

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Leonard Hird
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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 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 and is run by a private company. The school is located in a rural area, on a 24 acre site that has been developed to include an indoor sports facility and seven 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.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are receiving excellent levels of care, support and guidance. Members of staff receive very good levels of training, support and guidance from the company. Regular supervision meetings are occurring between members of staff and the home's management team to ensure there is consistency of high quality of care practice being delivered throughout the home. This high level of support helps members of staff to deliver a service to young people that is meeting extremely effectively their needs. Young people spoke very positively about the different levels and types of support they receive from members of staff.

Members of staff work extremely closely with the educational team to ensure that young people are fully supported to take a full and meaningful part in their educational courses. The home is fully involved with the different placing authorities to help young people to plan for their future after leaving full-time education and moving on to post 16 education and training courses.

Young people are well supported by the staff team to ensure they receive high levels of encouragement and support to succeed. This high degree of involvement and support from all of the staff is enabling young people to live in a homely environment that is safe and caring. Young people are benefiting from having excellent on-site health care services as well as having the opportunity to lead a very healthy life style. Young people spoke very positively about their life at the home and that they felt it was an extremely safe place to live.

No requirements or recommendations were made at this inspection.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home is providing excellent levels of care, support and guidance for a large group of young people. Young people are actively encouraged by members of staff to develop their social and independent living skills. This is achieved by the use of a 24-hour curriculum that encourages them to succeed in their academic life as well as their social and life skills. A strong sense of care permeates throughout the residential houses with members of staff focusing strongly on addressing young people's educational, personal and welfare needs.

The home provides a consistent and extremely stable environment for young people to live and work in. There are excellent working relationships occurring between the home and the school to ensure that young people's care and education plans are followed. Many of the young people have gone on to post 16 educational or training courses and the home tries to support them in these endeavours. The school is fully supported by the residential care staff team in helping young people to develop their often 'hidden talents'. There are many clubs and activities for young people to take part in both at the home as well as in the local community, including the Army Cadet Force, archery and music and drama. Achievement in extra-curricular activities is excellent and links to many facets of home and school life. A young person commented, 'since coming to this home and school I really have made great progress in my education.' A social worker commented that, since attending the school, the young person they were involved with had made very good progress in their academic subjects because of their regular attendance at school.

Positive encouragement is given to young people to keep in appropriate contact with family and friends. Records are maintained by the home of all contacts with family and friends. Members of staff actively try to involve young people's family in every aspect of their life at the home, including the provision of transport and supervised contact meetings.

Quality of care

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

Each young person has a comprehensive placement plan detailing how their health, social and educational needs will be met. There are regular recorded statutory educational and social care review meetings occurring to monitor the progress of young people. Young people's placement plans and risk assessments are easily understood, up to date and reviewed regularly by a senior member of the management team. Every young person has their own individual keyworker to help them to play an active role in developing their care plans. Keyworker sessions take place on a regular basis and young people indicate they value this 'one to one' time as it gives them the opportunity to have their say. The home actively involves young people, their families and partner agencies in planning for independence and adulthood. Members of the residential care staff team are playing an important role in the well-being of the young people by providing a beneficial and strong link between the school, their families and other agencies. Young people indicate they

really enjoy the support they receive from being part of a caring and understanding community.

Young people's health is looked after by the residential care staff team under the guidance of an experienced and well-qualified registered nurse. The nurse oversees all matters relating to the health and medication needs of the young people in the home. There are excellent working relationships occurring between the home and the local health centre. This helps to ensure that young people receive a very good level of external health care support, when required. The registered nurse is receiving professional clinical supervision from the local practice nurse to assist in their practice, professional and clinical development. Young people's health is protected and promoted by the safe storage and administration of medication. Detailed records and procedures are in place for this purpose. Members of staff are trained in the administration of first aid and the safe handling of medication. On each young person's health plan file there is a signed parental medical consent form to ensure that medication and emergency medical treatment can be given. Young people confirm they are really happy with the health care service they are receiving.

Regular formal and informal meetings are taking place between the young people and residential staff. These meetings help to ensure that members of staff take full account of the views and needs of the young people. Records are kept of these meetings and how the home has responded to the views of the young people.

All of the different houses on the site are well decorated, furnished, maintained and homely. Individual bedrooms are well decorated and personalised by the young people. There are good levels of bathing and toileting facilities available in the houses for use by the young people. The bathrooms have appropriate locks and are private. All of the communal areas are spacious and well used by the young people. Young people were observed to be enjoying the homely and comfortable facilities and indicated that there was plenty of room for them to 'chill out' in.

There is a good choice of hot and cold meals available each day and specialist dietary requirements can be catered for. There is a commitment to the provision of well-cooked meals that are healthy and appetising in content. As part of this commitment the catering manager meets with young people in order to gather their views about the menus. All of the staff who help in the preparation of food at the home have a qualification in food hygiene and are ensuring the relevant records are maintained. Young people generally spoke positively about the quality, choice and quantity of food served at the home and indicate that personal events, such as birthdays are celebrated.

Throughout inspection, young people and staff were observed to be working together in a very friendly though professional manner. A young person said, 'staff support us through the good times as well as the bad times and they are there when we need them.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's welfare is protected through clear and robust safeguarding policies and procedures which are consistent with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The residential staff team demonstrates a strong understanding of child protection and safeguarding matters. Regular staff training takes place in child protection. The designated safe guarding officers demonstrate excellent awareness of the legislation in respect of safeguarding. Excellent working relationships have been developed with the Local Authority Designated Officer and the other partner agencies. Young people confirm they feel safe while living at the home and a young person commented, 'this was the safest place they had lived at for many months.'

The home's measures to address the countering of bullying are excellent. Both young people and staff have a high level of understanding of the dangers of bullying and are aware of the home's 'zero tolerance' policy towards bullying behaviour. Members of staff, when dealing with incidents of bullying, follow the home's comprehensive anti-bullying policy, procedures and guidance. Young people confirm that staff record and appropriately deal with any incident of bullying. Young people indicate they are aware of how to contact different independent agencies for support, such as ChildLine or the Children's Rights Officer. Young people are very well protected through the home's positive approach to addressing bullying behaviour.

Young people' welfare is further protected by the home's robust complaints policy and procedure. There is a clear understanding within the residential staff team that any concern or complaint will be taken seriously and dealt with accordingly. Young people confirm they know how to raise a concern or complaint and that they are listened to and issues are dealt with accordingly.

The home is very successful in the promotion and celebration of good behaviour. There is a very clear policy and procedure on behaviour and discipline in place and members of staff follow this in practice. Members of staff receive regular training in behavioural management techniques including the use of physical intervention. The home's measures to address inappropriate behaviour are comprehensive, well documented and are seen by the young people to be fair. A detailed policy, procedure and protocol on the actions to be taken when young people are absent without authority is in place and is followed. Young people are benefitting from the positive, caring and very supportive relationships that occur in each of the houses.

The home follows comprehensive and safe procedures in recruiting staff. There is a clear policy on recruitment in line with the Department for Education guidance that ensures that members of staff are suitably experienced and qualified for their roles. A detailed record of this process is maintained, showing Criminal Record Bureau numbers, references, checks and the interview process.

The home has well-managed systems in place to reduce the risk from fire. Risk assessments are comprehensive and appropriate. Testing of equipment is up to date and evacuation drills are occurring regularly. These are carefully recorded and any

action required is logged, monitored and addressed. Day-to-day maintenance issues are identified by members of staff and addressed by the maintenance team, thus ensuring young people are protected from potential hazards. Young people are further protected by the effective monitoring of equipment, such as small electrical appliances and the safe storage of substances hazardous to health.

Leadership and management

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

The home's informative and up-to-date Statement of Purpose is readily available for use by parents, partner agencies and members of staff. Additionally, on arrival at the home, young people are given their own easily-understood young person's guide detailing the expectations of life in the home. Both documents contain information that details how agencies, such as ChildLine and the Children's Rights Officer can be contacted for support and advice.

Members of staff receive excellent levels of training, support and supervision from the management team as well as from the parent company. This high level of support ensures there are continual professional development pathways available for staff. The very-experienced and well-qualified management team is providing highly-motivational leadership for the home's staff team. This is helping young people to succeed while living at the home. Staffing levels are meeting the current needs and numbers of young people living at the home but, if necessary, extra staff can be quickly deployed if required. There is a very stable, experienced and well-motivated staff team working at the home who are really committed to meeting the often very complex needs of the young people. Young people are actively encouraged by staff to take a full-part in the many activities on offer at the home as well as integrating into the local community, wherever possible.

Unannounced monitoring visits take place on a monthly basis and are carried out by the parent company's designated officer. A record of these monitoring visits and the outcomes are provided to the home, the senior management team and Ofsted. The outcomes are shared with the home's Registered Manager to make sure the quality of service is maintained to a high standard for the young people. The Registered Manager, assisted by other members of staff, undertakes weekly and monthly quality assurance checks to ensure the home is performing to a high standard. If corrective measures are required then the management team addresses them. When requirements or recommendations have been made by Ofsted following an inspection, these have always been addressed.

Young people's care plans and records are well managed by staff and are reflective of the good care practice that is occurring in the home. The home's quality assurance systems are ensuring that young people's records are well managed, monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.

