

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

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 children and young people of either sex between the ages 9 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 children and 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.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

Children and young people make excellent progress while staying at this service. Their behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs overall are effectively supported and significantly improved. There is a strong educational ethos, with all children and young people consistently attending and doing exceptionally well at school. Clear boundaries and structured daily routines coupled with an in-depth understanding of each child or young person's individuality lead to excellent outcomes for children and young people.

Children and young people are provided with care that enables them to develop emotional maturity and resilience in preparation for their transition to adult life. They feel positive about their progress and value their educational achievements. They are consistently rewarded for their own individual achievements and development. They develop self confidence, are able to explore wider opportunities and they look forward to gaining qualifications, attending further education and getting good jobs. There are opportunities for young people to develop skills and awareness in relation to living independently.

Safeguarding is placed at the highest priority both in terms of environmental health and safety and promoting the welfare and safety of children and young people. The service has significant impact on risk taking behaviours and activities. There are minimal incidents of children and young people going missing from care and being involved in criminal activity. They are helped to develop a self awareness about how to promote and maintain their own safety. Children and young people are treated with respect and clear efforts are made to ensure their wishes, feelings and views are heard and included in the running of the service. They also develop more

meaningful and rewarding relationships with families, their peers and other adults.

The service is effectively managed. Systems and processes have been well established since the service opened 18 months previously. The dedicated, energetic and forward looking management team provides continuous quality assurance to maintain excellent standards and further develop improvements in the running of the service.

Areas for 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 person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
21 (2001)	complete the ongoing work in relation to ensuring there are suitable arrangements for the safekeeping of medicines. (Regulation 12(1))	31/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure children and young people are given an opportunity to discuss incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by (NMS 3.17)
- review the risk assessment process in relation independence preparation packages to encourage young people to take appropriate risks as a normal part of growing up. (NMS 4.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

Children and young people make exceptional progress in this service. They thrive, learn and develop due to a structured and clear behaviour management framework coupled with strong and effective education. Children and young people who have experienced significant trauma and present complex and challenging behaviours grow in self confidence, develop meaningful social relationships and make outstanding education progress. All children and young people say they receive excellent support with attending and doing well at school. They are extremely proud of themselves, their achievements and changes in their behaviour. They acknowledge the significance of and look forward to becoming a valuable young adult in society. Parents' surveys also reflect positive outcomes for children and young people.

Some children and young people expressed an initial difficulty with the very clear and structured routines of the service when they first arrived. However, they all acknowledge that this firmness coupled with good relationships with staff has had a very positive impact. They all acknowledge and value they have better ways to stay safe, get on better with families and enjoying positive relationships. All children and young people expressed that they would not be where they are at now had they not come to the service, particularly in terms of attending education, looking forward to and obtaining good qualifications and preparing to work and live independently when they leave.

Children and young people thrive because they are treated with respect and enabled to channel their individuality, skills and abilities into achievement and different opportunities. They grow in confidence, develop resilience and are more tolerant of others because there is a clear assessment and celebration of each child or young person's needs and individuality. Children and young people are given good opportunities to make sense of their backgrounds, experiences and their behaviours. They are encouraged to express themselves in terms of sexuality, gender image and culture, and religious beliefs are facilitated. Children and young people are cared for in an environment that proactively identifies, develops and celebrates difference.

Children and young people can express their views, feelings and wishes because they are given time to talk to their key workers, care staff, teachers and other support networks. They are also involved in the running of each house and the school. There are weekly house meetings where children and young people discuss what has been happening, the week ahead including activities, raise concerns and put forward ideas to improve the house.

Children and young people are safely and proactively enabled to try different opportunities and develop new skills. They feel good about themselves as they are consistently congratulated and rewarded on their achievements. All children and young people earn rewards as part of their behaviour and education programmes. Young people also have opportunities to develop independence skills, but say they would like more realistic opportunities to develop awareness as the daily regimes at the service remain the same irrespective of their age, independence status and proximity to leaving the very structured service.

Children and young people enjoy good and significantly improved health because they are encouraged to understand and be proactive about their own medical and health needs. Their medical needs are excellently met and effective good health promoted with proactive education and effective staff support, including good relationships with the school nurse. Children and young people can explore and discuss health issues and they understand how lifestyle choices can impact on their health. They develop an ongoing awareness about sexual health, the impact of drug use and how to lead healthier lifestyles including healthy eating, exercise, giving up smoking, improving personal hygiene and understanding puberty and adolescence.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **good**.

Children and young people are looked after by a competent and well trained staff team who implement a structured and effective framework for care, education and behaviour management. Children and young people are cared for and thrive in a stable and nurturing environment because staff consistently implement these established structures. Staff are skilled and enthusiastic in encouraging children and young people to explore opportunities to develop self confidence and achieve their full potential. They are committed to engaging, developing and maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships with the children and young people. These relationships are a key strength to the positive outcomes for children and young people.

There is a clear commitment to promoting diversity and equality. Staff have comprehensive knowledge about the individuality, including social, cultural and religious backgrounds, of children and young people. Staff provide an environment where children and young people can express themselves and also explore and develop their awareness of diversity, tolerance and equality.

Care and education planning, risk management procedures and behaviour management plans are comprehensive, practically detailed and give clarity to how staff are to support children and young people. Written plans reflect the individuality and diversity of each child or young person. There is a clear education policy and written individual educational plans set achievable targets and challenges. All care and education documentation support children or young people's emotional, behavioural and learning processes and enable them to aspire to their potential. There is good assessment and review of plans with children and young people being a key part this process. Records show that children, young people, staff and placing authorities identify clear progress since living at the home. Health care plans are comprehensive, effectively implemented and closely monitored. Assessment and review of each child or young person's placement contributes to the overall good level of care provided.

The care planning and risk assessment process includes plans for supporting young people to prepare to live independently. The majority of risk management strategies promote safety but also ensure all young people have opportunities to reach their potential and achieve. However, in terms of independence programmes, young people say they would like more realistic opportunities to develop their skills. They can earn independent time away from the home, but the daily regimes, including sanctions, at the service remain the same irrespective of their age and independence status. Consequently should they make a mistake and compromise trust, their independent time is taken away or suspended. These structured arrangements continue to be implemented in close proximity to when young people leave the service and do not necessarily reflect their imminent transition to independence and young adulthood.

Staff knowledge about the individual profile of each child or young person is key to managing and improving behaviour and motivating children and young people to achieve. There are the same daily regimes and expectations for all children and young people. Staff are good at making these meaningful for children and young

people because they have good knowledge of how children or young people's previous challenges and experiences have impacted on and influenced presenting needs and behaviours. There are significant improvements in behaviour because staff implement behaviour plans, promote clear expectations and positively reinforce and reward positive behaviours and achievements. Challenging behaviour is dealt with immediately, swiftly and consistently. Boundaries are clear, structured and understood by children and young people, but they are not always clear about how physical intervention should be carried out by staff.

Communication processes are strong and effective. The close working relationship between the school and care staff is effective and facilitates children and young people's placements. House meetings and regular key working contact are integral to including children and young people's views and wishes in the running of the home and their placement plans. Staff also liaise with external agencies in accordance with children and young people's care plans to access additional support and opportunities for children and young people and to facilitate staff development. These processes contribute to the excellent outcomes for children and young people and demonstrate that all staff are consistently concerned with the welfare, education and progress of the children and young people at the service.

Information about how to complain is displayed in each house, is contained in the children and young people's guide and covered each week in house meetings. Children and young people have also developed their own leaflet about what to do if they have a problem. Information about the external agencies children and young people may wish to contact with complaints is also displayed in the houses.

The good arrangements to promote children and young people's physical and emotional health are further improved with the recent appointment of a school nurse. The residential and school staff in conjunction with the school nurse work together to proactively promote children and young people's good health. Children and young people are supported by comprehensive health and medical assessments and healthcare plans. Healthy eating is promoted and menus are balanced, take into account some personal preference and a multi-cultural perspective. Children and young people are provided with a variety of activities that encourage physical exercise.

There is an excellent awareness of the complex physical, emotional and mental health issues that may present due to children or young people's past traumatic experiences and risk taking activities. The service provides an array of effective health support and education. The service maintains close liaison with the local medical centre. Staff also maintain good liaison with support agencies in order to provide informed and appropriate care. Children and young people can see the school nurse privately and engaging relationships are quickly developing, resulting in timely interventions and additional health education. Residential and education staff demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and awareness of health issues relating to lifestyle choices for children and young people. This knowledge is used to create and explore meaningful ways to educate and enable children and young people to understand risks, adolescence and develop a personal responsibility for maintaining

healthy life styles.

The procedures for the safe and effective administration of medication are receiving further professional attention from the school nurse. Although systems are in place and staff receive medication training, the storage facilities for some medication presents a potential risk due to raised room temperatures. Alterations to the storage, including the installation of an air conditioning system were being addressed at the time of this inspection.

The accommodation consists of six separate houses located in one building. There is separate and well resourced school. Each house has its own lounge, dining room and kitchen. All areas are well decorated and furnished. Children and young people's bedrooms are well maintained and personalised. The standards of maintenance, cleanliness, décor and furnishings are excellent. There are good levels of privacy for children and young people, including locks on bedroom, toilet and bathroom doors. They are encouraged to enjoy the garden areas surrounding the residential accommodation and the extensive grounds.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **outstanding** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Children and young people live in a safe, secure and stable environment. There are significant improvements in the safeguarding outcomes for all children and young people staying at this service. Levels of safety are effective because the robust and regularly reviewed policies and procedures are implemented by well trained and competent staff. Strategies to safeguard children and young people are clear and structured. The children and young people understand the importance of promoting their safety.

Children and young people are protected by an effective and robust recruitment process that includes a comprehensive check on all staff applying to work at this setting. Personnel records are maintained to a good standard. Visitors are checked, vetted and monitored.

There are significant improvements in children and young people's behaviour, risk taking activities and going missing from care. Children and young people say they feel safe, secure and see significant improvements in their behaviour. They feel staff respect their privacy. Children and young people have no concerns about bullying and they are confident that staff will manage their concerns and they are encouraged to treat each other with respect.

Safety is paramount and attention to the supervision of children and young people is detailed and consistent. Staff are fully aware of the procedures regarding children and young people going missing from the home and procedures are included in each placement care plan. The high levels of supervision both inside and outside the service are appropriate to the significant vulnerability of the children and young people. These arrangements are key to the children or young people's placements and make a significant impact on their safety. These routines are open and transparent in the written information provided to the children, young people and their social workers prior to placement.

Safeguarding strategies focus on robust risk assessment and there are subsequent restrictions on children and young people having free time. Staffing levels are allocated to ensure that all children and young people are supervised, kept safe and receive appropriate support. Free time is positively channelled and occupied with activities. They do not have time to access risk taking activities and associations. They quickly develop a pattern of making positive choices and leading safer and more fulfilling lifestyles.

Children and young people value the praise and rewards they receive for good behaviour and achievement. Staff are enthusiastic about the achievements and progress of the children and young people. Children and young people say the rules are clear both in terms of what constitutes good behaviour, what rewards are available and what behaviour is not acceptable. Records and comments from children and young people show the sanctions used when things do not go so well for children and young people are fair. Staff are trained in behaviour management, including physical intervention, and maintain good and accountable records. Concerns raised by young people during this inspection regarding the use of physical intention were addressed immediately. The managerial response demonstrated a

good awareness of safeguarding procedures and good working relationships with the local safeguarding children team. All staff receive training on safeguarding children and are aware their own roles and responsibilities and other agencies involved in keeping children and young people safe.

Children and young people live in a safe environment. Health and safety is well managed. Safety and servicing checks are carried out as required. Fire safety training of staff, regular checks to the fire systems and fire drills ensure children, young people and staff know what to do in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **outstanding**.

This service excels in providing children and young people with structured and effectively organised packages of care, education and support. Management systems are established and robust. There are clear policies and procedures, effective organisation of staff and consistent implementation of behaviour and safeguarding strategies. Staffing levels are good and are managed in keeping with the service's Statement of Purpose. Staff receive induction, training and regular supervision. They are able to understand and implement the clear and effective education and behaviour structures that are integral to the ethos and success of the service. Procedurally the service is very sound. Records are clear and accountable.

All members of staff spoken with gave very positive comments about the management team, their own professional support and positive staff team communication processes. Staff are enthusiastic and work closely as a team. Daily briefings and regular staff meetings contribute to the effective and consistent running of the service. There is strong leadership and staff are supported to provide consistent reinforcement of firm daily structures. This is balanced with a consistent focus on reward and a strong emphasis on maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships between staff, children and young people. The energetic leadership of the service promotes a child-centred culture of respect, individuality and achievement. This culture and competent staff practice makes a significant impact and difference to children and young people who have complex needs, present challenging behaviours and pose significant safeguarding concerns.

The management and staff have excellent levels of confidence and clarity about providing and constantly improving the service to children and young people. Internal and external monitoring of the service identifies good practice, shortfalls and further areas for development. The head of care works in conjunction with the registered manager. These roles continue to consolidate the now well established systems which include tracking patterns and trends of incidents, sanctions, physical interventions and children and young people's progress. There is also a strong and proactive ethos for improvement both in terms of staff development, the efficient running of the service and most significantly for the outcomes for children and young people. There is clear dedication, energy and expertise to provide a care and education framework that enables children and young people to positively channel their individuality so they can achieve their full potential.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.