

Inspection report for children's home

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Unique reference number | SC361167 |
| Inspection date | 30 June 2010 |
| Inspector | Julian Parker |
| Type of Inspection | Key |

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Date of last inspection | 2 February 2010 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|

© Crown copyright 2010

Website: 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

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 setting is a residential special school registered as a children's home. The service offers a comprehensive, integrated, specialised education and care package for children aged between eight and 18 years diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder that usually includes associated complex needs. The service is provided for both full-time and respite care of students who are not permanently looked after.

Care is provided in a safe, well-staffed, structured environment that has been carefully designed and constructed to an exceptionally high standard.

Children and young people admitted to the school follow their own bespoke programme of care and education in an atmosphere of high expectation whilst being treated as a valued individual. The school has a wide range of on-site facilities and children and young people are provided with access to educational, psychiatric and paediatric consultants for professional care advice and support.

Summary

This was a full inspection that concentrated upon all of the key National Minimum Standards. This residential special school, registered as a children's home, is judged as a good service with some outstanding features and numerous examples of good practice.

The service meets the health and medical needs of young people exceptionally well. Young people are kept safe by knowledgeable, competent and appropriate staffing levels following sound management guidance and company procedures. The needs of very vulnerable children with learning disabilities are very well provided for in a high-quality, functional environment where informed and individualised placement plans can be effectively progressed. The school and staff team are very well organised, managed and supported. The school's management team is forward looking but always responsive to the needs of young people. Input from children's families and placing authorities is encouraged and partnership working is very evident.

There are no actions or recommendations arising from this inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered provider was required to ensure that all staff receive regular and recorded supervision and that the case files of young people contained relevant and accessible information. It was recommended the homes Statement of Purpose was amended to reflect changes that had been made to the service and that a full time manager was appointed and registered with Ofsted.

The registered person has satisfactorily addressed all of these requirements and the regulator is currently processing a Registered Manager application.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The dietary needs of young people are very well met because they receive a considered, varied diet that fully addresses their particular preferences and medical needs. All aspects of food preparation and delivery are of the highest standard. Children and young people are able to enjoy fresh, wholesome, locally sourced food. A full dietary assessment for each young person evaluates individual preference, medical, nutritional, cultural and religious needs and supports healthy eating. Individual school houses have their own practice kitchens where students can learn about aspects of food preparation and keep a selection of their own favourite foods.

The health and wellbeing of children and young people is afforded the highest priority by following the registered provider's policies on health promotion and adjusting these where necessary to be fully responsive to the particular needs of children and young people with autism. Policies include guidance on drugs, alcohol, smoking and healthy eating.

The school, which is also a children's home, comprehensively addresses through preadmission assessment the medical and health care needs of young people to ensure that the placement is appropriate. Action is taken to ensure appropriate levels of personalised attention are provided by both the care staff and the school's medical team of qualified nurses. Dedicated health facilities support practice that assists with the administration of personal care and medication. Strict infection controls reduce the potential for communicable diseases being transmitted to vulnerable young people.

The health needs of young people are comprehensively recorded. Health plans relate specifically to the particular health and medical needs, for example, by fully addressing particular medication and allergy related concerns. Inclusive advice is collated through ongoing consultation with parents, health professionals, key worker's and placing authority social workers confirming the school's practice of working collaboratively to ensure the wellbeing of young people. Health records confirm the involvement of parents with the wellbeing of their children because case records include emergency medical treatment consents and written permission to administer or withhold medication. Established links with local health care professionals and disability consultants support the school's medical team when required.

The school provides young people with a safe and nurturing environment. The reporting and recording of all accidents and incidents is proficient and has been enhanced by practical experience. Comprehensive medication, administration and management procedures and effective security and prescribing practice draw upon best practice guidance.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are cared for sensitively and with respect in a manner that promotes dignity whilst maintaining their safety. This is demonstrated by care staff communicating and interacting with young people about all aspects of their daily living. Staff follow the provider's guidelines for promoting privacy wherever it is safe to do so. Individualised care routines recognise levels of learning difficulty with staffing levels being carefully adjusted to meet these needs. All young people have their own rooms that are specially equipped to be compatible with their interests and abilities. Limited personal communication abilities do not deter young people from being actively encouraged to maintain regular contact with their families. Staff receive training on developing an effective recording style and maintaining confidentiality thereby promoting the rights of young people.

Safety and welfare is actively promoted in the school because staff follow sound policies and procedures for safeguarding young people from abuse and bullying. The school adopts Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance to inform its own practice with vulnerable young people. All concerns are evaluated through inter agency consultation to further inform and improve how the school keeps young people safe.

An effective complaints policy and procedure is in place with child centred translations being provided in differing communication formats. These describe how complaints may be made about the service by young people or adults advocating on their behalf. All concerns are taken seriously, formally addressed and receive a written response from the Head of Service. A substantial number of written compliments from stakeholders and parents indicate high levels of satisfaction with the service being provided.

All of the school staff team receive an induction programme that includes safeguarding training which informs them how to recognise signs of abuse, or potential abuse and respond appropriately to any allegations of poor practice. Training is structured to recognise the particular vulnerabilities of students attributed to disability. A supportive whistle blowing procedure identifies how allegations about staff members will be addressed while keeping young people safe from any suspected poor practice.

Young people are effectively safeguarded against situations where they may go missing. This is achieved by utilising a combination of generous staffing levels, a physically secure campus and individualised risk assessments. These strategies prevent young people from putting themselves at risk.

The school operates a holistic approach to behaviour management that broadly includes aspects of dealing with bullying, promoting positive relationships between staff and young people and the effective management of conduct associated with a learning disability. The school utilises an accredited methodology for managing challenging behaviour, promoting the minimal and safest use of physical restraint with young people. All care and education staff are trained or have scheduled training courses equipping them to understand and recognise the diverse range of challenging behaviours likely to be encountered. The school evaluates all behavioural incidents to inform the safety of future practice. Improvements continue to be introduced to enhance consistency of practice and to better ensure comprehensive compliance with minimum standards.

The school site is equipped with a sophisticated, modern fire detection sensor system. Staff and young people regularly practise fire drills and fire equipment is fully checked in accordance with guidance. Scheduled environmental monitoring and a responsive on-site maintenance programme provide young people and their carers with safe, protected surroundings.

The school has established a robust recruitment procedure. This incorporates comprehensive checking of all individuals who may come into contact with the very vulnerable young people being looked after. The recruitment process fully meets the prescribed standards in the manner in which staff are interviewed and how background detail is presented on personnel files. The school employs strict controls with all visitors to the site to prevent any possible unsupervised access to vulnerable children and young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive very good support from the school because information sharing between residential, medical and teaching staff identify how specific needs can be best met. The assessment of young peoples' needs is thorough and holistic. Individualised communication is a key component in shaping each students care package. This is regularly reviewed and updated with any changes being shared with children's families and the relevant placing authority.

The needs of young people are exceptionally well met by the school through the use of good multi disciplinary staffing levels and access to a broad range of on-site sensory stimuli and equipment. Access to regular counselling, paediatric and psychiatric assessment from retained specialist consultants complements well provisioned in-house facilities.

Students are enabled to take controlled risks with the support and guidance of their key carers and staff team. The risks posed by daily living are known, assessed and minimised, for example, by having well supervised access to public and community resources and leisure pursuits. Choice for young people is actively promoted, for example, by staff being aware of mealtime preferences and particular activities and personal routines that affect the emotional state of mind of individual children. Staff advocate on behalf of students to improve on site facilities and having access to normalising activities that improve their experience of the wider community such as short visits to the city.

The school is extremely active promoting students' equality and diversity needs and widening the horizons of young people with disabilities. Young people are integrated into everyday public life by going shopping or attending community recreational facilities. Staff transport and assist students to use the local community to shop and access recreational facilities while assessing potential risks. Young people are practically assisted by being stimulated and encouraged to extend both their emotional and physical boundaries. The provision of education is bespoke to individual students and focused upon communicating and learning. Young people are helped to achieve to the best of their ability and receive praise for all their everyday and educational achievements. The school has developed educational structure to improve the learning needs of younger and older students.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All young people at the school are appropriately placed because their needs are comprehensively assessed from a multi-agency perspective prior to any admission being made. The care, educational and medical needs of young people are recorded in comprehensive placement plans that identify how outcomes will be achieved. Placement plans are working documents that are regularly reviewed to ensure young people receive full benefit from the service being provided. The plan is recorded from a 'first person' perspective that narrates how the young person prefers their particular care and recreational needs to be provided by their carers. A high visual and picture based level of recording actively encourages the young person's contribution when compiling and reviewing their plans.

The school recognises the significance of language for young people with autistic spectrum disorder and correspondingly employs specialist speech and occupational therapists. This service reinforces the provider's commitment to improving students' ability to make their views known through multi-media preferences chosen by the student. The school procedures reinforce the view that the rights and opinions of young people must be considered as well as those of the

child's parents, social worker and advocates. Although they may have severe impediments with language and understanding, no young person is presumed not to be able to communicate.

The overall complement and deployment of care staff within the school ensures that individual young people are able to form positive relationships with the adults that look after them. Positive relationships with parents are established by staff supporting regular communication between parents and children.

Ongoing development of the residential living areas and curriculum based skills learning practically enhances how the service is helping students improve basic living skills in preparation for their eventual discharge from the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The school is set in extensive grounds, rurally located in an area convenient for accessing the range of community, recreational and leisure facilities including retail outlets, transport networks and health related services. The school can however remain self-contained within its own resources to meet the needs of a diverse group of young people while actively preparing them for greater and safer levels of integration and socialisation.

The accommodation provided is constructed specifically to address the needs of young people with special needs arising from autistic spectrum disorders. The living areas, including the individual bedrooms used by children, have been developed following specialist clinical advice to deliver an environment where there is minimal physical or emotional risk to children from any source. All requisite support services are provided which practically enhance the care and education being given to resident young people.

Students live in a hygienic, extremely well-equipped home with ample individual and communal space available both indoors and out. The site is gradually evolving with improvements being informed by practice. This development asserts the providers aim to develop a service that recognises and adapts to the broad range of young people on the autistic spectrum. All houses are suited to the needs of their particular residents with many now showing physical signs of ownership.

The countryside location of the school complements the promotion of a calm and healthy living space in which young people may be safely nurtured. Extensive grounds, gardens and woodland walks are well used for exercise and practical outdoor learning with students.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A revised Statement of Purpose specifies what care will be provided by the school and how this will be delivered. The document is made available to all parents, placing authorities and other stakeholders.

The management of the school has been significantly improved by the appointment of key staff into permanent positions, for example the Head of Service, Registered Manager and Head Teacher. Care staff receive day-to-day and regular support from the renewed management

structure. The school's multidisciplinary team meets regularly and sets clear guidance about how the care, health and education needs of young people will be addressed.

A comprehensive induction is provided for all staff. They receive statutory and specific training that considers the particular and complex needs of young people with autistic spectrum disorders to ensure consistent practice from knowledgeable carers. In-house training is provided for staff with the explicit expectation that all staff become qualified. The school's record of training confirms that all statutory training is being accessed and any new unqualified staff are accessing National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 training. The overall skill levels within teams are well matched to the needs of children and young people. This includes capacity for supporting and mentoring less experienced staff.

The school's systems for management monitoring are effective in evaluating the day-to-day functioning and care provision. A school development plan and a workforce development plan are in place identifying both care and education objectives for the next year.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. This is because the school overtly respects each young person's individual difference and makes exceptional provision to ensure that every young person, irrespective of their disability, origin or any cultural difference is not disadvantaged from accessing any aspect of the service. The service actively promotes the right of young people to receive the best possible service to ensure positive outcomes.

The files of children and young people are confidentially stored and arranged in a manner that makes daily records easily available to care staff. Schedule 3 information is readily available. The quality of recording is high and file content is relevant for confirming the provision of care.

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 |
|----------|--------|----------|
|----------|--------|----------|

Recommendations

There are no recommendations.