropriate and staff are provided with guidance for assisting and supporting young people. Health promotion and education work takes place with the young people in areas such as sexual health and substance misuse. This is undertaken by various professionals and through individual programme work with keyworkers. This support helps young people to make informed choices about lifestyle and to stay safe.

Secure storage is in place for all medication, which helps to keep the young people safe. Staff who administer medication are trained in medication handling. Records are kept of medications that come into and go out of the home. Records of administration show young people get the medication they need, when they need it, which helps them to stay healthy. A health care professional provides the unit with oversight and scrutiny of medication processes and procedures to improve practice and hence the health and safety of young people. Consent is in place from a person with parental responsibility for the young people to receive homely remedies and first aid where required.

The home has in place a policy regarding young people managing some of their own medication in their preparation for adulthood. This is undertaken through a risk assessment process. The policy is new and is under review with input from an external health professional on its content and delivery.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The dignity of young people is respected by staff. While there is a need to consider security and safety arrangements, privacy is promoted as much as possible. Staff members are knowledgeable about how confidential information should be handled and when it can be shared.

A complaints system is in place which is understood by and accessible to young people. The number of formal complaints made remains low, with young people having access to advocates and participation officers, meaning many concerns can be addressed informally. Any complaints which are made are referred externally for investigation. Appropriate records are held which include details of a young person's satisfaction and the outcome.

There is a robust safeguarding structure in place. Staff members receive training in child protection and are aware of the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse being made. A record is held of all referrals or requests for advice. Regular multi agency meetings are held at the home where all incidents are audited. This ensures transparent child protection practice and safeguards the welfare of the young people.

The personal success incentive programme continues to be successful in promoting the positive behaviour of young people. The programme is reviewed on a regular basis and proactive changes are introduced to ensure it remains effective. Structured support is offered to young people who require help to ensure their behaviour remains at an acceptable baseline position. This combined with the good appropriate professional relationships between staff and young people means that there are a range of positive reinforcements in place.

All behaviour management techniques employed are recorded comprehensively. There is good auditing undertaken and young people are able to contribute to an entry should they wish. Staff members receive training in the use of physical intervention and diffusion skills and a restraint minimisation strategy is in place. Staff work hard to ensure that restraint is only used as a last resort, with diversion strategies employed initially. This helps young people to manage their own behaviour. Sanctions are used sparingly and on occasions imaginatively to ensure that they are relevant to the misdemeanour.

Staff and the young people jointly promote an environment where bullying is considered unacceptable. Information sessions are held on a regular basis with groups of young people and individual work is carried out if felt necessary. This helps to ensure that young people are protected from bullying.

Well constructed individual risk assessments are in place. These provide comprehensive details of all dangers to young people including self harm. Information is shared with all staff to ensure that risks are managed to an acceptable level.

There is a highly effective system, overseen by the facilities manager, to ensure that all maintenance, servicing and safety requirements for the premises are in place and met. Fire training and drills are undertaken with all staff and young people, helping to promote everyone's physical safety and security.

The procedures in place for vetting visitors and professionals ensure that young people are protected from contact with inappropriate people. Safe recruitment procedures ensure that staff employed are the right people to work with children. In most cases all required information is available on recruitment files, however in some cases a record of the verification of gaps in employment is not always in place.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are given excellent individual support from care staff to achieve in formal education. Structured assistance is provided within the classroom alongside help with preparation or completion of work on the living units. Some of the communication undertaken between young people and staff is outstanding and this is reflected in the respect shown by all. Each young person has identified individual targets in place for both education and social development and they are able to contribute towards the compilation of these.

The quality and quantity of leisure pursuits has continued to develop. There is a wide ranging and comprehensive programme of enriching activities available for young people to participate in. Staff encourage young people to experience pursuits which may be new to them, developing their confidence. Many activities link into the Princes Trust XL award which enables young people to receive accreditation for undertaking new learning experiences. No young person is excluded from activities and many are tailored to meet individual's needs. Support continues to be available for those young people who wish to raise awareness of a charity, including taking part in sponsored events. Activities such as the climbing wall and producing wall displays for the residential units enable young people to learn about and experience team work.

There are staff members who hold specific responsibility for activity provision and they ensure that skills and interests are identified and utilised. A drama group is offered which enables young people to undertake role play and experience how others feel. This is particularly useful when used as part of group work sessions, enabling learning about ones self and others while having fun.

An excellent system of evaluation and auditing of activities is in place. This helps to ensure that only sessions which young people wish to engage in and find beneficial are provided and that a range of physical and non physical undertakings are on offer at all times. Young people are also able to suggest pursuits they would like to try. Superb resources are in place to ensure that all young people are able to benefit from the proactive manner in which activities are encouraged. The skills and confidence of young people are developed by the provision of activities and support from staff that is in place.

Managers and teachers have established a supportive ethos within the school. Their high ambitions and aspirations for the young people have ensured that the education provision has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now outstanding. The school has very good capacity to improve.

Given the previously very poor histories of education and the complex and extremely challenging backgrounds of the young people it is impressive that they make very good progress during time in the home. Teachers and care workers work together very well to provide a calm and purposeful learning environment. Young people's behaviour in lessons and in their movement around the school is outstanding. Attendance and punctuality at lessons are high.

Young people learn to concentrate throughout lessons and are proud of their achievements. Their work is celebrated through lively displays in classrooms, social and circulation areas. Teachers organise young people's portfolios of work carefully which raises their self-esteem significantly. Through sports activities and whole school team challenges young people learn to treat each other with tolerance and respect.

The range of accreditation available has increased significantly since the last inspection and is now available in all areas of the curriculum at levels that are appropriate to young people's abilities and their length of time in the home. For example, in the last year young people attained qualifications in Spanish and German and those with appropriate skills were successful in GCSEs in science and mathematics. The numbers of qualifications attained are good overall. Young people make good progress in completing qualifications in the core subjects of English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT). Teachers are proactive in developing new opportunities for accreditation. The school has been part of a successful English functional skills pilot. Young people produce very good standards of work in art, science and ICT.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. All of the lessons observed by the inspector were judged to be good or better and a high proportion were outstanding. In outstanding lessons teachers set young people individual targets and activities based upon their needs and abilities. The pace of the lesson is very good and a variety of challenging tasks are highly successful in ensuring that young people work hard through the lesson. In these lessons young people make very good progress and produce work of a standard appropriate to their age and level. In most lessons teachers use stimulating learning resources to engage young people in discussions and to help them develop ideas and make choices. For example, in a very effective art lesson the teacher used examples of artists' work, video clips and internet research to promote discussion on the theme of 'Pop Culture'. In a minority of lessons teachers rely on work sheets with all of the young people working on the same activity. Most teachers make good use of ICT to enrich lessons and to develop young people's technological skills preparing them well for transition to the community.

Working relationships between care staff, teachers and young people are very good and sometimes exemplary. The behaviour management programme is implemented consistently by teachers. In the most effective lessons teachers end with a succinct review of individual young people's progress against their targets and an explanation of the points they have been awarded. This is very effective in helping young people to reflect on their behaviour and to understand what they need to do to improve.

Young people learn in very small groups with very high levels of supervision. In most instances this is managed well by teachers and care staff who encourage the young people to make their own choices. This helps the young people to develop resilience and self-confidence. In a minority of lessons staff provide too much assistance for the young people which does not prepare them appropriately for transition to mainstream settings.

The school timetable provides subjects that meet the requirements of the national curriculum and a good range of activities for the young people. The short morning tutorial provides a calm start to the day during which teachers review young people's progress against their targets. A useful slot in the afternoon is used by care and education staff working together to review young people's behaviour. The curriculum is enriched through out-of-school clubs and activities



including a film club and art, and links with other agencies. Regular physical education and team challenges are very successful in promoting healthy lifestyles and enjoyment of school. Opportunities to take part in a practical curriculum designed to prepare young people for transition and future employment are limited. An experienced connexions personal adviser provides good information on career options.

Young people benefit from good support that helps most to reach their potential. Initial and baseline assessment is carried out thoroughly and identifies young people's individual learning needs. Most teachers use the information from initial assessment to inform individual targets for young people and to design appropriate learning materials. For example, in science young people work on individual tasks which are challenging and motivating. This information could be used more in English and mathematics to develop personalised learning resources.

High numbers of young people have very low reading ages and have been out of education for considerable lengths of time. Good support from teachers and care staff helps to improve their attitudes to learning and their reading ages. Promotion of the enjoyment of reading could be further improved to ensure that there is specialist targeted support to remove barriers to learning for those with the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Managers and teachers, with strong support from the local authority, have made very good progress since the last inspection. All of the areas for improvement have been resolved. The school's advisory board, chaired by a senior member of the local authority, has members with very good educational experience and knowledge. It has provided effective support and challenge to the head teacher, which has been significant in supporting improvements.

Self-evaluation and quality assurance are very effective in raising standards. All staff are involved in self-evaluation and are clear about their roles in improving standards. The school improvement plan is informed by the accurate outcomes from self-evaluation and quality assurance. Young people's, parents' and carers', and stakeholders' views about the quality of the experience the school provides are valued by staff and are used well to inform improvement plans. Lesson observations help teachers to understand what they need to do to improve. A whole school approach to leadership, innovation and sharing best practice has improved communications and team work which are very good.

Managers access to and use of management information has improved significantly and is very strong in relation to monitoring individual young people's progress. The overall evaluation of young people's achievement of qualifications and their progress in reading, literacy and numeracy could be improved further.

Teachers are enthusiastic and well-qualified, and receive good support to continue to develop their skills. They receive good support from local authority advisers and are able to visit mainstream schools and other secure homes to extend their experience. Daily meetings between care managers and teachers are very effectively focused on sharing information about the individual needs of the young people. Very good accommodation and learning resources support the delivery of the curriculum. The school is a welcoming and very well maintained environment that is conducive to learning and values young people. Learning resources are mostly very good, but access to books to promote the enjoyment of reading is limited.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Good assessments are carried out when young people arrive at the unit. This enables a comprehensive plan of care to be put in place which describes how the unit will meet the assessed needs of young people. Initial planning meetings contribute to the plans by outlining the future provision envisaged for the young person when they leave the unit. The plans and targets set are reviewed on a regular basis. This ensures that plans are on course and that the care and welfare of young people is being promoted positively.

Statutory reviews are held within required timescales and young people are encouraged and supported to contribute, either in person or by a written submission. Staff at the centre provide reports for the review which indicate progress and continued areas of need.

Further improvement has been made in the recording by staff of contact with placing authorities, mainly in relation to transition placements and educational provision. All contact, whether by telephone, e-mail or letter is now detailed on each young person's file. This ensures evidence is available of the work carried out by staff to remind local authorities of their responsibilities to young people.

Contact arrangements are agreed between the home and placing authorities at an early stage and are known by all staff and young people. Only appropriate contact is promoted which assists in keeping young people safe. A telephone is available for use which is situated in an area on each living unit which provides privacy. The arrangements in place assist in ensuring young people maintain constructive contact with people important to them. Visitors to the centre are able to meet with a young person in a private area if this is appropriate.

Admission and discharge procedures are sensitively undertaken and are integrated into the unit's day-to-day operation. Staff are aware of the differing emotions a young person may be feeling at these times and take care to deal with them in a perceptive and caring manner.

Consultation with young people is wide ranging and there are a number of meetings held where they are able to suggest improvements to many areas of the home's operation. Representatives from the young people are invited to the latter stages of staff meetings so that any concerns can be raised in an inclusive forum. Some of the areas of the home's operation about which young people can state their preferences include: food provision; décor; activities and the personal achievement scheme. Individual link worker sessions are also used to enable any requests or suggestions to be made. Much of the support and consultation carried out is enhanced by the positive professional relationships in place between the staff group and young people. Advocates and participation officers also help young people to give their views.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

All young people at the home are not yet of an age where formal leaving care planning is required. Arrangements are in place at an early stage to ensure all young people have an exit plan. Mobility packages are tailored to assist young people to move on to their new placements after discharge. A good system is in place which ensures young people have the opportunity to develop and practice basic life skills for adulthood, such as cleaning and budgeting.

The Princes Trust XL scheme helps young people develop a range of skills for adulthood and affords accreditation to link with educational attainment. Skills such as employment interviews, leading groups, careers and working within budgets are learned. All young people above the age of 14 years can access the award and a number have attained bronze, silver and gold levels.

There is an identified worker for transition to help young people move towards independence and adulthood. The purpose of the role is to develop the home's understanding and practices in this area. Links have been made with other partners to further develop this area of work and practices within the home.

The home provides a good environment that is conducive to the positive secure care of young people. The home is well decorated, furnished and maintained throughout providing a safe, pleasant and comfortable environment for young people.

## **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. Information about the home is provided in different formats, such as in different languages or Braille. Young people and parents from varying backgrounds and with different needs can therefore understand what the home does and what services to expect.

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's religious and cultural needs are considered in planning and are met. Young people have access to the internal complaints system, an external complaints officer and an independent advocacy service, all of which helps to promote and protect their rights. Young people are provided with opportunities to give their views and are involved in decisions that affect their lives. Staff have received training in equality and diversity to help them understand and meet young people's needs.

Staff support is satisfactory. Regular team meetings are held and include discussion about the operation of the home and the care provided to young people. The quality of supervision records is good, however most staff are not receiving formal supervision to the level required in order to fully support them in their care of young people. Very good levels of staff retention exist and robust attendance management procedures are in place.

Most staff are qualified. Newly employed staff who do not yet have qualifications are undertaking induction and foundation training. There is a clear pathway for new staff to be enrolled to attain a relevant qualification. The staff team have a good mix of experience, understand their job and young people's needs well and have undertaken a range of appropriate training. This helps them carry out their job of caring for young people to the best of their ability. 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 safe care. The staffing policy set out in the Statement of Purpose determines there are always at least four staff on duty on both units at all times. Deputy managers are experienced and provide good support to the Registered Managers of the units.

The home does not have a specific written development plan in place that identifies future planned changes and resourcing. Current issues pertaining to the operation of the home are

set out in the local authority's looked after children plan. However, this does not determine any plans for future provision and what this means for the care of young people at the home. Good use is made of external and independent perspectives to improve outcomes for young people. A range of external professionals speak positively about how they work with managers and staff to develop practices and ensure good services are provided to young people.

External monitoring of the home takes place and covers all required areas helping to improve the quality of care provided to young people. Actions are raised in reports to assist the home in improve the provision to young people. Effective leadership is exercised in the home by the management team to ensure that the home is organised, managed and staffed to deliver the best possible care to young people. Internal monitoring by managers is carried out each month. However, reports do not always determine the quality of care or the quality of the areas monitored in order that standards of care provided to young people can be improved.

Young people's files are well organised and contain all required information so young people can make sense of their history.

## 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 and Schedule 2; specifically ensure for all employees that a full employment history is obtained together with a satisfactory explanation of any gaps (Regulation 26)	31 August 2010
28	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate supervision; specifically provide all staff with supervision to the level 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):

- implement the homes policy on Administration of Medicine Lead Role; specifically ensure that audits are carried out to the frequency set out in the policy (NMS 13)
- help young people prepare more effectively for the transition to the community by extending opportunities for them to learn in larger groups with lower levels of supervision and taking part in activities that increase their understanding of the skills needed for employment (NMS 14)
- review and extend the learning resources and curriculum for those young people with low levels of literacy and numeracy (NMS 14)

- 
- revise the system for monitoring the performance of the home under Regulation 34 so it comments on the quality of matters monitored (NMS 33)
  - devise a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the home, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resourcing. (NMS 33)