

## Inspection report for Children's Home

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<b>Inspection date</b>	08/12/2010
<b>Inspector</b>	Christy Wannop
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Random

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	17/06/2010
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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**

The service is a residential school that is registered as a children's home to provide care for 34 young people of either sex between the ages 11 and 17 years, with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The service is owned by a private company. The school is a large detached property in extensive grounds. The residential services are located in a separate building, split into six units or houses. Each house has a lounge, dining room, kitchen and two bathrooms, including shower facilities. There are either five or six single bedrooms for young people in each house. The service has sports facilities and also accesses resources in the local and wider community. The home is located in a small village and has its own transport. Public transport from the local village provides links to further public transport and facilities in the wider community. Twenty six children were resident at the school during the inspection and the inspectors spoke with the majority during activities and in groups.

## **Summary**

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an aligned interim inspection, announced at short notice; and conducted at the same time as a Section 162a inspection of the education provision at the school. It looked at all key standards under the Every Child Matters outcome area of staying safe, and followed up on two regulatory and two national minimum standard shortfalls from the last key inspection under being healthy and positive contribution. The service established good overall outcomes at the first key inspection in June 2010 and has now been open for twelve months. This inspection finds a lack of rigour in staff recruitment procedures and gaps in consistent placement planning for children. Consequently, two actions and four recommendations are made, with an overall judgement of satisfactory.

The service continues to provide a structured, nurturing environment for young people and behaviour is well managed. A healthy environment and good systems for medication and first aid treatment support healthy lifestyles for children. There are clear boundaries, consistent rewards and praise for positive behaviour; and staff encourage constructive social skills and good relationships within the group. Young people say they feel safe and have staff they trust and respect if they are worried or unhappy. Staff are energetic and sensitive to children's needs. The environment is safely managed and the school provides a good home in beautiful surroundings for children who are unable to live within their own families or attend local mainstream education.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

The previous inspection identified two regulatory shortfalls in how the service documented the strategies to eliminate risks to health and safety. These are now written within young people's risk assessments and stored alongside the placement plan in each child's file, so that staff have access to the whole picture of their needs and how to keep them safe.

Placement plans did not previously set out the assessed needs of children clearly. The school's placement plan now comprises a file containing the risk assessment, behaviour management plan and a broad placement plan, however, these are not in place for all children.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Arrangements for promoting good health are good. Children live in a clean, hygienic environment and their needs are generally identified. One child said of the care, 'it is very good. They look after me.' Staff encourage healthy lifestyles and health care is strengthened through appointment of a school nurse. However, health plans are not in place for all recently admitted children and this may impact on the delivery of appropriate health care.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The service ensures children are safe and secure at the home, and there are good arrangements for managing missing children, promoting positive behaviour, anti-bullying practice, and resolving complaints. Staff respect privacy and treat information confidentially. The environment and children's activities are safe. However, this good practice is compromised by a lack of rigor in recruitment processes. These are not robust or well coordinated, and so do not ensure that children are cared for by safely recruited staff. The process does not ensure that all legally required elements for references are completed before staff start work.

Other systems to promote the safety and welfare of children, and to protect them from abuse, are well established. There is effective policy, procedure and partnership working with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the service has managed investigations appropriately. Care staff know what to do in the event of an allegation or suspicion of abuse and how to plan for safe care, including physical contact with children, and time alone. However, there are gaps in staff training that have the potential to impact on safe implementation of the procedures, because not all staff have had training in these at a level commensurate with their role. Ancillary staff have still not had training in child protection.

Children have complex needs and their behaviour can be very challenging. Staff help

children behave well, encourage socially acceptable behaviour and implement constructive responses. One child said, 'I feel that the staff and the teachers treat me fair.' However, some staff have not been trained in safe restraint and behaviour management techniques. Short staffing means that these staff may be working alone in units with children and be responsible for de-escalating and diffusing their behaviour alone. While back up arrangements mean they can call for support if physical intervention is needed, it is not good practice for untrained staff to be involved in physical restraint.

The school promotes an atmosphere where bullying is unacceptable. Children do not report this as an issue and staff are clear that they act immediately to prevent harm. They promote a zero tolerance approach and talk to children in one-to-one and group sessions about their experiences. However, staff do not have formal training in awareness and effective strategies to counter bullying.

Children's privacy is respected and they know that information about them is confidential. Staff act as 'good parents' and protect children through careful support whilst helping with personal care, and when it is necessary to search for items which may cause harm to children. Complaints are well managed and children know their complaints are taken seriously. The staff and leadership team sort things out for children without delay and keep them informed of progress. Children said that there were staff who they liked, trusted and could talk to if they were worried, unhappy or angry.

There are effective strategies to prevent or reduce children going missing from school, and consequently children have not run away. Staff are ready to implement written guidance if they are absent without authority and there has been good liaison with the local specialist police officers for children missing from care. The manager takes effective action to make sure that children live in a home that provides physical safety and security, free from unnecessary risks. The school and separate children's home building provides a safe environment for children to live and learn.

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

The provision is not judged.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The leadership team are developing and improving care planning and assessment documentation. Work is underway to strengthen the evidencing of the work staff do with children on a day-to-day basis, and link this with the objectives of placement and assessed needs. Placement plans are in place for the majority, but not all children. Those who are newly admitted do not always have a plan detailing their physical or emotional care needs, or how these will be met on a day-to-day basis.

Consequently, there may not be a written plan for promoting children's health, cultural or religious needs, or contact with families, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives. In practice, children talked of their happiness that staff had helped them to improve their behaviour so they could have more contact with families.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is not judged.

## **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.

<b>Std.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Due date</b>
27	obtain for all staff, before they start work at the home, all the information set out in Schedule 2, notably two written references, including a reference from the person's most recent employer and if duties involved work with children or vulnerable adults, so far as is reasonably practicable verification of the reason why the employment or position ended (Regulation 26)	31/12/2010
2	ensure each child has a written placement plan, setting out how, on a day-to-day basis, they will be cared for, and their welfare safeguarded and promoted. Include arrangements made for health care and education and any arrangements made for contact with parents, relatives and friends. (Regulation 12)	31/12/2010

### **Recommendations**

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

- ensure the provision of training for all staff, including ancillary staff, in the prevention of abuse, recognition of abuse, dealing with disclosures or suspicions of abuse, and the home's child protection procedures (NMS 17.8)
- ensure all staff are trained in, and follow in practice the registered person's policy of physical restraint (NMS 22.8)
- train staff in awareness of, and effective strategies to counter, bullying (NMS 18.2)