

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 is a secondary aged residential school for boys and girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is also registered as a children's home. The school is located in a rural area, on a 24 acre site that has been developed to include an indoor sports facility and six small units where young people can practise their independent living skills. Young people living at the home come from local authorities, covering almost all geographical parts of the United Kingdom. It currently provides full-time, 52 weeks, residential care for 75% of the young people in its care. The school's ethos is to create a centre of excellence for the education, care and personal development of young people with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced key inspection, during the course of which all key standards were inspected. The overall outcomes for the care of young people are good, with many outcomes exceeding the requirements of the national minimum standards. The inspector was also able to meet with and speak with a significant number of young people during the course of the inspection during the course of the inspection.

Young people's assessed needs are met by staff who have developed positive relationships with the young people and their carers. Young people are generally positive about the care they receive in the home. They are also particularly positive about the educational attainments they achieve in this placement.

Young people are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles. The practices implemented within the home ensure that young people's health and dietary needs are appropriately met. The life skills used within leisure activities assist young people to develop skills which will enhance their self esteem and link into planned education programmes.

Improvements since the last inspection

One action was made following the previous inspection. It related to the organisation's recruitment procedures. Statutory checks of staff being re-employed by the company are now fully completed before they recommence work.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The outcome for being healthy is judged to be outstanding. This is supported by the collective approaches taken by the home to meet the health needs of young people. For example, there are comprehensive health plans, good liaison with other services to provide health advice and treatment and the provision of a varied and diverse diet. Staff receive training on health issues that are effecting young people. This enables them to fully support the young people in their care.

The staff are aware of each young person's dietary requirements and ensure that the food served meets their needs and preferences. Meals are sociable occasions when the staff and young people eat together in their individual living areas. The menu is varied and young people are consulted about their preferences. Some young people are of an age where they make their own decisions about what to eat, as part of their preparation for independence. They are helped to understand the nutritional value of different foods and staff support them to eat a balanced diet. Staff share their interests with young people and this has been used to good effect to develop a part of the grounds to grow vegetables and keep ducks and hens. Known as 'The Farm' the venture links with young people's educational and personal attainments. They are responsible for both producing and selling produce to the extent that the project has become self sufficient .

Each young person has a comprehensive health plan and this with their care plan details the care required to meet their health needs. Any illnesses, accidents or injuries are well recorded and body maps are used as a record for any marks or bruises. There is very good liaison between the staff and health professionals and when required, the staff accompany the young people to appointments. The staff regard health promotion as an integral part of each young person's care, teaching them how to maintain their personal hygiene and how to stay healthy.

Medication is appropriately stored in a locked cupboard and good processes are in place for their safe administration. Any medication the staff administers is well recorded on each young person's medication administration record (MAR chart); balances of medication are monitored enabling a clear audit trail in the event of any discrepancies. Permissions are in place for the use of non-prescription medication. The disposal of medication is appropriate and timely. The staff are trained in the administration of first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff respect the young people's privacy and handle information about them confidentially. They are clear about the circumstances under which such information is accessed and when an individual's room or possessions are searched. However, the records of room searches are not always signed by all staff involved. The young

people can use their house cordless telephone in their room, or in a quiet part of the house, to make private calls to their families or social workers.

The staff recognise that all the young people have the right to complain and believe their complaints should be taken seriously and investigated. Both staff and young people advise that most issues are sorted out informally. A complaints log is maintained for young people wanting to make a formal complaint. There are two entries since the last inspection which indicate young people are happy with the outcome of the investigation.

The staff are responsive to any safeguarding concerns, whereby the welfare of the young people is promoted. The home's policies and procedures are comprehensive, requiring that all staff have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure before employment and all the staff are trained in child protection. In addition, the local safeguarding procedures are readily available in the home for the staff to reference.

Bullying is regarded as unacceptable and effective measures are taken to reduce the risk of bullying, as well as to manage any instances. The staff are alert to those young people who are likely to bully as well as those who are vulnerable. Most young people spoken to during the course of the inspection were clear that bullying in any form would not be tolerated by staff. In addition, the spacious environment with excellent play facilities enables the young people to be together or to be in separate smaller groups as appropriate. Discussion about any incident ensures trends are identified and effective preventative measures are introduced.

There are systems in place to record instances of absence without authority. Risk assessments ascertain the likelihood of absence and details of the action to be taken are included in the young people's care plans. In the event, good records are maintained as events unfold and the police are involved when appropriate. Young people are offered the opportunity to meet with a representative from the 'National Youth Advocacy Service' (NYAS) or the home's independent listener when they return, to discuss their reasons for absence. There have been four instances of young people leaving the home without permission since the last inspection.

There is a clear and comprehensive behaviour management policy, which is consistently used by all staff. Each young person is on a reward system for good behaviour and receives points for attending education and completing daily living skills. All staff have been trained in behaviour management techniques and they are skilled at diverting young people's negative behaviours into a more positive activity. All physical interventions and sanctions imposed in response to unacceptable behaviours are appropriately recorded. Monitoring by the senior managers identifies trends in behaviours to ensure staff consistency. Young people are aware of the sort of behaviour that may result in sanctions being imposed on them, showing their awareness of the home's behaviour management policy. Sanctions are appropriately recorded and there is documented evidence that the home is reviewing their effectiveness. Following any incident of physical intervention, behaviour management plans are reviewed. This is to consider whether the intervention has been effective

and to look at alternative strategies to be used in the future. The aim is to defuse and divert future incidents, in a manner which makes physical intervention unnecessary and keeps young people safe.

Safety checks undertaken within the home protect the young people. Appropriate risk assessments for the premises, as well as for activities, are undertaken. The fire risk assessment is regularly updated. However, reference in it on the use of door wedges to ensure adequate supervision of young people does not adequately cover the good practice which staff implement. Equipment is appropriately checked and the necessary contracts for servicing are in place. Fire drills are not being undertaken within the required frequency. There have been significant changes in young people being accommodated at the home. A number of new care staff have also been employed. The potential impact on both staff and young people of drills not been undertaken is that there is no assurance that they are aware of the action to take in the event of a fire. Visitors are well vetted and there are many good measures in place to support the safe recruitment of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The young people receive excellent individual support and professional services are accessed when needed. Individual time is spent with their key worker providing opportunities for them to share any personal concerns they may have. Young people indicate that staff are approachable and that there is always someone on duty who they would approach if they needed help or advice. Regular visits to the home by an independent listener ensures all the young people can access an independent person to take up issues on their behalf.

Developing educational potential is at the forefront of planning the home's philosophy of care. Young people attend education at the organisation's school which is on site. Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for the young people in their care. Care staff are observed to support young people's learning through close liaison with teaching staff. This enables them to provide practical and emotional support to young people experiencing difficulty. All young people are participating in individual learning programmes. Young people progress well with their academic studies, and a significant number leave school with qualifications they had not anticipated achieving. Young people are extremely positive about the academic attainments. They indicate it is an extremely positive outcome for them in terms of future prospects. They are proud of their achievements. The staff team are also skilled at recognising and celebrating young people's achievements and personal successes. These actions show young people's educational needs are addressed very well.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Systems are in place to ensure that young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. Pre-admission documentation is comprehensive and ensures that the home feels that they are able to adequately address the needs of the young person.

The care team works hard to ensure that young people are fully involved in all decisions affecting their lives. All young people have care plans in place, which concentrate on how their needs are to be addressed and the roles and responsibilities of other key individuals in the young person's life. The plan is based on an assessment of their needs and detailed risk assessments. They are developing documents, which evidence the targets set to attain positive outcomes for all young people in the home's care. Young people, social workers and other key professionals and family members are involved in monitoring and reviewing the plans.

Young people contribute to decisions about their own life and about the running of the home. There are regular questionnaires, key working sessions, young people's meetings and these all help the young people to express their views and wishes. There is a strong emphasis on consultation and there are regular examples of where it is clear that action has been taken by the staff to ensure a proper response.

Young people are assisted to maintain constructive contact with parents, family and other people significant in their lives. Contact arrangements are discussed at the time of the young people's admission and are recorded in their placement plan. Staff in the home work closely with the young people's families and carers. Where part of their care plan, young people have regular home contact visits and staff provide transport and escort facilities for them to travel home. Young people's views, and those of their parents/carers and placing authorities, are regularly sought and taken in to account.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

There is an independence programme in place for young people preparing to leave the home. The home has six semi-independent living units for young people sited separately in the grounds. The independence programme is designed to give these young people accredited educational awards as well as develop life skills. The programme prepares young people for independent living and develops their life skills. The home liaises closely with placing authorities who have responsibility for formulating pathway plans for young people. The home also liaise closely with parents, and the Connexions organisation in the formation of programmes for developing independence skills.

The home is situated in its own extensive grounds, which are well maintained and

provide excellent recreational facilities for young people. These include an on site sports centre. The residential units have a homely feel. They are decorated and furnished to a high standard. Young people in the semi-independent units, benefit from single bedrooms. Most young people in the two large units share bedrooms, which they are encouraged to personalise.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The statement of purpose and young people's guide provides a detailed picture about the service. This includes what the home's function and purpose is and important matters that young people need to know about, while living at the home. On admission, all young people receive a user-friendly guide, that tells them what they should expect from the home, including their right to express issues about living in the home, which they may not be happy with. Recently young people have participated in developing a 'welcome to our home' DVD which prospective new residents can view prior to coming to look around the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home has assessed and determined the individual needs of young people, in areas such as culture, religion, risk assessments and equality. The care plans developed by the home, identify the young people's assessed individual needs in these areas and outcomes are recorded and reviewed each month. Matters that promote fairness, such as access to the complaints system are good.

The staff team is a mix of male and female staff. All staff either hold relevant qualifications, are studying towards obtaining them, or are completing the organisation's induction training programme. All staff are scheduled to begin studying towards the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 within six months of starting work, with the aim of obtaining the award within one year. The staff induction training programme covers all relevant areas and it is based on the Children's Workforce Development Council programme. These actions show that the organisation has systems in place for staff to obtain relevant training and qualifications. The Registered Manager ensures there are sufficient members of staff on duty, to adequately meet the needs of young people. An 'on call' system is in operation enabling staff on duty to contact a senior staff at any time for support. Staff were positive about the support they receive from the home's management team. These actions show staff are suitably trained and supported.

Quality assurance and reflection on practice is fundamental to how the service runs. There are good monitoring processes in place to monitor the care of the young people as well as the home's performance against its statement of purpose. Appropriate records are reviewed and signed; the frequency of events and any trends are identified. These actions show the operation of the home is well monitored.

Young people's case files are kept securely in a suitable place. They contain relevant

information and young people are aware they can view their own files if they wish.

Although there are many areas of very good practice within the inspected standards, the impact of shortfalls under 'staying safe' have been taken into account when judging 'organisation'.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
26	ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that the persons working at the home and, children accommodated there, are aware of the procedures to be followed in case of a fire. (Regulation 32 (1) (e))	12/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure all room searches are documented showing the time and date and the reason for the search, noting what if anything was found, who carried out a search and who was present at the time. Such records should be signed by all those persons (NMS 9.8)
- take adequate precautions against the risk of fire. In particular this relates to the need to ensure fire risk assessments clearly reflect staff practice in relation to the use of door wedges. (NMS 26.8)