

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Andrew Hewston
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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 centre is registered as a children's home, operated by a local authority and is approved by the secretary of state to provide secure care and accommodation. Education is provided on site within a school area equipped with purpose built classrooms. The centre is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 20 young people aged between 10 and 17 years.

Overall effectiveness

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

The centre management have continued to build on an already outstanding performing service. Young people are at the forefront of all work undertaken and individualised practice ensures that outcomes are excellent. Managers have a clear view of how they wish to see the centre develop and along with staff are ambitious to continually improve.

The depth and rigour of monitoring in place ensures constant progression of the quality of care and outcomes for young people. Staff support young people effectively to meet with their individual needs. The safeguarding of young people's welfare is exceptional.

The educational progress of young people has been enhanced by developments within the education setting, external support and management arrangements. The availability and quality of enrichment activities and opportunity to experience vocational training is exceptional.

Areas identified for development include the continued improvement of formal accreditation and schemes of work in education. The recording of risk assessment outcomes on individual behaviour management plans is also recommended.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- implement actions to maintain improvements to the range of accreditation offered so that young people's achievements are recognised fully (NMS 8.4)

- embed and sustain improvements in the leadership of the school so that that quality of teaching and learning reflects mainstream practice. Ensure that all teachers produce well -planned schemes of work and lessons that meet the personalised needs of the young people. (NMS 8.4)
- ensure children's physical and emotional and social development needs are promoted. Specifically by making sure that the outcomes of individual risk assessments are recorded within behaviour management plans. (NMS 6.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people develop extremely well at the centre due to the range of individual programmes, the comprehensive placement planning and a highly skilled staff group that young people relate to well. Young people's progress is assessed and progressed in areas ranging from activities and enrichment to improving self esteem. One young person stated 'the staff have helped me to change while I've been here'.

Appropriate diets, exercise and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle ensure that young people leave the centre more aware about their personal health than they were on admission. Thoroughly supportive staff and health professionals help young people's physical, emotional and psychological health development.

Young people's educational achievements are fully supported and celebrated within both the residential and educational departments of the centre. Young people enjoy contact arrangements which are highly promoted by the staff. Rooms where family visits take place have been improved further since the last inspection, enabling visits to be pleasant social occasions in what can on occasion be a difficult situation for all.

Arrangements for young people's resettlement start at the point of admission to the centre and are given high importance throughout their placement. Young people are thoroughly supported by staff throughout the preparation for transition.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from a staff group who promote positive relationships. This is done within a relaxed atmosphere and allows for a professional yet comfortable level of discussion in a range of circumstances around the centre. Staff are knowledgeable about specific needs of young people and how they are working with them. Young people talk about staff in a positive way, stating 'my key worker helps me to sort through things'.

Young people's views are sought constantly through forums such as young people's meetings, key worker meetings, reviews and informal discussions. They are able to contribute towards the running of the centre as well as their own progress.

The placement planning records are thorough with relevant, up to date information within paper files, e-asset and additional computerised records which contribute to a high level of care planning. Identified case managers and key workers work well together to ensure that all aspects of young people's care are appropriate and promote their development. This ensures that young people receive individual care. Young people state that they are able to 'talk about how I'm doing'.

Staff ensure that young people's families are also involved within the planning process. A parent stated that they were very happy that 'I can always phone up and talk to the staff about how (my son) is getting on and we always get invited to meetings about him'.

The centre promotes a healthy lifestyle to the young people through regular exercise, well thought through and healthy balanced menus as well as a range of information around the centre relating to physical health. Strong links are in place with visiting health professionals to support young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs. These include CAMHS services being provided through the placing authorities to ensure consistency, a local speech and language therapist, GP and dental services which are provided at the centre. The centre's nurse has a high awareness of the differing needs of the young people and how to meet these through available specialist services. The nurse ensures that staff are well trained in matters relating to health and also has an overarching responsibility for medication, which is administered and recorded fully to ensure young people's safety. All of this work carried out means that young people receive a very high quality of healthcare.

The staff are aware of any conditions which may affect the well being of a young person. Occasionally the recording of some specific risks relating to medical issues is not transferred into behaviour management plans. This was brought to the attention of managers during the inspection and was immediately addressed.

Young people are involved and achieve in a range of differing aspects of their placement. The level of enrichment activities available for all of the young people is highly commendable. All activities are thoroughly organised, presented and assessed by enthusiastic staff. The Building Brighter Futures programme fully records young people's development of their skills developed through enrichment. The Skills Zone development of young people's practical skills enables them to experience and achieve in a range of working environments that will be useful in later life.

Offending behaviour programmes are well structured and organised to raise awareness of, and challenge, the attitudes of the young people. These are updated on a regular basis and are focused on the primary needs of the young people. Specialist sexualised offences programmes are of a notably high quality. The programmes delivered help young people to understand the responsibilities of and consequences of their actions.

Displays relating to differing faiths, as well as information on the specific cultural and regional backgrounds of young people, help to promote an awareness of personal identity. Young people's individual dietary needs and celebrations of a range of aspects of their lives are fully promoted. Additional work is undertaken on a daily basis to raise young people's awareness of a range of cultures, disability and living in a community. Voluntary groups external to the centre are invited to talk about their work and how they form an important part of the support networks available. A comprehensive record of all the work carried out is held, which is supplemented with photographs and comments from young people on the sessions they have taken part in.

Since the last inspection there has been good progress implementing a formal curriculum offered to young people. The school timetable has been revised and now offers a structure and range of subjects that reflect the national curriculum. The timetable follows the pattern of the mainstream school year and offers a consistent programme throughout the term which provides stability for young people and staff. For example, the themed week operating at the time of the inspection reflected the end-of-term activities seen in mainstream schools. Young people were actively engaged in a wide variety of enjoyable tasks on the topic of the Olympics. This included a sports day; arts activities and a day of team building that was delivered by an external agency.

Arrangements for the weekly assembly have been enhanced to provide young people with a very well-planned citizenship programme including activities that develop their understanding of issues such as bullying and friendship. The school provides a purposeful and calm environment that is conducive to learning. The number of young people returned to the unit during the day as a result of poor behaviour has reduced significantly and is now low. This means that young people benefit from and remain in education for longer periods.

Opportunities for young people to develop work-related skills through enrichment activities have improved significantly. The 'Skill Zone' outdoor area provides an excellent facility for young people to develop construction skills that will help them to progress to further education and employment. Care staff who deliver this provision are working closely with the head teacher to develop plans to link this experience to young people's development of literacy and numeracy and to provide opportunities for vocational accreditation.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they feel safe at the centre. One young person said 'it's good and safe here'. Young people are supported by staff to keep themselves safe and practice ensures all interactions with other young people are appropriate and offer protection for all.

The child protection procedure and practice protects young people's welfare. The system is robust and there is a good relationship with the Local Authority Designated Officer. Referrals and requests for advice are made appropriately and any conversation with child protection services is fully recorded. All staff undertake safeguarding training and they regularly attend update sessions ensuring their knowledge is up to date.

Independent advocates visit the centre on a weekly basis and are able to speak with all young people freely. This ensures that there is access to an external person who they can raise any concerns with. A complaints system is available and young people know how to access it. In practice however, there are very few formal complaints made, staff are skilled at addressing any issues which arise to young people's satisfaction without the need for recourse to the formal structure. This means that young people can be confident issues they raise are dealt with promptly.

Young people are encouraged by staff to display positive behaviour. An incentive scheme is in place which enables young people to receive rewards for acceptable conduct and additional incentives are available for sustained positive behaviour. Where sanctions are used these are done so appropriately and sparingly. While there has been a slight increase in the number of sanctions issued for negative behaviour, this was in response to a small number of young people who were particularly disruptive. Mediation and reparation is used routinely by staff in their work. This enables young people to display positive responses at times of conflict.

The use of restraint continues to be low. Its use has fallen slightly since the last inspection and it is only used as a last resort. Boundaries and expectations of behaviour are known by young people and staff work hard to ensure any display of negative behaviour is prevented from escalating into more serious conflict. The use of separation has also fallen slightly since the last inspection; this means that young people benefit from effective engagement from staff.

The records which are held of all behaviour management techniques used are comprehensive and of high quality. The records and CCTV recording of any occurrences are viewed by the manager and a senior staff member. This helps to ensure that any incident was handled correctly, offering further protection for young people and opportunities for staff development of practice where identified.

Security arrangements at the centre are robust and offer protection for all. The environment is physically safe and written risk assessments are in place for all areas. Required safety and service checks are carried out and staff receive training in security and safety practice. The building is well maintained and equipped, enabling young people to experience an appropriate living environment. Recent upgrading has been carried out to some of the bedrooms on two of the living units. One of the

living units is somewhat older than the others, is not equipped with en suite accommodation and despite the efforts of staff is not able to be made as homely as the others due to its age and layout. Young people feel that the accommodation in this unit should be better, given that it is used as a longer term unit for those who have displayed consistent positive behaviour.

Leadership and management

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

The centre is managed extremely effectively and efficiently. There is clarity of roles and responsibilities within the senior management team and lines of accountability are well defined. A written development plan sets out the targets and aims of the centre and the management team strive for constant improvement in what is already a quality performing service. Young people benefit from a service which is constantly looking at how to meet their needs fully. There is excellent capacity for improvement, any recommendations which are made following inspections or by visitors from the local authority are addressed without delay.

A statement of purpose sets out the aims and objectives of the centre and young people have their own information which tells them about life at the centre and the expectations of behaviour, rights and responsibilities. The information for young people is available in other formats and languages should these be required.

Young people benefit from the input of a well supported and supervised staff group. The staff team at the centre are a stable group, consisting mainly of experienced staff along with some who are newer and more recently appointed. There is a good gender balance and staff teams are formed to ensure an appropriate balance of skills and strengths is available. Staff are highly motivated, dedicated to young people's development and receive appropriate training to help them work with young people. Support is available informally as well as by a formal system of regular supervision. Resources available are well managed; there is a sound, professional business base in place which provides a strong foundation for the centre's operation.

Quality assurance of the service provided is interwoven into all aspects of the centre. Comprehensive internal and external monitoring is in place. Regulation 33 visits are undertaken as required and any actions required are noted and made known to the manager. Internally Regulation 34 reports on the progress and development of the centre are carried out on a monthly basis, enabling a constant updating of data held on performance and development areas. Young people are able to contribute to both of these undertakings. Additionally an external report on the care, education and financial aspects of the centre is presented to the local authority strategic overview committee on a monthly basis. The comprehensive nature of the quality assurance monitoring assists in ensuring young people are able to receive the best quality service possible.

Records required to be held on young people's progress are well structured, clear and concise and stored securely. There is additional monitoring of these records by senior staff members to ensure all actions required have been carried out. All significant events which occur within the centre are notified to the relevant agencies and any required actions are carried out and recorded.

Good relationships and working arrangements are in place with other agencies such as the fire service and health and safety departments. Positive community links are also in operation. All of the above aids the transparency of work at the centre and offers further protection for young people's welfare.

Managers have made significant progress in improving the educational leadership of the school. A new head teacher took up post in January 2011. She has taken swift

and decisive action to improve the quality of the provision provided for the young people. In a very short time she has astutely acquired a good understanding of the issues that need to be tackled. These are clearly outlined in the school's development plan and associated actions are being implemented that are already having positive impact. A new management structure for the school has been developed that is linked effectively to the delivery of an improved curriculum. New teaching assistants have been appointed and a sound rationale for their deployment is enhancing the support for young people in lessons and joint working with care staff. Changes to the timetable, curriculum and the deployment of teachers have provided stability for education and care staff. For example, the head teacher now attends review meetings and as a consequence teachers remain in lessons providing a consistent experience for young people.

Local authority staff have provided good support to the unit that has been very effective in improving arrangements for quality assurance. An advisory board, that follows the practice of the governing body in a mainstream school, has been established. The board members have very good experience and skills which they are using to provide external scrutiny and to support the head teacher in improving the quality of the experience for young people. With local authority professional human resource support arrangements to hold teachers to account for their performance have improved significantly. The head teacher is also benefitting from the support provided by a national leader of education and the school improvement partner. They are providing specialist expertise and advice that has been effective in improving arrangements for observation of teaching and learning and is beginning to make teachers who have been working in the unit for many years aware of mainstream developments and the need to improve their performance. These developments need to be embedded and sustained to ensure that improvements planned for the autumn term are implemented effectively.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.