

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Clare Davies
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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

This school provides care and accommodation for up-to-76 young people with autistic spectrum disorder and learning disabilities. It operates as an independent co-educational residential special school which also provides accommodation for a number of young people receiving up to 52 weeks placements and is therefore registered as a children's home.

Students are accommodated in seven on-site residential houses and one off-site house in a neighbouring village. The school is set around a restored country house, within acres of parkland.

Overall effectiveness

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

The quality of care is highly personalised and effective in providing good outcomes for young people with autism. The leadership team has a clear vision and draws upon monitoring systems, and the views of others, to drive forward improvement and raise standards for young people.

The involvement of the multi-disciplinary team ensures individual care planning enables young people to make good progress in their personal development. Staff are creative in seeking young people's views through varied methods of communication and specialist input. Young people are cared for by staff who are enthusiastic and dedicated to ensuring that the best outcomes are achieved. Good relationships are formed enabling young people to feel secure and safe with their carers.

One requirement and one recommendation are raised in order to further improve practice and outcomes for young people.

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
32 (2001)	ensure that the registered person shall after consultation with the fire and rescue authority take adequate precautions against	11/11/2011

	the risk of fire and provide adequate means of escape (Regulation 32 (1)(a)(b))	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure the children's home has a record of the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on those working (including as volunteers) for the children's home which includes: CRB Disclosures, including the level of disclosure, the unique reference number, and the outcome of the check including whether the individual is barred (in line with eligibility to obtain such checks). (NMS 16.3 (b))

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress as a result of highly individualised, child-focussed, care and support. Initial assessments identify how young people's personal needs will be met. Parents and carers are fully involved with the introduction and provide key information about their child's needs and routines. This ensures that young people are cared for according to their parent's wishes and that they receive continuity of care.

Young people benefit from the support provided by a committed staff team. The on-site therapists, nurses and education staff work collaboratively with residential staff to deliver care plans tailored to individual young people. The availability of the multi-disciplinary team ensures that young people have quick and direct access to these professional services. This holistic approach ensures young people receive consistency and make progress in many aspects of their development. For example, where some young people found it difficult to eat in a group and participate in social activities they have now achieved these targets and continue to show improvements in their social skills.

Young people are supported in following a healthy lifestyle through frequent physical activities. Regular exercise is a core component to the structured approach in supporting young people with autism at this service. Young people are provided with a nutritious diet. Staff incorporate individual preferences and dietary requirements, where possible, into the daily menu. Choice and experimentation of new food is encouraged to extend the limited diet of some young people. There are opportunities to make drinks and snacks and, with staff assistance, cook a meal or do some baking as an activity. This helps to develop young people's independence, life skills and promotes healthy eating.

Young people have excellent attendance at the on-site school.. Care staff support

them with the transition into the school setting and remain present in the classroom to provide continuity of care. Staff are skilled at using different methods of communication to connect with young people. The speech and language therapists are instrumental in devising personalised systems of communication. Through the use of picture symbols, sign language and verbal skills, young people are encouraged to express themselves and participate in decision making. This support leads young people to gain in confidence and to make sense of their world through different methods of communication.

Young people are able to contribute to the home through simple household tasks such as loading the dishwasher and helping with laundry. This promotes a sense of responsibility, develops independent skills and supports young people with a sense of achievement. There are wider links with the local community where young people take part in events, make and sell items to raise funds and invite pupils from a local school to visit. Such activities promote engagement with the local community and enables young people to develop their social skills outside of their daily living group.

Young people are effectively supported in maintaining contact with their parents and relatives, ensuring that telephone calls and video calls are positive experiences. Separate accommodation is available to parents and siblings who wish to stay overnight. This promotes the relationships between families, particularly helpful to those who live far away.

Quality of care

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

A strength of this service comes from the dedication and commitment of the staff. Young people benefit from the warmth and security provided by carers who put the needs of young people at the forefront of their work. Parents say 'the staff are brilliant, they always appear calm, happy and dedicated to the children'. 'The staff are hard working, professional, caring and very positive'. 'They understand my son and his condition'.

Staff are ambitious for young people and display pride and joy when talking about young people's achievements. Staff can readily provide examples of development; they celebrate success with the young people and those adults who are significant to them. This enables young people to develop their self-esteem and gain in confidence.

There are some staff vacancies, the impact on young people is reduced by regular temporary staff providing cover. Due to the skills and knowledge of permanent staff, overall young people continue to receive good quality care. Staff challenge the barriers faced by young people with a learning disability and promote inclusion; this ensures that whenever possible, young people have access to services and facilities enjoyed by other young people. Staff are able to meet young people's care needs relating to their cultural background and their personal identity. The staff team represent the multi-cultural community of modern Britain. This fosters a culture to

embrace diversity and celebrate difference.

Young people have access to the complaints procedure in each house. Through using photographs of key staff and picture symbols, the procedure informs young people of who can support them with a worry or complaint. Complaints are effectively responded to and there are compliments that demonstrate some high levels of satisfaction from parents.

Young people are involved in care planning and the review of their care wherever possible. Pictures and symbols are selected to identify likes, dislikes and a range of emotions. This creative approach engages young people in their care planning process. Personalised targets focus on the development of young people and consequently improved outcomes.

There are sound systems for the management of medication. Some young people have complex health care needs that are managed well by the range of professional skills available on site. This supports parents in the knowledge that their child is being cared for by competent, medically trained staff. Parents report 'there are specialists on site who address my child's needs' and 'it is a wonderful school with well-trained caring staff'.

Young people benefit from the broad range of facilities on site to encourage activities. Sensory toys and stimulation provide interaction for many young people. Extensive grounds allow young people to enjoy outdoor space and play equipment in a safe environment. Some young people take part in community activities such as dancing, using a climbing wall and swimming which promotes their inclusion and integration with local groups. Books and toys stimulate educational development. All staff are aware of young people's targets within education. This ensures that the waking day is supported with learning outside of school hours.

There are seven separate houses providing accommodation across the site and one house located in a nearby village. The off-site house provides an opportunity for more independence and preparation for moving on as a young adult. With the majority of the accommodation on the same site as the school this supports young people who struggle with transitions and avoids the need to use transport. Each house has its own character providing a well-maintained environment. Young people have selected the colour scheme and some soft furnishings for some areas of their house. This consultation values the views of young people as they make a contribution to the development of the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The routines and structure to each day support young people in feeling safe and comfortable in their surroundings. This means young people are able to achieve in their personal development as a result of feeling secure. The supervision provided

from good staffing levels minimises the risk of young people going missing. Procedures are known by staff if this situation should arise, this ensures prompt action can be taken and liaison with the police to secure the safety of any missing young person.

Young people's well-being is firmly placed at the centre of staff practice. Staff receive training in safeguarding and team meetings promote regular updates. As a result, staff demonstrate a good understanding of the action to take should they have concerns about a young person's safety or welfare. Staff are knowledgeable about the particular vulnerabilities of the young people and have a range of effective risk assessments to refer to in order to reduce known risks.

Each young person has a personalised behaviour support plan. These plans assist staff in providing a consistent response to behaviour. Psychologists and therapists work effectively together with care and education staff to create and review strategies in managing some challenging behaviours exhibited. This co-ordinated approach ensures the most suitable support is made available. The psychology team closely monitor reports of incidents and physical intervention, this enables patterns and trends to be identified and reported to the manager. This detailed monitoring allows the multi-disciplinary team to respond and adapt to support young people appropriately.

Prior to this inspection a safeguarding concern was identified by the provider relating to an error in recruitment checks. The provider reported the matter to the local safeguarding authorities and responded swiftly and appropriately. This has led to a detailed review of all recruitment checks and the implementation of a robust system. In addition, a dedicated member of staff has been appointed to deploy and manage temporary staff. This consistency of approach ensures regular temporary staff are employed and that they are suitably checked with an acceptable level of skills, training and experience. These measures ensure that staff vacancies are covered by staff who are suitable to work with young people. All staff are assessed as suitable to work with children and young people at an enhanced level. The personnel records fail to indicate that this level has been secured, this has no impact on the safety of young people, as it is an administrative shortfall.

Generally across the site there are sound health and safety systems to minimise unnecessary risks to young people, staff and visitors. One area of accommodation is compromising safety with temporary arrangements in relation to fire safety. This could put young people and staff at risk. Young people benefit from a secure site for their safety without severely restricting their movements. Many latches that were previously on playground gates have been removed. This ensures the environment allows young people the choice of movement within the secure boundaries of the site.

Leadership and management

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

This service is effectively managed and demonstrates capacity for continual improvement. Three recommendations made at the last inspection have all been addressed satisfactorily; the level of monitoring applied to physical interventions is comprehensive. This means there are improved strategies to support young people that results in them receiving highly personalised care.

Since the last inspection, the newly appointed Registered Manager has been instrumental in driving forward the development of the service. The leadership team has effectively brought about many changes to improve the quality of care available to young people. Young people benefit from the creation of single rooms providing increased privacy and a dedicated space to personalise and call their own. A revised staff rota has been implemented this ensures young people benefit from continuity of staff and less carers within a 24-hour period. This service can now offer 52-week care, this provides support to families, it offers consistency to young people and security in their placement and surroundings.

Some parents requested for communication from the service to be improved. In response to this each young person now has a daily journal recording their achievements, diet, activities and general well-being. The journal accompanies the young person as they move between residential care, the classroom and their family home. This provides a reflective account of each day, a record for parents and the young people themselves.

The updated Statement of Purpose provides an excellent account of the aims, values and services provided. This gives parents and the placing authorities, comprehensive information about what to expect from the home and school with regards to their child. The manager and senior leaders undertake monitoring of the quality of care. This assists the leadership team to have a grasp of the strengths of the service and any areas to improve upon, contributing to the overall development plan.

This service is well resourced ensuring that young people have good staffing ratios, access to purposeful activities and leisure interests and pleasant homely environments. The leadership team are striving to employ permanent staff and have reduced the usage of agency staff. A large pool of temporary staff work frequently, this ensures that young people can receive continuity of care.

The staff teams are enthusiastic about their work and there is a strong commitment to supporting young people. Good outcomes are achieved as a result. Young people benefit from being cared for by staff members who feel supported in their work through supervision, good training opportunities and ready access to therapists and clinical practitioners.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.