

## Inspection report for children's home

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC402370
<b>Inspection date</b>	08/11/2012
<b>Inspector</b>	Rebecca Sharp
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

---

<b>Date of last inspection</b>	12/01/2012
--------------------------------	------------

---

© Crown copyright 2012

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The service is a residential school that is registered as a children's home to provide care for 54 children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The service is owned by a private company.

### 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**.

Young people receive well planned and individualised care from an outcomes-focused and diverse staff team. Young people are encouraged to read their care plans and offer their input. Therefore young people have a sound understanding of their own needs and how to work with the home to meet them. There are many strategies in place to keep young people safe and young people generally report that they feel safe living at the home. Daily living is structured and young people adhere to an organised routine in order to minimise disruption. Some young people thrive on this level of organisation and have flourished as a result.

The manager has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and the desire to secure future improvement. The requirement and recommendation from the previous inspection have been met. This is evidence of the manager's desire to improve the quality of care provided. Shortfalls found during this inspection are mainly in leadership and management, including issues with recording. They do not have a direct impact on outcomes for young people.

Young people's plans reflect their needs well. The home supports the young people to achieve good outcomes and challenges barriers for young people, including advocating for them where necessary. It is clear that the young people's welfare is the driving force for staff development. Relationships between staff and young people are good, with most young people able to identify an adult with whom they could talk if they were unhappy.

Peer dynamics are generally managed well. Incidents of bullying are managed

through thorough risk assessments in order to ensure young people's safety. Young people are also supported to stay safe through direct work completed by key workers and in weekly group 'circle time' sessions.

## 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.

<b>Reg.</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Due date</b>
4 (2001)	ensure the statement of purpose for the home includes; the number, relevant qualifications and experience of persons working at the children's home (Regulation 4, Schedule 1 (5))	31/12/2012
22 (2001)	ensure the child's placing authority consents to the use of electronic door alarms (Regulation 22 (1) (a))	31/12/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all staff receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	31/12/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made which includes details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure. (Regulation 17B (3) (b))	31/12/2012

### Recommendations

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

- ensure children are encouraged to have their views recorded in records kept by the home, following instances of sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint (NMS 3.18)
- ensure entries in records are clearly expressed, with particular reference to specifying potential risk of injury in restraint records, and clarification of consequences. (NMS 22.4)

### Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have made good progress in all areas of their lives since their starting points. Educationally, the stability, routine and structure the service provides has enabled young people to integrate back into a learning environment and has provided creative opportunities for young people to achieve positive academic

outcomes. Some young people have flourished in this environment, achieving exceptional progress. The on-site school provides a full and imaginative curriculum in order to support all young people to re-establish the significance of learning.

Evening leisure pursuits also allow for young people to achieve extra-curricular qualifications. This enables young people to secure a foundation of credible accreditations to aid their transition into future learning or employment. One young person is attending college and is being supported, at their own request, to ensure that they continue to achieve with the enduring assistance from the home.

The school nurse provides invaluable support to the care team in ensuring that young people's health needs are met, including completing statutory health assessments. The nurse is trained in child mental health, which ensures a prompt response in supporting young people's emotional and psychological well-being. The school nurse stated that this experience was 'hugely important, as there is a dual aspect to my role. New admissions use me for emotional support whilst they adapt to the boundaries of the home and school.'

Positive working relationships have been made with the local general practitioner, pharmacy and the school nurse from the company's other school. Working together, this guarantees that the young people's health needs are holistically met. There is a strong focus on preparing young people to become responsible for their own health needs, especially when they move into independence. The 'health passport' system in place allows young people to make important connections with health professionals prior to leaving, whilst still in receipt of support from the school nurse. This is especially important for those who have specific needs and ensures that they have the tools in place to maintain their health, while living independently.

Young people are encouraged to maintain a healthy lifestyle through physical activities. This contributes positively to their physical and emotional well-being. Dedication from staff in implementing consistent behaviour management strategies inspires young people to take responsibility for their own behaviour and to develop alternative approaches in times of emotional crisis. One young person said 'I'm better at dealing with it if I'm angry, now.' In depth key-working and 'circle time' sessions take place regularly, which further strengthens young people's ability to develop both their emotional resilience and a positive self-view.

Young people attend a variety of local clubs, making a positive contribution to sports teams and youth groups in the community. Several young people play football and rugby for amateur clubs. Others are part of an amateur dramatics class and others attend the nearby church youth group regularly. The manager has developed relationships within the local community and is currently exploring local Army cadet groups, following requests from young people. This allows for young people to develop friendships outside of the home and school and also to develop a sense of belonging within the community.

Contact with family and friends is supported well, in line with placing authority care plans and individual risk assessments. Parents, families and carers are encouraged to

visit to ensure that attachments are maintained.

## Quality of care

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

Young people have developed constructive relationships and strong attachments to some staff, in particular, their key workers. Young people who have experienced long term placements can evidence the impact the home has had on their lives. One young person stated, since living here, 'I've matured up and I do education better.' There has been improvement in education, social and practical development. For example, young people are encouraged to take part in a range of different clubs which are in place each evening after school. This promotes social skills, confidence and self-esteem. It also gives young people an opportunity to mix with each other through shared interests rather than class groups or with fellow residents in their designated home.

A recommendation was made at the last inspection to canvas young people's views on the institutionalised nature of using surnames for care staff. This was done by the manager and the majority of young people felt this was appropriate. Regular house meetings ensure that young people's views, wishes and feelings are expressed in the day-to-day running of the home. Young people are aware of the home's complaints procedures and were able to identify 'complaints boxes' around the school where anonymous complaints could be made.

Placement plans are individualised in their content and include all areas of young people's care, including personal identity, gender and religion. There are clear objectives set and a plan in place to action these. Placing authorities are positive about the care young people receive and confident that they are meeting their needs. One social worker stated 'it has been an excellent placement, both in terms of their care and education and (their) future looks very hopeful.'

Internal plans are discussed at reviews, in order to ensure that all parties are working towards same goals. Consultation papers are completed prior to reviews in order for individuals to have their voices heard. The home works hard in advocating for young people. In particular instances, it has been necessary to request independent advocates for individuals to ensure that they receive adequate and necessary support with important decisions concerning them.

The home provides a very healthy environment for young people. Not only are their physical needs met through the attendance at statutory medical appointments, but a wide range of outdoor activities is promoted through education and leisure time. There is a school counsellor who is available to provide emotional support for young people. The counsellor also facilitates staff consultations to support staff in dealing with young people's complex needs. This, together with the tenacious support from the school nurse, ensures that young people have access to the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs.

Education is promoted well by the home. The young people benefit from on-site education, because there is a seamless support system in place. Communication between the two aspects of the service is of a high standard. Care staff receive a thorough handover at the beginning of their shift, covering issues which have arisen during the school day. The structure of the school day is mirrored in the care provision. Young people follow a clear routine from leaving school, taking part in leisure activities through to bedtime. Plans are made in advance to ensure that staff and young people are clear about the coming week's activities. This allows for consistency and continuity of care.

Positive behaviour is promoted well and individuals have incentive plans tailored to their needs in order to earn rewards. There are clear strategies in place to manage incidents of negative and unsafe behaviour. However, records are often unclear as to what consequence has been put into place and young people do not have the opportunity to comment on measures imposed. As a result, it is not clear if all sanctions are appropriate or proportionate in relation to the misdemeanour.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Young people are safe and generally feel safe living at the home. Staff have a good understanding of safe working practices in relation to their role. There are risk assessments in place to ensure that dynamic management of risk is applied at all times. Individual risks are considered in the planning of group activities and where necessary, additional plans are made to ensure that all young people experience the same positive opportunities. Some young people are supported to take age-appropriate risks and in turn, are developing a sense of identity. For those young people whose participation would mean too great a risk, the home ensures that there are equal opportunities to experience new things, with added safeguards in place, such as additional supervision. Positive behaviour is promoted through good role modelling from staff and consistency in the implementation of boundaries and individual strategies. Young people say that their privacy is respected, which was a requirement from the last inspection.

There have been few incidents of young people being reported as missing from care. Appropriate protocols are followed for individuals in line with the police and local authority joint policy. For some young people, there has been a dramatic decline in episodes of going missing. This is encouraging in terms of their sense of safety and well-being.

There are adequate levels of supervision during the night, with a mixture of staff who perform sleep-in or waking night duties. Young people are further safeguarded by electronic door alarms on bedroom doors. These are activated at bed time and are only used to alert staff to the movement of young people through the night. Whilst this is an adequate measure to promote the safety of young people, not all young people have consents on file from their placing authority agreeing to their use. The impact on young people is minimal, as they are aware of the alarms and the

reasons for their use.

There have been a number of incidents of restraint; however, in relation to the number of young people coupled with their complex needs, this is not necessarily concerning. The manager and staff are confident that restraint is only used as a last resort. There are many different behaviour management strategies in place which take precedence over physical intervention. However, some records do not adequately justify the reason for the young person to be held. Information is held on individual's risk assessments; however, these are not clearly cross referenced in the recording of incidents of restraint. This makes it difficult for managers to monitor whether the use of restraint was appropriate.

Recruitment procedures are robust and every precaution is taken to reduce the likelihood of unsuitable adults working with young people. References are checked verbally and all gaps in employment are investigated in line with the requirements of Schedule 2 of the amended Children's Homes Regulations 2011. This helps to reduce the risk of unsuitable persons being employed to work with children.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The manager has a clear vision for the service and a passion for improvement. Development plans are in place in conjunction with the school improvement plan. The comprehensive Statement of Purpose ensures that placing authorities and other stakeholders are clear about the aims and objectives of the home. However, the current system which refers to the staff's experience and qualifications is insufficient, because it includes collective information rather than that which is specific to individuals. This breach in regulation does not impact negatively on the outcomes for young people.

The home benefits from a full staff team, complete with regular bank staff to eliminate the use of agency staff. Recruitment processes are robust and help to ensure that young people are cared for by suitable staff. Training is extensive and all staff are up to date with mandatory learning. Staff benefit from the expertise of the school nurse, who is able to offer training in many specialised areas. There are plans to look at additional areas of training to further strengthen the knowledge base of the staff team, in order to offer comprehensive care to young people.

Staff attend regular meetings and are able to approach the management if they have a concern. However, formal supervision lacks regularity. For example, some staff have not received formal supervision for nine months. Appraisal of performance is not routinely completed annually; or at all for some staff. As a result, staff are not fully supported professionally in fulfilling their roles. Staff say they receive positive peer support however, the lack of formal support and guidance from management potentially impacts on the quality of care young people receive if they are not adequately monitored in their practice.

The manager and staff have a sound understanding of the needs of the individuals in



their care and are outcomes-focussed. Young people's experiences at the home, since their admission, have had a significant impact on many aspects of their lives. This is demonstrated in academic achievement and the reduction in risk taking and offending behaviours.

The monitoring of the home is robust and contributes to the effective review of the quality of care for young people. Consultation with parents, carers and placing authorities is routinely completed and young people's feedback is sought in order to form an accurate evaluation of the service.

## 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* and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.