

Mount Tamar Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Michelle Oxley
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

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

Summary

This is an announced inspection undertaken against key national minimum standards for residential special schools. The recommendations from the previous inspection are also followed up.

The service continues to demonstrate an outstanding level of provision for young people who use the hostel. The strengths of this service are the preventative approach to safeguarding children. The excellent joined up work between school and hostel staff. The continued success of the behaviour management system and the commitment and dedication of the managers and staff team.

Following this inspection there are two good practice recommendations made. These concern the design of the welcome document and the purchase of a fridge to further support independent living skills development.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the previous inspection two recommendations were made. It was recommended that staff records for classroom staff who also work in the hostel are held in line with the standard in that they contain the same level of information. The relevant information is now on file for the staff member concerned, the recommendation is met. A second recommendation was set concerning the cleaning routine being extended to check on vacated rooms. All parts of the building including vacated rooms are clean. The recommendation is met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Health and personal care is very well supported by the care team. Health care needs are identified promptly and set out on each young person's placement plan. Staff demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that young people attain and maintain good health. They work collaboratively with parents and carers in order to ensure that health needs are met. For example the team will take young people to health and medical appointments when it is difficult for parents and carers to do so. This can often mean that the team provides more support that would usually be expected from a service of this nature.

Young people receive a healthy well balanced diet. Mealtimes are well organised occasions. At lunch time the whole school takes lunch in the dining hall, which is used exclusively for those staying over at tea time. Staff and young people sit together, staff remind young people about

behaviour and table manners where appropriate. Meals are plentiful at lunch time and in the evening. Children have the choice of three main meals including a vegetarian option. They can also have a filled baguette or baked potatoes as an alternative. Deserts are fresh fruit, yogurt or a home cooked pudding are provided and drinks are freely available. In the hostel young people may also have an evening snack, drinks and fresh fruit are provided. The kitchen manager has developed good links with care staff, information about dietary needs or identified eating problems are promptly fed back and are addressed by the team. There have been some concerns about the quality of cooking of evening meals, this is being addressed through meetings with kitchen staff and the Head in order to sustain improvements already made.

Good health is promoted through positive care practices and through the placement planning process. Health needs related to good health promotion are targeted and set out in the placement plan. The team reinforce positive messages around issues such as smoking, drinking alcohol and drug taking. Healthy lifestyles are well supported through the provision of evening activities which ensure young people get a good level of physical exercise.

There are robust systems in place to manage and store medication including controlled drug.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The systems in place to protect and promote welfare are outstanding. Young people benefit from a service which takes a seamless and preventative approach to child protection across hostel and school. One member of staff has a key role in developing the approach to safeguarding. She is also a member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and has wider responsibilities for delivering training across the local area. This is of benefit to the school and young people as it means that they have kept up to date with new policies and procedures and are able to operate a system drawing on best practice.

Since the last inspection there has been further staff training in safer recruitment and training for designated individuals, the annual training in child protection for all school staff remains in place. Some excellent work is taking place to support young people. A group of key staff including those from the hostel meet to develop strategies to support young people and their families with a view to preventing welfare concerns. There are robust systems in place for reporting child protection concerns, these are well known to hostel staff. Overall young people report that they feel safe at the hostel.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is respected. Staff understand the importance of treating confidential information sensitively, policy documentation supports this. Young people tend to choose to spend much of their time as part of the group during their short stay. However staff understand that on occasions young people may choose to spend time alone in their room, this is respected. Bathrooms are fitted with privacy locks and shower screens are obscured for privacy.

There are effective strategies in place to deal with bullying. Staffing levels are set at a ratio which allows the team to supervise small groups of young people. The team are alert to any potential issue and take immediate action to prevent escalation of incidents. Information is quickly passed between the team and where necessary the matter is dealt at the level of the individual. Leisure time is well structured with young people engaging in activities of their choice. Positive peer relations are reinforced and highlighted through the behaviour management

programme, in addition the programme serves to address bullying by enabling young people to self examine their behaviour. Young people who feel they are bullied have the opportunity to raise their concerns with staff through a number of formal and informal systems.

Young people are protected by the hostel's absences procedures. There is one recorded absences without authority since the last inspection. The matter was reported to the relevant authorities inline with the hostel policy.

There are systems in place to manage complaints. Young people know how to make a complaint and feel that they are listened to. Information about how to complain is given to young people in their admissions book. A post box is provided for young people to post complaints. Young people say that they felt they can approach staff directly to have a complaint dealt with informally.

Behaviour management at the home is outstanding. Staff receive training in physical interventions but these are rarely used with only one recorded restraint having taken place to protect young people since the last inspection. The team are mostly able to manage behaviour effectively without resorting to restraint. The approach to managing behaviour is creative and applied with commitment and consistency. It is built around well nurtured, stable relations between staff and young people. A series of short term incentives are used to promote positive behaviour. Young people understand and are responsive to the system. The approach is beneficial as it enables young people to examine their own behaviour. It helps them learn to behave in a socially acceptable manner. The result is that young people enjoy their time at the hostel and are mostly cooperative and agreeable.

Procedures to vet staff and visitors to the home are in place. Staff are vetted before they commence work at the hostel including obtaining a Criminal Records Bureau check.

There are good health, safety and security procedures in place that ensure young people are protected from harm, including the completion of risk assessments. Fire procedures are well established, including evacuation drills. All tests of the fire alarm system are recorded. Appropriate service contracts are in place for fire, gas and electrical equipment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The promotion of education and the transition between school and the hostel is excellent. The focus of the service is supporting educational attendance and attainment. However both school and care staff are realistic and acknowledge that many young people require additional care and support through the hostel provision in order to ensure that they are able to attend school. The relations between the school staff and care staff are outstanding. The approach is collaborative and based upon mutual respect and a combined aim to support young people in a holistic way. Communication systems are well established, well organised and effective. Staff in the hostel value educational attainment and take time to praise individuals for their participation and achievements at school. Hostel staff help young people with school work where there is an identified need. Young people benefit greatly from this joined up approach to care and education.

Leisure time is efficiently structured and offers young people a range of beneficial opportunities. Young people have the chance to participate in activities that may not otherwise be available.

Young people choose the activities they would like to take part in in conjunction with the behaviour management programme. During the inspection these included, waterslide in the grounds, swimming, football, outdoor games, cooking, cycling and preparation for a weeks holiday at a holiday camp. Some young people are involved in clubs and activities outside of the hostel such as camping and cadets.

Young people are provided with individual care and support in line with their needs and wishes. The relations between staff and young people are strong based upon trust. Young people are able to approach staff with their individual concerns and feel that they will be listened to. Established staff have known young people over several years enabling them to understand each young person's specific needs and circumstances. The team will seek out appropriate outside professional and family support for individuals when it is required.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Admissions to the hostel are well managed and operate in the best interests of young people. Careful consideration is given to each application for admission. The manager is sensitive to the needs of the existing group as well as the interests of individuals. Young people are allowed to develop and move on at their own pace which means that they are not moved on unnecessarily. Admissions are carried out with sensitivity and in conjunction with parents and carers. Young people have the opportunity to visit before they stay over and are not rushed into placement.

Young people are listened to and feel that they are able to have an influence on the way the service operates. Young people each have a key worker although most say that they can approach any of the staff team. A suggestions box is provided for young people to post their comments. There is evidence that these are acted upon where practical. Group feed back session give young people the opportunity to express their views to the team and to other young people. Young people are able to comment on their placement plans and targets. The team involves parents and carers in the day to day operation of the home by working in close consultation. Parents who were spoken with praised the transparency of approach, the excellent communication and welcome they receive when they visit.

There are excellent systems in place for assessing and reviewing needs. Placement plans provide detailed assessments of young people's needs and include risk assessments and behaviour management strategies. The plans are well written and provide clear direction for the team in how to meet needs. Plans are updated and reviewed regularly in line with care planning meetings, communication with others and key worker sessions.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are assisted to develop skills for independence. Since the last inspection there have been some developments in this area. The hostel staff and some school staff have signed up to deliver a programme of certificated independent living skills courses. These will help to formalise some of the work already carried out and will have the benefit of defining further targets for young people. The system is new and has not yet embedded although there is good evidence of achievements already made. These include skills development in the areas of cooking, shopping, using the laundry. Young people noted that the kitchen currently used for

independent living skill does not have a fridge. They currently use the fridge in the main kitchen, which means that preparing a meal can sometime take more organisation than it otherwise would.

The team have made the building homely and communal areas and bedrooms are domestic in style. The building remains problematic in terms of a layout which is not conducive to managing the group's behaviours. All bedrooms are single occupancy unless siblings request a twin. Shower and washing facilities are sufficient in numbers to meet young people's needs. Bathrooms are in reasonably close proximity to the sleeping accommodation. On site facilities for leisure are good, there is a games room and a computer room. School facilities including the sports hall are also available. In general the property is well maintained and a programme of redecoration is underway.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Management and staffing arrangements at the hostel are outstanding. The staff team is stable and well established. Staff shift patterns are predictable and known to young people. Staff work well as a team and demonstrate durability, commitment and dedication to young people. Young people benefit greatly from the predictable arrangements and positive relations they have established with the team. The consistency of approach coupled with staff who are well known to young people has served to create a stable environment which is a prerequisite to good care.

The manager is an experienced care provider whose approach to management is democratic and hands on. The manager provides a good level of support to the team through the supervision process, her interactions with colleagues and her direct work with young people. The headteacher supports the overall function of the hostel and takes an active role in overseeing the service. Staff are encouraged to develop their skills as individuals through the undertaking National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ). One team member recently having gained NVQ at level 4. An ongoing programme of training is in place which ensures that the team undertake all statutory training as well as training specific to the needs of young people.

Systems are in place to monitor the homes performance. The homes records are well maintained and up to date. Each child has a case file which is held securely. The headteacher oversees the recording systems and signs the relevant logs. A temporary independent visitor is currently visiting the home and reporting at the required intervals, the new visitor is due to take over in September. There are systems in place to monitor aspects of the homes performance in order to inform future practice.

A Statement of Purpose is in place which provides information to all interested parties. A welcome document for young people provides some useful information about what young people can expect from the service. However the document is not always written in a child friendly and accessible format.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The team demonstrate commitment to equality and diversity through their approach to care practice. All young people are supported and encouraged to fully access community services and activities. Exceptional support is given in encouraging young people's educational attainment with a view to re establishing young people back in to mainstream schools where possible. Young people have opportunities to learn

about diversity through examination of their own ideas and beliefs. Policy documents regarding equal opportunities are in place.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- consider the purchase of a fridge for the independent living skills kitchen (NMS 21)
- redesign the welcome document for young people in a more accessible format (NMS 1)