

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC048552
<b>Inspection date</b>	03/05/2013
<b>Inspector</b>	Lynn O'Driscoll / Elaine Clare
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	31/10/2012
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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 59 young people, between the ages of 11 and 17 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 **adequate**.

Young people's wishes and feelings are ascertained and taken into account in all aspects of their care. They feel safe at this home and enjoy sound relationships with most of the staff. The majority of young people are also positive about the quality of care provided. They are making good progress both socially and educationally despite their difficult past experiences.

The new manager is genuinely committed to providing a high standard of care and to improve young people's life chances. He knows and understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and is taking appropriate action to address the latter. However, the current development plan does not adequately reflect these on-going and positive changes. There are also limited opportunities for parents and other stakeholders to comment on the quality of care provided. Moreover, the annual appraisals of staff do not take into account young people's views. Recommendations have been made to address these shortfalls.

There are also three requirements arising from this inspection. This is to ensure: all young people can make and receive telephone calls in private; restraints are recorded in a suitable format; and the manager scrutinises recruitment records to ensure stringent practices at all times.

## 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
15 (2001)	ensure that the young people accommodated in the home are provided at all reasonable times with access to a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls in private without reference to persons working in the home (Regulation 15(4)(a))	20/05/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint, a written record is made in a volume kept for that purpose (Regulation 17B (3))	20/05/2013
34 (2001)	ensure regulation 34 monitoring includes all the matters set out in schedule 6 and in particular, staff recruitment records and conduct of required checks for new workers in the home. (Regulation 34, Schedule 6(8))	31/05/2013

## Recommendations

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

- demonstrate that the views of young people's families, social workers and independent reviewing officers are regularly sought on their care (NMS 1.4)
- demonstrate there is an effective system in place for reaching decisions as to which staff are appointed in the light of any criminal convictions or other concerns about suitability that are declared or discovered through the recruitment process (NMS 16.5)
- ensure annual appraisals take into account any views of young people the service is providing for (NMS 19.6)
- produce a written development plan about the future of the children's home, identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service. (NMS 15.2)

## Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

In general, young people are happy and settled at this home, get on well with each other and the majority of the staff. They also participate in day-to-day decisions about their care and their futures. One young person said, 'It's the best place I have

been in and I have lots of friends.'

Young people benefit from healthy lifestyles including homemade meals, plenty of fresh air and physical exercise.

They like their bedrooms which are personalised. They are also generally happy with the choice and quality of the meals on offer. Many get the opportunity to cook their own. Young people really enjoy the wide range of activities on offer. Choices of the evening workshops they can attend change each term to widen their experiences. Current examples include, jewellery making, guitar practice and independence training. This is in addition to a significant number of sports. Motor biking is a firm favourite. Individual interests and talents are actively encouraged and supported which further increases young people's confidence and competencies. Examples include army cadets, football, music, tai chi, gymnastics and street dance.

School attendance is excellent and young people are making good progress especially given their starting points. Indeed, four young people took their mathematics examination a year early. Consequently, some are now looking forward to further education and have positive future ambitions. One young person said, 'This place has turned my life around.' There are also good opportunities to undertake vocational qualifications to support their future employment prospects.

Young people make a positive contribution to the local community by, for example, regularly raising money for a children's hospice. Moreover, they have made and sustained positive friendships outside the children's home, which all adds to their genuine sense of belonging.

Some significant risk taking behaviours have ceased in this placement including offending and drug misuse. Moreover, diets and personal hygiene have also demonstrably improved which increases their confidence and self-esteem.

The large majority of young people enjoy constructive contact with family and friends. They are, therefore, gaining a good knowledge of their background and developing a strong sense of identity. However, they do not all have direct access to a telephone to enable them to make and receive telephone calls in private without reference to persons working in the home.

The daily life within this home enables all young people to gain age and ability appropriate practical and social skills needed for future successful independent living. Consequently, they are already competent in a number of relevant areas including budgeting, laundry and using public transport. However, a few do not feel emotionally ready to leave.

### **Quality of care**

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

Young people have a good range of opportunities to express their views in respect to

their day-to-day living and in the development of the service. Examples include regular surveys, individual key worker sessions and house meetings. There is also a forum which young people are elected onto by their peers, to represent them. Young people say the Registered Manager is particularly approachable and actively listens to their views. He is also making changes to some rather regimented routines and established practices more indicative of a boarding school rather than a children's home. For example, young people are no longer having to go to their bedrooms after their evening meal. Most significantly, he has introduced more unsupervised free time which young people are especially pleased about.

The Registered Manager has also ensured more individualised and child friendly placement plans are now in place which young people have actively contributed to. Moreover, all the care staff are taking a more active role in maintaining young people's files and taking responsibility for showing how their unique needs are met. However, culture and identity is not fully encapsulated. For example, demonstrating how young people from large cities are supported to adapt to living in a rural and remote setting.

There are limited opportunities for parents, social workers, independent reviewing officers and other relevant professionals to comment on the quality of care provided. This is unfortunate because the feedback received during this inspection process was generally positive. In general significant others recognise that it is a strict regime with stringent boundaries but say they produce good results. One social worker confirmed, 'This service is providing the young person with an appropriate level of care and education.'

Education is provided on site and care staff actively promote young people's progress. This includes the recent introduction of joint meetings with teachers exploring in detail any additional support required to enable young people to reach or exceed their individual targets. Care staff also attend and contribute to the annual educational reviews, but not to young people's statutory reviews.

A key strength of this service is the provision of a wide range of constructive and stimulating educational and leisure activities and holidays. Examples include, canoeing, archery, camping and kayaking. Particular highlights for young people include a skiing trip and taking part in a major public singing event. Facilities on site include a purpose built and well equipped sports hall, a drama studio, bike track and a farm. They also make full use of local community leisure activities.

All young people's achievements are celebrated and rewarded which increases their feelings of self-worth.

This service will challenge placing authorities if decisions made are deemed not to be in the child's best interest and ensure they receive independent advocates. This means, for example, young people move on to placements that best meet their assessed needs, school placements are maintained and constructive contact is re-established.

This service benefits from having a qualified nurse on site who ensures timely statutory medicals and routine health appointments. Communication between the nurse, school staff and the care team has much improved resulting in consistent practices. The arrangements for the storage, administration and recording of medicines are safe and effective. However, there are no young people who self-medicate which is recognised by the service as an area for development to ensure young people are suitably prepared for independent living.

Young people benefit from a clean, healthy and well maintained environment with extensive grounds.

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

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

Overall there are adequate arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of all the young people currently living at this home. All the care staff are trained in safeguarding to ensure they respond appropriately in the event of any disclosures of abuse.

Individual risks are clearly identified. However, there are limited opportunities to enable some young people to take reasonable risks as part of their continued development. This is an on-going challenge the new Registered Manager is currently addressing and is making positive changes to other established practices. For example, the whole group is no longer being sanctioned for the misdemeanours of a few. He is also closely monitoring the use of restraints to ensure safe practices and to identify any patterns and trends. For example, although there is a 17% decrease in the use of restraints compared to the previous year, he has identified an increase in the month of April. This reflects some young people's anxieties about having to move on in a few weeks' time. Consequently the home is liaising closely with social workers to ensure a smooth transition.

Recent sanction and restraint records demonstrate that the views of young people are now actively sought and any concerns raised are taken seriously and acted upon. This includes the suspension of staff as a neutral act during an investigation. However, the current process of binding the separate incidents sheets after the event does not meet statutory requirements and guidance. It does not ensure that entries are not tampered with.

In the context that the majority of young people do not positively choose to be placed here, they are relatively happy and settled and feel safe. They learn important social skills such as patience and tolerance and confirm bullying is not a problem.

Young people are very clear about the rules and strict boundaries in place. Good behaviour and effort is rewarded and is having the desired effect.

Young people can all identify someone they would speak to if they have any concerns. It was particularly highlighted by several young people that the Registered

Manager is very approachable and described by one young person as, 'The most open member of staff.' All young people know how to make a formal complaint and a few have exercised that right.

The establishment of good working relationships and effective joint protocols in place with the local police minimise incidents of young people going missing. The police also confirm, 'this service is better than most at dealing with incidents and only involve the police where necessary.'

All the required health and safety certificates are in place and fire checks undertaken at the required frequencies. This ensures the environment is kept physically very safe and secure. Young people take part in regular fire drills so they know exactly what to do in the event of a real fire.

Staff recruitment files include all the legally required information to evidence a safe and competent workforce. However, the records do not always demonstrate a thorough process. For example, the home has an established practice of evaluating and risk assessing the reasons for still employing an individual in the light of any criminal convictions or other concerns about suitability that are declared or discovered during the process. However, this important safeguard is not consistently recorded in sufficient detail.

## **Leadership and management**

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

This home is financially viable and well resourced. This includes a recent recruitment drive specifically to increase staffing ratios and a new organisational structure to ensure suitable deputising arrangements in the absence of the manager.

The new Registered Manager is suitably qualified and experienced and is actively driving improvements. He has an extremely good knowledge of the individual needs and wishes of all the young people and will appropriately challenge placing authorities if necessary in young people's best interests. He is also making some positive changes to systems and documentation, but recognises this is a gradual process. In particular he is revising current and introducing new monitoring systems to ensure that any shortfalls are efficiently identified and addressed. This includes, for example, monthly analysis of all notifications. However, monthly schedule 6 monitoring does not currently include close scrutiny of staff files to ensure stringent recruitment procedures are always adhered to.

This home keeps Ofsted well informed of any significant events. These demonstrate good collaborative working with all relevant agencies to safeguard and protect young people's welfare.

Staff say the manager is very accessible and approachable to discuss any matters at any time. They also confirm satisfaction with the regularity and quality of more formal individual supervision sessions. An effective system has also recently been



introduced to ensure timely annual appraisals. This enables all staff to fully explore their continued personal development and future training needs. However, the current process does not include the views of young people.

Given the recent staff turnover, only 71 per cent of the current staff team hold the required qualification for their respective roles which is being addressed. However, they do all benefit from on-going relevant training opportunities to continue to develop their skills and knowledge.

The three recommendations made at the last interim inspection on 31 October 2012 have been satisfactorily addressed. Consequently, all individual risk assessments have been reviewed and revised as necessary. This has resulted in more young people having access to the internet and unsupervised free time. A six month regulation 34 report has also been forwarded to Ofsted.

The Registered Manager has clear developments for continuing to improve the facilities on offer. These include: conservatories on the houses to provide more communal space; a café area attached to the shop and renovating and furnishing a separate building specifically for family contact. However, these positive future plans are not reflected in the current whole service development plan which has an education bias.

The home's Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the current aims, policies, practices and organisational structure. Young people are also given a meaningful children's guide during the admission process so they understand the services provided.

Young people's files are securely stored. They provide an accurate and positive account of their background, progress, achievements and future goals.

## 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.