

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC022448
Inspection date	24/11/2011
Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Gwen Buckley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Secure Unit

Date of last inspection	11/08/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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 operated by a voluntary organisation, registered as a secure children's home and is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation.

The centre can accommodate 12 young people in two purpose built living units. The centre accommodates young people whose behaviour has placed them or others at risk. Education is provided on site and external professionals offer support for young people's physical and emotional health needs. Facilities include outdoor exercise areas and a sports hall.

Overall effectiveness

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

This inspection has the purpose of informing the Secretary of State on the continuing suitability for this provision to operate as a secure unit to restrict children's liberty.

A robust care planning system is in place providing personalised effective care. The multi-disciplinary approach to care is a strength of the home. Staff have positive working relationships with external professionals to help them meet the complex care needs of young people. There is a clear emphasis on meeting individual needs and ensuring each young person develops both emotionally, socially and educationally. Young people feel safe, enjoy support from a stable experienced staff group and have sound relationships with staff they know and trust.

Particular strengths of the home are the positive relationships between staff and young people and the imaginative way young people are helped to communicate their feelings. This enables young people to make good progress at the home and to look at the issues that brought them into secure care. There are robust recruitment practices and good working relationships with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the police.

The manager has been asked to: review the sanctions and reward schemes and ensure there is a formal process in place to contact social workers or placing authorities when young people do not get the service they are entitled to. The centre has also been asked to keep safety information readily available with cleaning materials used.

There is a clear vision for education, focused on gaining the best possible outcomes for young people both in terms of their academic achievement and their personal and social development. Leaders and managers are regarded as supportive by staff and regular supervision takes place. Resources are managed well and treated with

respect by young people.

The education department monitors young people's performance in lessons well, but further analysis of data would be beneficial to identify trends in behaviour and progress. There are limited opportunities for young people to gain experience of vocational education and more could be done with the use of trips out of the secure environment for education, vocational purposes and developing independent living skills. Teachers have been asked to introduce higher level courses and accreditation for those able to achieve these and further develop the system for recording young people's progress, especially in literacy and numeracy.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is an effective system in place to remind placing authorities that young people should receive the same measures to safeguard and promote their rights and welfare as they should in other children's home. This specifically relates to the need to introduce a robust system to notify placing authorities whenever young people are not receiving services required in a timely manner (NMS 23) Previous
- ensure the premises are fit for purpose with maintenance arrangements consistent with any Government guidance. This specifically relates to the recommendations of the Department for Education's architect to ensure Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) information is available and that all maintenance issues are fully recorded (NMS 23.14)
- ensure children are provided with appropriate education. Further develop the system for recording young people's progress, especially in literacy and numeracy (NMS 23.10)
- ensure children are provided with appropriate education. Introduce higher level courses and accreditation across the curriculum (NMS 23.10)
- develop an environment and culture, to promote models and support positive behaviour that all staff understand and implement. Specifically, review the reward scheme to ensure it is equitable between care and education aspects of the centre and continues to encourage the positive behaviour of young people (NMS 3.2)
- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and young people. Specifically, ensure that sanctions issued are effective and reflect the misdemeanour (NMS 3.8)
- ensure children develop skills and emotional resilience that will prepare them for independent living. Further develop the independent living programme and education plans to increase the use of trips out of the centre for preparation for

adulthood, education and vocational purposes. (NMS 2.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people receive care from staff who have an in depth knowledge and understanding of their complex needs. Staff support young people to make good progress based on their assessed abilities and needs. Each young person is supported by a key worker who works well with them to meet the objectives of the placement.

Young people benefit from a staff group who have the ability to communicate effectively with them. Imaginative use of poetry helps young people express their feelings and as a consequence key work sessions focus on very specific needs and action is taken to keep young people safe. Comments from young people include 'my time with my key worker helps keep me safe, I can talk to her about my issues', 'the nurse is great, she listens to me and will sort things', 'my key worker is the best' and 'staff want me to do well and keep reminding me I have done well'.

The centre promotes a positive ethos that fully embraces diversity. Young people at the centre regularly take part in and raise money for various local and national charities. As a result, young people begin to appreciate the significance of differing values and are actively learning to have respect for themselves and each other.

Good arrangements are in place to assess, review and provide support to young people on admission. Ongoing medical support is good and includes access to a general practitioner, nurse, dentist or optician without delay. A wide range of mental health professionals support young people and the staff caring for them. As the needs of young people change staff liaise with placing authorities and request action is taken to ensure appropriate services or future placements are found. Requests to placing authorities have met with varying degrees of success with some being very slow to respond. Therefore appropriate timely support has not always been provided to the young person by the placing authority.

There are good systems in place ensuring young people have meals provided to meet their cultural, religious or medical needs. Young people influence the menu planning and have choices each day including vegetarian options. Young people's views on food vary although the vast majority of the time they are satisfied with meals provided.

A good 'preparation for adulthood' resource pack is available for use with young people. Young people can use this to review what they know and work with their key worker to develop their skills. This particular resource is not used for all the young people as the staff consider individual needs such as age and understanding. Food technology makes a good contribution to developing young people's independent living skills. Recently enhanced transition and independence programme planning has been imaginative and highly individualised to meet the complex needs of young

people. This has increased individual young peoples confidence, skills and ability to manage the transition from a safe secure environment to living at home with family members or in other placements. However, this highly individualised work is not presently available to all young people and there is a lack of opportunities for young people to gain experience of vocational education outside the centre.

Young people receive individualised support to maintain contact with family and others who are important to them. Excellent attention to detail ensures contact arrangements are unique and ensures both the needs of the young person and their family members are recognised and addressed. Parents say they are made welcome at the centre, young people are encouraged to keep in touch with family members and staff keep parents informed of progress made by the young people.

Young people benefit from physical education lessons three times a week which supports them well in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The personal, social and health education curriculum includes drug awareness, sexual health, some careers education and general personal development topics. This is complemented well by the cultural awareness course that is also provided.

Education outcomes for children are good. In the last year virtually all young people left the centre with at least one nationally recognised qualification. For most this was their first experience of educational success. Young people obtained 135 qualifications in food technology and 25 in French in the last year. There is an appropriate emphasis on supporting young people in the development of their literacy and numeracy. However, the recording of young people's progress in literacy and numeracy is underdeveloped.

There is scope to provide higher level qualifications for more able young people as some young people produce work, in for example art and textiles and English, at levels higher than is currently being accredited. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses are not routinely available, although young people benefit from continued support in GCSE courses they are taking prior to coming to the centre and are able to take these examinations.

Most young people produce high standards of both practical and written work. In an English lesson young people produced outstanding work, used ICT confidently to solve complex and technical problems and made very good progress with their projects. In art young people produce Batik work as well as other artwork of an outstanding standard. Young people also made very good progress in trampolining and were able to carry out more complex sequences successfully. Many of the young people are very keen to ensure they produce their best work and are justifiably proud of their achievements.

Behaviour is generally good. Most young people are polite and respectful to teachers, care staff and each other. Relationships are positive and mutually respectful. On a few occasions the behaviour of individual young people is unacceptable and appropriate action is taken to remove them from lessons when all else fails. The incentives and earned privileges (IEP) scheme is ineffective in helping this very small

number of young people to address their inappropriate behaviour. Punctuality to education is good and changeovers between lessons are usually carried out calmly.

Quality of care

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

Admission processes are robust. The safety of the young people already in the centre is considered when looking at new admissions. This ensures the centre promotes the safety of all the young people as well as the centre's ability to meet the assessed needs of those being referred.

Activities are varied and take account of young people's individual needs. Young people are able to spend time alone or in groups informally or during structured sessions with staff. Imaginative use of individual staff skills enhance the activities provided. Young people enjoy flower arranging, interior design, cooking, beauty nights, and arts and craft sessions as well as sports and games. Young people appreciate the effort staff make to vary the activities provided but still say they would like them to do more as being in secure can limit their experiences.

Detailed care planning is clearly linked to the assessed needs of young people and the objectives of the placement set at reviews. Young people take an active role in their care planning and are able to influence the day-to-day running of the centre and contribute to the décor and furnishings. The centre is well maintained, clean and bright. There are very good displays of young people's work in classrooms and around the centre, making it a stimulating and positive environment in which to live and learn. Young people feel respected and report that when room searches or personal searches are undertaken; staff explain why they are necessary and ensure the young person's dignity is maintained.

A comprehensive complaints system is in operation. Young people understand the system and are able to easily and confidently raise issues. They receive timely responses and add their views to the outcome of a complaint. They also have the opportunity to take their concerns to the next stage if they are unhappy with the response received. Young people are confident complaints will be taken seriously by staff. All staff receive complaints training and are skilled at resolving minor issues on an immediate basis, negating the need for a formal complaint to be made.

Teaching and learning are generally good. In most lessons, tasks are challenging and interesting and a good range of resources are used effectively. In these more effective lessons young people remain very focused and enjoy working to the best of their ability. Young people's very differing abilities are considered in the planning and delivery of most lessons. As a result of this good planning by teachers, young people usually achieve well. In lessons where young people were active and tasks were suitably challenging, young people's learning and progress was at least good and often very good. On a few occasions, tasks were too simplistic for some young people and differing abilities were not taken into account. Teachers and classroom assistants use praise and encouragement well in largely successful attempts to boost

young people's confidence and self esteem. There was an over-reliance on the use of printed worksheets. Also, on a few occasions, teachers provided answers to the task in hand too readily and did not allow young people to solve the problem for themselves to develop their independent learning skills.

Young people overall benefit from good support in education. All young people's abilities in literacy and numeracy are assessed soon after their arrival at the centre and this information is used in a variety of ways such as informing young people's targets and identifying where additional support will be required. Additional support takes the form of two scheduled one-to-one sessions per week as well as additional sessions to meet young people's needs.

Classroom assistants provide very good support in lessons. They are very effective in supporting young people to remain on task and to complete their work. De-escalation of negative behaviour is used effectively which results in young people engaging in lessons and making good progress. Classroom assistants are also skilled at encouraging young people who are reluctant to participate at the start of a lesson to go on to produce work to a very good standard.

Young people have individual targets and these are recorded on a simple but largely effective individual learning plan (ILP). Appropriately, targets may be behavioural as well as academic and may also be for aspects of school such as attendance. Some targets on ILPs are unattainable due to issues such as risk assessments and some timelines are unclear. Progress towards targets and the setting of new ones is reviewed monthly by the young person's key teacher, which is too infrequent to be effective.

A Connexions advisor visits the centre for one morning a fortnight and sees young people routinely giving priority to those who will be leaving shortly. To support transitions a summary of the needs of young people is forwarded by Connexions to the receiving local authority.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe at the centre and appreciate the security that the placement offers them. One young person stated 'if it wasn't for the unit I would be dead'. The nurse and general practitioner and mental health professionals are involved in the consultation process when a referral for admission is received. This helps ensure the centre identifies risks around healthcare requirements, such as substance misuse, and contributes to keeping the young person safe.

Good individual risk assessments are in place and these are amalgamated with plans of care and behaviour management plans. This ensures that all staff understand the work required for each young person and any risks they pose to themselves or others. All plans are regularly reviewed to ensure the vulnerabilities of young people are identified and action taken to reduce risk to young people.

There are good working relationships with external child protection services, police and mental health professionals which assist staff to keep young people safe. Advice on child protection issues is available from local services and internally from a dedicated allegations manager for the service. The allegations manager sits on the Local Safeguarding Children Board and disseminates updated information and changes in practice to managers and staff at the centre. All staff members complete mandatory training in safeguarding practice and a robust child protection system is in place which contributes to ensuring the welfare of the young people.

Staff in the centre work with young people who present extreme challenging behaviours and who can be a danger to themselves or others. They form excellent professional relationships with the young people and are able to encourage and motivate them to achieve and display acceptable behaviour most of the time.

Staff use an incentive and earned privileges scheme to encourage young people's positive participation in daily life. However, this can be ineffective due to an inequality of points awarded between the care and education disciplines. The difference in allocating points between care and education means that young people on occasion will opt out of certain sessions or display negative behaviours at school and still achieve overall on the scheme. This can mean that while the unsettled behaviour is challenged well by staff at the time, it has minimal effect on a young person's overall achievement for that day.

The use of restraint at the centre is low. It is used as a last resort and often implemented only in order to protect a young person or others from harm. All staff receive regularly updated training in approved physical intervention techniques. There has been an increase in the use of separation occurring over the last two months. However, many of the occasions when it has been implemented have been as part of a safe behaviour plan compiled in conjunction with clinical professionals. Additional staffing has been made available to support young people and the implementation of the plan. This additional staffing helps keep everyone safe.

The use of sanctions has reduced and there is more use of negotiation and reparation with young people. However, when formal sanctions are applied they are not always effective or relevant to the misdemeanour. This does not help the young person to relate the sanction to the behaviour.

Behaviour management records are comprehensive. All the measures used are fully detailed in the records which are monitored on a regular basis by senior managers. Analysis of behaviour management data is good. It is considered by senior managers on a monthly basis in order to highlight trends or any need to amend a young person's care plan or practice in general.

There are excellent well-established advocacy arrangements in place. Young people are able to speak freely with an external advocate who visits weekly. This practice ensures they can raise any concerns confidentially and receive additional support should they want this.

A strong and consistent approach is taken by staff to address any potential or actual bullying. As a result young people report that there is minimal bullying occurring in the centre and that staff are quick to deal with any instance. A good system is in operation which enables any concerns to be logged and tracked fully. All actions taken and outcomes are recorded in designated logs enabling effective monitoring and practice development.

Staff recruitment and vetting procedures are robust. These are overseen by the manager at the centre and the external human resources support officer and contribute to protection for young people. Appropriate security checks are made on all visitors and any contractors are accompanied while in the building.

The environment is safe and secure. A range of risk assessments are in place to ensure the safety and welfare of the young people and staff. Good links are in place with the fire service. Fire drills are held regularly and all equipment is tested appropriately. This ensures that young people and staff know what to do in the event of an emergency. Maintenance records are well maintained although for the large projects the records are not detailed. Safety information relating to cleaning materials used is also not readily available.

Leadership and management

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

The management of care and education at the centre is good. Staff across the centre work well as a team and are supportive of each other. Managers and senior staff from care and education are aware of their individual roles and responsibilities and work together well. Communication within the centre is good through daily and weekly formal meetings and informal exchanges of information. Young people benefit from a stable management and a staff team who strive for continued improvement.

A Statement of Purpose is available which sets out the aims and objectives of the centre. Staff and managers work tirelessly towards ensuring these can be met. Young people are given their own copy of information about the centre in one of two guides which are available dependent on which living unit they are accommodated in. Staff ensure all young people understand the content of the guides and provide assistance for young people if needed due to their level of understanding.

Good quality monitoring systems are in place. Effective monitoring of records and the quality of care delivered has led to an improved clarity in record keeping and a consistent approach to care. The reports from external monitoring visits provide a further element to the quality assurance process. The reports from these visits make specific comment and recommendations where necessary. Young people are able to contribute to this external monitoring and can discuss their views with the visitor.

The centre management have responded well to the requirement for all staff to

complete the Children and Young People's Workforce Development Council induction and qualification standards. All staff are already qualified or are registered and completing an appropriate qualification course. A programme is in place which covers proposed training up to March 2013. Staff have access to appropriate training relevant to the young people they look after, including mental health awareness. This helps ensure staff possess the competences and skills to effectively meet young people's diverse needs.

Staff receive regular formal supervision at an appropriate frequency. Staff members are supported well by the training and supervision packages in place. The training provided for care staff is excellent. Staff meetings take place on a regular basis to disseminate information and consolidate consistent practice. This helps staff to carry out their roles with young people proficiently.

The Registered Manager is well supported by an external manager. A development plan is in place to ensure continued progress in the quality of care offered and that managers recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the centre well. The centre management have complied with and successfully addressed the requirement and recommendation carried over from the previous inspection. This has resulted in young people being fully aware of actions to be taken in the event of a fire or emergency situation and the full completion of behaviour management records.

The head of education is very visible on the unit and hence recognises the strengths and areas for improvement within education. A robust lesson observation scheme is in place. Education staff are well qualified and all have significant experience of working in a secure setting with extremely challenging young people. All receive regular supervision from the head of education and have personal targets usually focused on improving further teaching and learning or curriculum development to benefit young people.

Within the constraints caused by very low numbers, the curriculum meets the needs of most young people as the vast majority do not return to mainstream secondary education. The timetable is planned well and provides flexibility to meet individual needs. For example, young people with a keen interest in geography are able to carry out projects in geography even though the subject is not included in the formal curriculum.

There is an appropriate emphasis on mathematics and English. The art and related subjects curriculum is particularly impressive and gives young people exciting opportunities to work with a wide range of materials and media. Information and communications technology (ICT) is not delivered as a discrete subject but is integrated well into English and personal, social and health education. Young people have good access to the internet and use this valuable resource safely and sensibly.

There is a need for the introduction of higher level accredited courses so as to provide clearer progression routes and to further prepare young people for their future education and training careers. There is no provision of work based learning. However, the curriculum available to young people is enhanced by visits from outside

groups such as dance and drama companies and also from a weekly visit from a professional artist.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.