

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Shaun Common / Graham Robinson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This secure children's home is operated by a local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to restrict young people's liberty. Education is provided on site in a separate purpose-built building.

The children's home can accommodate up to 27 young people, who are aged between 10 and 17 years. Admission of any young person over the age of 10 but under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

Facilities include an artificial surface sports pitch, a sports hall, gym, garden areas and a courtyard containing a tennis court.

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**.

Staff provide young people with good quality care, which leads to positive outcomes. Young people's needs are identified and fully met. There are very good relationships with young people who are provided with positive support that leads to good outcomes.

Young people's health is promoted and they have access to a range of health care services, which leads to improvement in their health and well-being. Young people also make good progress in education, which improves their life chances.

Young people are kept safe through positive practices and the implementation of safeguarding procedures. Managers have a range of monitoring systems that ensures they have oversight of safeguarding matters. This leads to improvements in the safety of young people. There are strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. This Board has external oversight of the unit's work and this assists managers and staff to keep young people safe.

The environment provided for young people is positive and conducive to their care.

However, some areas of the unit require attention, as some décor and furnishings are showing signs of wear and tear.

There is an appropriate number of qualified, trained and well-supported staff in order to care effectively for young people. Although some agency and temporary staff are employed, this does not affect the consistency or quality of care provided.

Young people are provided with opportunities to share their views about their care and the running of the unit. Young people feel listened to and any concerns they have are quickly addressed. Their views are carefully considered, taken seriously and used to improve provision.

Leadership of the unit is good. There are clear monitoring systems in place designed to assess and improve the quality of provision to young people. Internal monitoring is thorough; however, summary reports are not sent to Ofsted, to enable external oversight of the unit’s progress. External monitoring undertaken through visits under Regulation 33 assists managers to identify and build on strengths and to address areas of shortfall or weakness.

Additional areas of improvement identified at this inspection include; recording the effectiveness of the measure in sanction records; ensuring that the searching policy is reviewed and adhered to; having appropriate secure records of physical restraint and where young people have been restrained, they are able to see a medical professional afterwards if they choose.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that sanction records include the effectiveness of the measure used. (Regulation 17B(3)(e))	31/07/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where there has been physical restraint, young people are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)

- ensure that records of restraint are kept in formats that cannot be tampered with after the event - e.g. bound numbered records or electronic entries that are then "barred" so that they cannot be amended at a later date (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.91)
- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the units records are up to date to show that all existing care staff have either attained or are working towards a relevant qualification within 6 months of confirmation of employment and all relevant training (NMS 18.1 and 18.5)
- provide a summary report of monitoring carried out under Regulation 34, to Ofsted at six monthly intervals and with twenty eight days of completion (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)
- ensure searches of bedrooms and communal areas are carried out in line with the policy and records show what was found during any search, if anything; ensure the policy is reviewed and agreed with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. (NMS 23.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Staff are skilled at quickly developing good relationships with young people following their admission. This helps and supports young people to settle in quickly. As a result, young people prosper socially, emotionally and educationally.

Young people recognise the high level of support received from staff, which helps them to progress and achieve. One young person stated, 'this place has been good for me. I can read now and I've been able to sort myself out.'

Young people's health needs are positively promoted. Following an independent health audit, resources since have increased. For example, there has been the appointment of a full-time nurse manager and an increase to existing nursing cover. This means that young people benefit from having a nurse available on site from Monday to Friday each week. This also means there are good arrangements in place to ensure that young people's health needs are met. Young people have quick access to nursing staff, who can call on community-based resources such as general practitioners, opticians and dental services for young people. A range of more specialist services, such as psychiatric and psychological provision are available to support young people with more complex needs. As a result, all aspects of young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are well met.

Young people's general health and fitness levels improve throughout their time at the centre. This is achieved through staff encouraging exercise and a healthy lifestyle, and through provision of a healthy diet. Young people are supported to understand the risks of tobacco and illicit drug and alcohol use in order to promote their health and well-being.

Although there were some mixed responses about food, the majority of young people feel that the quality, quantity and choice of food served is good. Forums exist for young people to make choices and requests which can be added to the menu. Any special dietary requirements are noted at admission and catered for. Main meals are taken in a central dining room, providing young people with a pleasant, social occasion.

Young people speak about, and engage positively with their education, which is reflected in good attendance figures. For example, three described difficulties with their education prior to admission. They now have a more positive outlook and are looking forward to gaining relevant qualifications. One young person spoke of his progress and acceptance at a local college when he returns to the community.

Young people are provided with opportunities to contribute positively to both the unit and wider community. For example, they participate in raising funds for a range of local and national charities. This leads to young people developing a wider perspective of life, contributing to good causes through fund raising and a greater appreciation of others less well off than themselves.

Young people's contact with those important to them is encouraged, supported and promoted. They confirm that they make regular telephone calls and that the unit facilitates and supports visits from family members and friends.

The arrangements for preparing young people for their return to the community and developing skills for adulthood and a more independent lifestyle are good. Young people are supported to develop a range of practical life skills in school and on house units. Young people work towards a programme of mobility designed to meet their individual needs and to further prepare them for the transition to the community. As a result of developing wider skills, young people gain greater self-confidence, self-esteem and resilience allowing them to look to the future with positivity.

Quality of care

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

Young people are well cared for by staff that are empathetic and sensitive, and who provide high quality care. Staff and young people interact in a warm and affectionate manner and quickly develop trusting relationships. Trusting relationships are the foundation of positive behaviour management strategies.

Staff have good interpersonal and communication skills. They use humour well to diffuse potential conflict and promote positive behaviour. Positive behaviour is recognised promptly by staff in day-to-day interactions and rewarded through the home's incentive scheme. The participation of young people in setting their own improvement targets ensures that they learn to take responsibility for their behaviour.

Young people are actively consulted about their care and life at the unit. Staff talk with young people about any changes or developments that will affect them. For example, they are actively involved in choosing new décor and furnishings for the unit. Young people also contribute to recruitment processes by interviewing potential staff members. This means that young people feel that they are listened to, and that their views are taken seriously. Staff and managers ensure that young people are given a full explanation when it is not possible to act upon their wishes.

Young people know how to complain and feel that their concerns are listened to and taken seriously. The unit's 'Can I Have A Word?' system is used effectively to resolve complaints and to promote improvement. Young people have access to independent external advocates who visit the unit each week and provide an opportunity for young people to talk about life at the unit and any worries they may have.

Staff undertake a detailed assessment of each young person's needs. Staff understand and address these needs well. Health and education plans are detailed and support staff to deliver a good quality service to young people. The routines of the unit are well-embedded and young people respond well to this structure. Morning routines are well organised so young people arrive at school promptly and in a positive frame of mind to achieve their potential. Staff are good at recognising and celebrating educational progress and young people are encouraged to take pride in their achievements.

The unit is good at meeting needs that relate to culture, religion and personal identity. Good links with chaplaincy services mean that young people are supported to practice their faith. Awareness days and group work are used well to address a range of social and cultural issues including hate crime, domestic violence and homophobia. Young people learn about a range of cultures and lifestyles and they are able to celebrate diversity.

Young people benefit from a wide range of constructive and stimulating activities. Facilities available to young people include a large artificial turf pitch, sports hall, gym, pool table and tennis court. These facilities are well used by young people for activities such as football coaching, roller blading, arts and crafts, keep fit classes, wheelchair basketball, trampoline and dance. During the recent school holidays young people were able to gain first aid and fire awareness qualifications. Stand-up comedy and photography workshops were also available. The creativity of staff in providing novel and interesting opportunities ensures that young people grow in confidence as they learn new skills.

Although the unit is adequately designed and maintained and conducive to the positive care of young people, some areas are showing signs of wear and lack decorative touches. For example, some paintwork is marked and some furniture in need of replacement, due to being worn or damaged.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people stated they have no worries or concerns. They feel safe and are kept safe.

On admission, a thorough assessment is undertaken which determines young people's level of vulnerability. A risk assessment is developed, regularly reviewed and implemented in practice in order to keep young people safe. Those young people at risk of suicide or self-harm are very closely monitored and cared for to ensure their safety and well-being.

Child protection matters are well managed. There is a clear and up-to-date procedure that is implemented in practice to ensure young people are safeguarded. There have been six child protection matters since the last inspection. Issues are referred to the local authority child protection services and/or the local authority designated officer as appropriate. Each incident is clearly recorded and shows how the matter has been quickly dealt with in line with the procedure. Records show where matters have been appropriately concluded. Where others are on-going, records show the stage the proceedings have reached and the effective working relationships with the relevant local authorities.

The Registered Manager has strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. He works closely with the local authority designated officer to develop child protection practices at the unit and has close links with the head of safeguarding for the local authority. The Registered Manager provides information to the Board on a regular basis about unit practices; for example about physical restraint. Therefore the board has oversight of the unit's work, helping the unit to improve practices.

The incentive scheme is well embedded in the unit routine and is fully understood by young people. Young people feel it supports them to develop and they move up in the scheme by earning points for good behaviour. The scheme has various levels from bronze through to diamond. Each level has progressive rewards and benefits to encourage young people to improve their behaviour and to develop positive social skills. A young person stated, 'the reward scheme is good. It is nice to be rewarded for your hard work.' The incentive scheme is applied flexibly and is tailored to respond to young people's specific needs.

The unit actively and positively uses restorative practices. For example, where young people engage in behaviour that is unacceptable or which affects others, they are encouraged and supported to make good or put right what they have done wrong. This can be through an apology or a task that makes amends.

Sanctions are used on occasions where the restorative approach is refused by young people, or a sanction is more appropriate. Clear records are kept of any measure imposed, which show they are relevant to the misdemeanour. Young people are able to sign this record or write their comments about the measure used. This encourages young people to develop understanding and responsibility. Although on most occasions the effectiveness of any measure is demonstrated through records of restorative practice, it is not clearly recorded or demonstrated on all occasions.

Therefore, there are times when it is not clear whether all measures used are effective in addressing negative behaviour.

Single separation is used appropriately. Records kept by the unit are accurate and show that young people are closely monitored during periods when they are locked in their rooms. Young people have the opportunity to sign these records and write their comments, which helps to promote their rights.

Physical intervention is used appropriately and each incident fully recorded. Staff are trained in the use of physical intervention to ensure they are able to use methods appropriately and safely with young people. The methods used by staff do not involve pain compliance and there is a focus on the use of de-escalation, diversion and diffusion to try to avoid any physical intervention taking place. Each incident is accurately and fully recorded; however, records are made on loose paper forms and do not use a tamper proof method, such as a bound and numbered book or electronic records with barring to prevent post-record changes. Although current records are well-kept and stored, they are not kept as required and this could affect young people's rights though the impact of this matter is minimal. In addition to the way restraint records are kept, they do not always show that a young person has been offered the opportunity to see a health professional. Records show that at times a first-aider or the unit nurse sees each young person after an incident; however, a first-aider is not a qualified health professional and this does not fully promote young people's rights. Robust monitoring takes place of all restraints by senior managers, which promotes the safety and well-being of young people. Managers check all records alongside viewing every incident on closed circuit television recordings to ensure practice is appropriate.

There has been one incident where a young person has absconded since the last inspection. The incident occurred during a planned visit into the community. An appropriate procedure and protocol is in place that was followed by staff. The relevant authorities were contacted and the young person was found and returned to the unit. A record is in place that shows the incident and the subsequent positive action taken to help keep the young person safe.

The unit has policies and procedures relating to undertaking searches intended to keep young people and others safe. The searching of young people is determined by risk. This means the kind of search that is carried out commences only after a formal risk assessment has been undertaken. The unit has four levels of searches, from asking a young person to turn out their pockets, using an electronic wand, a 'pat down' or a more thorough search of all clothing called 'level 4'. The policy is clear that no intimate searches are carried out and if there is a risk to young people or others and an intimate search is required, then the police or a health professional would be requested. A level 4 search can only be carried out on the authorisation of a senior manager. Records are kept of all searches and the risk-led approach ensures that young people's dignity is promoted and balanced with the need to keep them and others safe.

Searches are undertaken of communal areas and young people's rooms to promote

safety. However, records of searches of communal areas are not always clear about what has been searched and what was found, if anything. Records of searches of young people's rooms show that these are carried out at least fortnightly. One member of staff signs the record of the search. However, these are not carried out in line with the policy, which has not been reviewed since 2006. The policy states rooms should be searched twice weekly and by two staff. The effect of this shortfall is minimal as there is no discernible impact upon young people.

Recruitment processes are robust. There is a clear policy, procedure and process in place. All relevant and required information and checks are carried out, to help ensure that the right people are employed to work with vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

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

The Statement of Purpose gives a clear picture of the services provided and how the unit will meet the diverse needs of the young people. The young people's guide is written in a way that makes it accessible and it contains a good range of information that young people state is 'useful to know when you first come into the unit.' The young people's guide can be provided in various formats to meet their needs. For example in different languages for young people whose first language is not English.

The unit has an effective and strong senior management team that show a good awareness of the operation of the unit and are responsive to the support needs of staff and young people. The management team are consistent in their commitment to the unit and to promoting positive outcomes for young people. Effective systems are in place to communicate information to staff teams, ensuring that all are fully aware of how young people are to be cared for and kept safe.

A detailed and robust development plan is in place, which identifies areas such as service delivery, staffing and the fabric of the building. This is reviewed on a six-monthly basis and highlights where improvements have been made or where further action is necessary.

Visits are undertaken monthly by external visitors in conjunction with Regulation 33. Reports of these visits give managers a clear indication of the strengths of the provision and any areas for improvement. This supports managers to improve the quality of care provided to young people.

A range of internal monitoring systems are in place which are effective in improving the quality of the service for young people. This includes examination of matters such as physical restraints and night-time observations by night care officers to support the safety and well-being of young people. Although monitoring is carried out regularly and thoroughly, a six-monthly summary report has not been provided to Ofsted so there is external oversight of the progress the unit is making.

The management team have a clear measure of how successful placements for

young people at the unit have been and the positive effect that staff have had. Success of young people and their progress is clearly recorded within their review reports.

The unit is appropriately staffed to meet the needs of the young people. Although there is some use of agency and temporary staff, there is a consistent level of care provided.

Staff are well-trained and qualified. There are positive links in place with a local college and university. This increases the nature of the training packages offered to the staff team. Initiatives such as 'bite sized learning' are positive and allow staff's awareness and knowledge to be developed in areas such as hate crime and disabilities. Staff are trained and qualified to the expected level; however records are not all well-kept to show clearly the range of training and qualifications undertaken and attained in all cases. All staff receive a thorough induction to the unit prior to working with the young people to ensure that they are able to fully respond to and meet young people's needs.

All staff are very well supported through regular formal supervision and appraisal. Information from annual appraisals is used in the organisation of staff training. This ensures that staff members developmental needs are provided for and this in turn enables them to provide good quality care to young people.

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 the inspection of children's homes.