

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC069336
<b>Inspection date</b>	09/10/2013
<b>Inspector</b>	Thomas Webber / Wendy Anderson
<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>	11/03/2013
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

This school provides care and accommodation for up to 76 young people with autistic spectrum disorder and learning disabilities. It operates as an independent co-educational residential special school which also provides accommodation for a number of young people receiving up to 52 weeks placements and is therefore registered as a children's home.

Students are accommodated in nine on-site residential houses and one off-site house in a neighbouring village. The school is set around a restored country house, within acres of parkland.

### 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**.

Overall the home provides young people with a good standard of care. Quality of care and outcomes for young people are rated as outstanding. The manager provides strong and effective leadership. Young people continue to make significant progress in many aspects of their lives due to the high level of individual support they receive from the manager and the staff team.

Staff are highly motivated and committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for young people, socially, emotionally and educationally. Staff are consistently concerned about the welfare and safety of the young people. Staff interpret the behaviours of young people and are able to reduce anxieties by implementing strategies in a consistent manner. Young people are provided with structure and routine; this enables them to feel safe in their environment and staff are skilled at recognising when young people require additional support.

Young people are encouraged to make choices and express their views through their preferred methods of communication. Progress is seen across many aspects of the lives of the young people. Parents and professionals endorse these positive achievements of young people.

Areas of deficiency were identified in relation to some records. These relate to complaints, restraints and records if a young person goes missing. Deficiencies were also identified in some areas of supervision and the qualifications of staff.

## 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 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 is always legible and provides a comprehensive record of the event. (Regulation 17B(3))	30/11/2013
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation. (Regulation 24(5))	30/11/2013

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that written records are developed and kept by the home relating to all aspects of when a child goes missing. (NMS 5.10)
- accelerate the arrangements to ensure that all existing staff attain the level 3 Children & Young People's Workforce Diploma. (NMS 18.5)
- ensure that all staff are provided with regular supervision. (NMS 19.4)

### Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make significant progress in many areas of their lives. This is a result of the individualised child-focused care young people receive which successfully maximises their potential. The implementation of personalised planning with young people working towards individual goals is successful in increasing their level of confidence. The parents of one young person commented that, 'the placement is fantastic, their child is making significant progress educationally, the management of their behaviour is now calmer, less traumatic and more manageable. The high level

of support they receive has enabled them to make significant progress with their personal care and helped them to develop more independent skills.'

All young people attend the on-site education provision where they access a 'waking day curriculum'. The curriculum is applied across the school and residential provision. The school also places a high emphasis on creating meaningful and functional learning opportunities for young people which builds on their individual strengths and interests to provide a person-centred approach. Staff fully support the educational needs of young people whereby they now achieve excellent attendance. Teaching and care staff work extremely cohesively together. This approach enables young people to make successful progress and helps them to strive towards achieving their full potential.

The facilities provide young people with an excellent range of indoor and outdoor leisure activities, including extensive grounds and outdoor space. Young people are fully supported to engage in a wide range of activities both on site and within the wider community.

Excellent communication is maintained between the home and the parents of young people and other professionals. Parents and professionals are very positive in their comments about the care and services young people receive. The results of a parent survey undertaken by the service in April 2013 highlighted a high proportion of satisfaction with the care and services provided. Parents commented that 'staff are caring, knowledgeable about autism and about their children. Their sons and daughters are kept safe and secure and make progress in communication, behaviour, personal care and developing life skills since being admitted to the home.' Parents also confirm that their children are happy living at the home, are able to access a good range of experiences and their needs are met. In addition, parents feel very well supported through the training, advice and support they receive. They feel that their comments are listened to and acted upon, they are kept well informed and their overall expectations are met.

Transition plans are very robust and take into account the length of time some young people require to process and adapt to their new environment. This process can also include staff supporting young people and their parents on such visits to new provisions. Staff are proactive in ensuring that all relevant information relating to individual young people is shared with the new provision to ensure a successful transition.

## **Quality of care**

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

Young people benefit from excellent relationships with staff which is a real strength of the service. Staff demonstrate an extensive understanding of the individual and complex needs of the young people. Where young people receive intimate care, this is carried out sensitively, with respect and dignity. They are cared for by an enthusiastic and very committed staff team who are very concerned about the safety

and welfare of the young people. The high levels of individual care and support contribute to the significant progress achieved by young people living at the home. This view was reiterated by comments received from the parents of young people and other professionals.

Staff fully support and enable young people to express their views and wishes by using their preferred method of communication. Young people are offered every opportunity to make a range of choices, on a daily basis, about many aspects of their care. This includes snacks, drinks, clothes, activities and when addressing their personal care needs. Young people respond positively to the approach of staff who carry out their duties in a respectful and caring manner.

Young people are provided with information in a user friendly format on how to complain. Complaints are normally made by the parents of young people. Although the home takes prompt action to address and resolve all complaints/concerns, thorough records are not maintained of these. The written complaints procedure also does not set out identifiable timescales for responses.

The individual care planning for young people is exceptional. All aspects of their care requirements are well documented and translated into detailed individual plans. These plans are frequently reviewed and updated to reflect the current and diverse needs of young people, including their medical, health and additional support required due to their disabilities. Staff demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of these plans which enable them to provide a proactive and consistent approach in supporting the needs of young people.

The health care needs of young people are extremely well managed and are overseen by the range of health professionals on site. Strong links are also maintained between these and external health care professionals. These arrangements ensure that the health care needs of young people are robustly met. However, in respect to one incident staff did not necessarily follow the most appropriate advice. This could have potentially compromised the health of the young person. The home has subsequently reiterated the appropriate procedures for this area of practice. There are sound arrangements in place for the safe storage and management of the administration of medication for the protection of young people.

Young people are supported and encouraged to make healthy choices in relation to the food they eat and the range of activities they engage in. The individual cultural and dietary needs and personal preferences of young people are well catered for. The range of nutritious meals provided encourages young people to choose and try new food to gain a greater appreciation of the meals available. Young people, where at all possible are involved in the planning, budgeting and preparation of some meals with the support of staff. This is particularly useful for young people who are developing independent living skills.

Young people are accommodated in one of ten separate houses, one of which is located in a nearby village. These provide young people with a homely, welcoming and relaxed atmosphere. Each house also provides young people with a comfortable

environment which is tailored to meet their needs and is generally maintained to a high standard. A robust maintenance programme is in place which ensures that any defects are promptly addressed. Young people are provided with their own bedrooms which are personalised to their individual wishes. The houses also provide young people with good social spaces which are well equipped. Good bathing and toilet facilities are also provided to meet their individual and collective needs with some houses providing en-suite facilities. The privacy and dignity of young people are well promoted when using these facilities.

The safety of young people is paramount. As a result, the school and its environment have been designed in such a way as to support the transition of young people around the site and to aid their security. It is reported that a significant number of young people find moving between different areas of the school and their houses very difficult due to the stress and anxiety this can cause. A system has been designed to divide specific areas of the campus with a system of metal grids and gates. This system is part of a designed environment strategy to alleviate the anxieties of young people. This strategy is kept under review to ensure that it reflects and meets the needs of the young people accommodated.

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

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

The home liaises well with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) in respect to any potential safeguarding concern. They have also forged close working partnerships with them to contribute to the protection of young people. However, records indicate that the home has instigated investigations to some potential safeguarding concerns without prior agreement with the local authority designated officer (LADO). Any such agreement between both parties would benefit being formalised in writing.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training and demonstrate a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in respect to any safeguarding concerns. Team meetings also provide staff with opportunities to receive regular updates on procedures to follow and focus on particular vulnerabilities of young people. Staff are able to interpret the behaviours of young people very well which enables them to act effectively in instances where young people are worried or upset. The safeguarding policies and procedures of the home were updated during the inspection to ensure that they are fully compliant.

The service ensures that thorough and robust staff recruitment processes and practices are followed for the careful vetting of new staff. These ensure that new staff do not commence employment until all the required checks are carried out and deemed satisfactory. This practice contributes to the protection of young people.

Management and staff take appropriate measures to keep young people safe. The high staffing levels and close monitoring of young people minimise the risk of them going missing. No incidents have occurred since the last full inspection. A clear

written policy and procedure is established which is well known to staff. This enables them to take prompt action should an incident occur. However, an effective and robust recording system has not yet been established as there have been no incidents. The lack of this system does not currently significantly impact on the safety of young people.

The behaviour of young people is generally well managed and praise and positive motivators are used to promote positive behaviour. The psychological team provide strong input and clinical oversight in respect to the behaviours of young people. As a result, comprehensive individual support plans are well established for young people. These provide agreed proactive and reactive strategies to support young people in learning to self-manage their behaviour. These plans also provide staff with tools to effectively manage the challenging behaviour of young people and ensure that a consistent approach is achieved. The service maintains a detailed analysis which monitors all incidents and physical interventions. This enables patterns and trends to be identified and new strategies implemented where necessary.

A high number of physical interventions/restraints have been used since November 2012. The Registered Manager recognises this and is in the process of providing staff with additional training to distinguish the difference between restraint and physical intervention. Many of the incidents are described as being more 'guiding' rather than restraint. Records of restraint and incidents are not always legible and do not provide a comprehensive record of the event.

Staff respond appropriately to all incidents of bullying. The home's approach takes into account the complex needs of young people and the levels of their understanding in dealing with any incidents. This approach is supported by the home's robust policies and procedures.

Young people and staff regularly take part in fire evacuation drills to ensure that they are fully aware of the correct procedures to take in the event of an emergency. The various health and fire safety tests, checks and servicing arrangements are suitably maintained to safeguard young people and staff. These practices ensure that young people live in a safe environment.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The Registered Manager demonstrates clear and effective management so that young people benefit from living in a home which is well managed. The manager is aware of the shortfalls highlighted in this inspection which primarily relate to maintaining comprehensive records in relation to complaints, restraints and records if a young person goes missing. Some of these records do not directly and significantly impact on the care provided to young people, however, the manager is fully committed to ensuring that these weaknesses are addressed.

The aims and objectives of this service are clearly set out in the home's Statement of



Purpose. This document provides young people's parents and placing authorities with comprehensive information about the care and services young people can expect to receive while living at the home. A children's guide is also produced in a format which is understandable to them.

The manager and staff team are very committed to ensuring that continual improvements are made to the care and support young people receive. As a result, staff maintain high aspirations in respect to the care of young people. Excellent staffing levels are maintained, within all the houses, throughout the day and night to meet the individual and collective needs of young people. This ensures that their complex and challenging needs are well catered for. The home continues to experience high staff turnover within the care provision. However, experienced senior staff are allocated to specific houses to ensure that young people receive continuity and consistency of care. The use of flexible workers who are familiar with the home cover for any staff vacancies which also contribute to the continuity of care.

The range of training staff access is exceptional. This equips them with the skills, knowledge and competence to effectively work with and meet the complex and challenging needs of the young people accommodated. Staff speak very positively about the training opportunities afforded to them. However, the continual high staff turnover impacts on the number of qualified staff within the home. The organisation are taking steps to address this shortfall.

The management structure enables staff to be well managed and supported to ensure that they are clear about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people. Excellent communication is maintained between the staff of different disciplines throughout the school. Regular handover and staff team meetings are held. These forums provide staff with good opportunities to raise and discuss any particular concerns or issues relating to the care of young people as well as to review and revise their day-to-day work practices. A sample of records viewed and from discussions with staff confirmed that most staff receive regular and good quality supervision. Staff feel very positive about the level of support they receive including the excellent input from the psychological team. However, it was noted that where actions had been highlighted as a result of an investigation, these were not always followed up through supervision.

The quality of care is regularly monitored through the use of well-established external and internal processes. These arrangements monitor how the home is run and evaluate the progress and achievements of young people as well as contributing to the overall delivery of care provided to young people. The manager takes all necessary steps to address any recommendations. The use of surveys completed by the parents of young people are also useful for ensuring that the delivery of care to their children continues to be of a high standard.

## 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.