

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	20/08/2012
Inspector	Bill Drumm
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	06/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately-owned residential special school, which is also registered as a children's home. It provides a service to eight children, between the ages of six and 12 years, who experience emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides a very warm, supportive and nurturing environment in which young people can grow and feel safe. There are some good examples of personalised, individual care being delivered to young people who have experienced some very difficult emotional times and family trauma. The nurturing environment allows young people to enjoy being children and to develop acceptable behaviour with clear boundaries from excellent role models. Young people have developed from their starting points. They have a safe and secure home where they can feel cared for and loved. This helps them to develop emotionally and improves their relationships with family members. Young people are very happy living at the home. However, each young person does not have an overall placement plan that highlights the specific objectives of their placement. This means that staff and young people may not know what the overall aim of the placement is meant to achieve.

All young people attend school on a full-time basis. Formal education is given a very high priority. Young people are supported to understand the importance of a good education, to attend regularly and to achieve their maximum potential. The relationship between young people and staff was observed to be loving, warm and positive. Young people spoke fondly of staff.

Feedback from staff, responsible social workers and other professionals involved with the home is extremely positive. The home is comfortable and well maintained throughout. The atmosphere created by the staff and young people is informal, friendly and very cheerful. Staff have a genuine affection for the young people and are fully committed to ensuring they achieve their maximum potential. One young

person's social worker said, 'staff have worked hard to build positive relationships with the young people they care for.' Young people know that staff, genuinely care about them.

Staff work hard to ensure that all young people are kept safe and free from harm. Young people are encouraged to manage their own behaviour and to understand the consequences of their actions on others. Restraint or holding of young people does take place in exceptional circumstances. The pattern for the use of restraint is decreasing significantly as young people develop emotionally and feel more secure. On occasions, sanctions are also used to help young people modify their behaviour. Written records are in place to show what sanctions have been applied and for what specific reason. However, some of the records show several items being removed from the bedrooms of young people in response to their negative behaviour. This is not in line with the home's own procedures for removing items from a young person's bedroom.

The home is very well managed and the staff team is fully committed to meeting the diverse needs of young people. The home operates a thorough recruitment process that helps to ensure young people are looked after by suitable people.

Independent visits help to ensure the home is run properly. The independent visitor speaks in confidence with young people and staff. However, they do not speak in confidence with family members, to ensure that their opinions are borne in mind.

The needs of young people are regularly monitored and reviewed. This helps staff to identify changing needs and to respond quickly to them.

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
33 (2001)	interview, with their consent and in private, parents and relatives of children accommodated at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	31/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- review each young person's placement plan to ensure that the reasons for their placement at the home are clearly understood by staff and young people (NMS 25.1)
- ensure that the home's room search guidance is followed, for example when removing items from a young person's bedroom. (NMS 3.20)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy very good health and they attend all primary health care appointments. Staff, ensure that young people access all the services they need to promote both their physical and emotional well-being. Where appropriate this can also include therapy services. Young people who become ill are attended to promptly and efficiently. One young person's independent reviewing officer said, 'the home, seem to understand his needs very well, I have no concerns about his well-being.' No young people participate in behaviours, such as smoking. Young people are encouraged and supported to understand why smoking is bad for their health. Young people enjoy a very good healthy and nutritious diet. One young person said, 'I don't really like roast dinners but the meat's sometimes nice'. Another young person said, 'the food's always great here and we sometimes join in and help if we want to'.

Young people are fully supported and encouraged to have good attendance at school. Academic and sporting achievements are celebrated and staff, have high aspirations for the young people in their care. One staff member said, 'the young people generally look forward to going to school'. Young people are fully supported to achieve their maximum potential.

Young people at the home have lived together for some time and generally get on well together. Occasional arguments do happen but, staff are quick to minimise the impact of these. One young person's social worker said, 'the children at the home are allowed to be just that, children. They learn how to get on with each other. Staff, provide clear boundaries and their handling of all young people is consistent.' Within the limits of their age and understanding young people are encouraged to get involved in jobs around the home. One staff member said, 'they help to Hoover up and in the kitchen, some enjoy it more than others'. This helps young people to learn new skills, to be more independent and to take care of their home.

Staff talk with young people and help them to make sense of their background and to understand why they have to live in the home. Family contact is actively encouraged and supported. Since coming to live at the home some young people have developed strong, positive links with their families. One young person's social worker said, 'the home has been brilliant. The turnaround with my young person and their mum has been phenomenal. The manager and staff have worked tirelessly to support their relationship.'

Quality of care

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

One young person's social worker said, 'I wouldn't hesitate to place a young person in this home again. The staff have, created a warm loving environment for young people to grow up in.' Another young person's social worker said, 'staff show they care and are not afraid to give a child a hug when they need one'. This supportive and nurturing environment allows young people to develop physically and emotionally. Staff set clear, consistent boundaries for young people. Their approach is firm but fair whilst adopting a relaxed manner. All young people have had their needs assessed before moving into the home. The home has then developed a number of care plans for meeting the individual needs of young people. However, the home does not have one specific plan which outlines what the overall aim of the placement is. This means staff, and young people may not know what a placement at the home is specifically meant to achieve. One young person's social worker said, 'I can't fault the day-to-day care my young person receives. The homes ensured he has a bright future now, which is more than could be said when he first went there.'

Regular monitoring and review of the care provided to young people takes place. Key workers have formal and informal meetings with young people to discuss the care they receive. This enables staff to evaluate the care they provide and to ensure young people are happy. One young person's social worker said, 'the communication's fantastic they keep me informed of all developments'. The results of all statutory reviews are available in the home. The care provided to young people is adapted to ensure the care provided meets their changing needs.

Young people's files are detailed and well ordered. Written information retained within the home provides an extensive record of each young person's life there, as well as the help and support carried out by staff. Within the limits of their age and ability, young people are involved in the running of the home. Regular, formal young people's meetings are held during which young people are asked specifically for their opinions. In addition, mealtimes provide young people with the opportunity to discuss issues within the home and to voice any concerns they may have. Young people know that their opinions are listened to.

The home has a culture of promoting each young person's life experiences and in ensuring they are able to participate in a wide range of activities. Activities which young people are involved in include, camping trips, country walks and the St Johns ambulance brigade. This helps young people to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

All admissions to the home are carefully planned and take place at the young person's pace. This process helps to overcome any anxieties the young person may have and to ensure the home can meet their needs. Members of staff are fully committed to ensuring each young person enjoys a positive experience while living at the home and is able to develop both physically and emotionally. A staff member at the home said, 'the young people come here with all sorts of problems. We just try to give them some security and let them know that we do actually care about them

and what they do.'

Young people enjoy living in a residential area close to the town centre. Each young person has their own bedroom. Bedrooms are individually decorated in a style of each young person's own choosing. This helps young people to feel safe and at home. Young people have access to computer gaming equipment, a range of books, board games and toys. There is also a television in the lounge where young people can relax. The home has a dining area where members of staff and young people can socialise and enjoy a meal together. The home provides a very comfortable environment for young people to enjoy.

Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Individual dietary needs are catered for and members of staff have undergone training in safe food hygiene. Each young person has written consent forms in place in order for members of staff to administer medication or first aid where this is necessary. Staff, work closely with health care professionals in ensuring that prescribed medication is regularly reviewed and, where possible, discontinued. The welfare of young people is actively promoted and safeguarded.

Young people enjoy being cared for by friendly, warm and supportive staff. One young person's social worker said, 'the staff have time for the young people, they show attention and always listen to what they have to say'. Members of staff actively strive to provide an environment in which young people are nurtured, where they can develop at their own pace, be happy and flourish. Young people spoken to said, 'this is a great place to live' and, 'I like the staff here'. One young person's social worker said, 'I wouldn't be confident another setting could manage my young person as well as this home does.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe at the home. There have been no occasions since the last inspection when a young person has been missing from the home. Staff provide close supervision to young people when in the community. This helps to keep them safe and free from harm. One young person's social worker said, 'staff have worked really hard to ensure the safety of all the young people. I have complete trust in them to do the right thing. I'm comfortable with their decision-making.' Staff, deal with any incidents of alleged bullying quickly and efficiently. Bullying is not tolerated at the home. The manager and all members of staff are trained in safeguarding and receive regular refresher training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to ensure they are both confident and competent in dealing with any safeguarding issues should these arise.

Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for managing their own behaviour and to understand how it affects others. Young people who moderate their behaviour receive warm praise and, where appropriate, a treat. Sanctions and restorative techniques are also used to help young people understand the

consequences of their behaviour. Written records are in place to show what sanctions have been applied and for what specific reason. However, some of the records show several items being removed from the bedrooms of young people in response to their negative behaviour. This is not in line with the home's own procedures for removing items from a young person's bedroom. Young people may not understand why it is necessary to move several items in response to one incident of negative behaviour. The restraint or holding of young people takes place as an absolute last resort. All incidents where restraint has been used are closely monitored by the home's manager. This helps to ensure that all essential information is fully recorded. Close monitoring by the home's manager has also resulted in a decrease in restraints or holds being used. One young person's social worker said, 'my young person was quite wild when he came here. I didn't think they'd be able to do much with him but they have. They've been marvellous and he's had an absolute turnaround.'

Regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting are carried out by the home's manager. Young people take part in fire drills and the time at which fire drills take place are fully recorded. Young people live in a safe environment because the home has a thorough and systematic approach to risk management. Risk assessments are clear, focused and regularly reviewed. Regular checks of gas installations and electrical equipment also take place.

One young person's social worker said, 'staff have helped my young person to learn how to behave properly. He's like a totally different child now. He used to put himself and others at risk but now he's much better.' Young people benefit from an energetic and caring staff team. A placing social worker described the staff as, 'willing to go the extra mile'. This helps to ensure that young people can learn routines, boundaries and develop appropriate behaviour. The home has appointed three new staff members since the last inspection. Recruitment procedures are thorough and help to ensure that young people are looked after by suitable people and are fully protected from potential abuse. Visitors to the home are asked to identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitors' book.

Leadership and management

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

The home's manager and staff were described by one placing social worker as, 'brilliant'. The manager provides effective and competent leadership and staff members are enthusiastic and fully motivated. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose and provides clear information about the skills, qualifications and experience of the staff team.

The home's manager and senior staff provide regular supervision and daily support to the staff team. This helps staff members to develop their skills, feel fully supported in their work and ensures young people receive consistent care from a well-supported staff team. Members of staff understand each young person's individual strengths and needs. Working practices are consistent in enabling young

people to develop both physically and emotionally, in increasing their self-esteem and in helping them to achieve their maximum potential.

Young people live in a home that is well managed. The home's manager provides effective management and has systems in place to ensure that the quality of care is regularly monitored. Problem areas which may be identified are quickly highlighted and swift action is taken. One young person's social worker said, 'they're never problem focused here, they're always so positive.' The manager has written a development plan for the home. The manager and staff know what the strengths and weaknesses of the home are and what improvements they wish to make.

Regulation 33 visits take place and Ofsted is provided with written reports in a timely manner. The reports are quite informative and give a general overview of how the home is performing between inspection visits. There are discussions with young people and staff. However, discussions do not take place between the independent visitor, the relatives or family members of young people. This means that their views about how the home is run or how the young people are looked after do not take place. Their opinions and suggestions for improvement do not currently form part of this process.

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.