

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Taylor / Jim Palmer
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Provision subtype	Secure Unit

Date of last inspection	04/12/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This secure unit is managed by a local authority. The unit is registered as a secure children's home and is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation. The unit currently provides placements for up to 10 young people.

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**.

This was an unannounced, full inspection of both the residential and education provision of this centre. The centre's fitness to continue to offer secure accommodation to young people was also assessed. A recommendation will be made to the Secretary of State for a three-year approval to be given for the centre to continue to operate as a secure unit.

Young people have areas where they make very good progress and clearly benefit from their time at this home. While education attendance is good, young people make adequate progress while attending education on site. This is an area in which it is identified that young people could do better.

Relationships between members of staff and the young people are excellent. Young people are seen to seek out the company and reassurance of the adults caring for them. Young people benefit from bespoke packages of care which ensure that they receive the guidance and support they need. Health care is well thought through and of a very good standard. The home's approach to restorative justice is embedded in a culture of mutual respect which values people's viewpoints. As a result, young people feel listened to and feel their opinions count. This is a key strength of the home. A young person commented: 'This is the best home I've been in.'

Two requirements have been made at this inspection, relating to ensuring that restraint records are appropriately completed and that all adults who work on site have their backgrounds appropriately checked.

Recommendations relate to encouraging homework more consistently and to developing aspects of the educational curriculum. A recommendation made at the previous inspection remains relating to the design of a part of the building.

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 the registered person must ensure that 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 in a volume kept for this purpose (Regulation 17B)	15/11/2013
26 (2001)	ensure that no person starts work in the home unless full and satisfactory information is available in relation to him in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2 (Regulation 26 (3) (d))	15/11/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the education and achievement of children is actively promoted, in particular ensure each young person is set challenging and personalised targets soon after their initial assessment highlighting the gaps in their knowledge, translating these into weekly activities that are shared with care staff and teachers so that everyone can have a valuable input in the young person's progress. (NMS 8)
- ensure the education and achievement of children is actively promoted; in particular, swiftly review the curriculum to ensure sufficient priority is placed on the development of English, mathematics, physical education and vocational skills, introducing accreditation that is valued in mainstream education (NMS 8)
- ensure the education and achievement of children is actively promoted; in particular, strategically plan, in conjunction with the care team, the further development of activities that extend learning during after school hours such as the use of the library, homework or group reading sessions (NMS 8)
- ensure the education and achievement of children is actively promoted; in particular, encourage teachers to provide more opportunities during the lessons for learners to demonstrate and explore the topics they have learnt (NMS 8)

- ensure the education and achievement of children is actively promoted, in particular, develop successful strategies for teachers to manage learning engagement in the classroom, by negotiating and compromising with reluctant learners, sensitively achieving the right balance between challenge and support. (NMS 8)
- ensure that the home is suitably designed in order to promote children's health safety and well being. In particular ensure that suitable facilities are available to facilitate improved arrangements for personal searches (NMS 10.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people make significant progress in developing their self-esteem and confidence, especially when bearing in mind their starting points on admission. They benefit from strong, trusting relationships with members of staff who provide clear boundaries and safe routines. As a result of this, the young people are able to reflect upon the reasons why they have been placed in secure accommodation and can develop skills and strategies to improve their behaviours. One young person commented: 'They do all they can for me.'

Young people have very good levels of attendance at the education on site. Their academic progress is assessed as adequate. Young people do not have regular homework and therefore are not developing academic skills as much as they could beyond the education day.

Young people benefit from having their views valued and listened to. They have numerous avenues to voice their opinions, including being able to attend parts of management meetings. Relationships and interactions with members of staff are warm and supportive. This enables the young people to voice how they feel they are being cared for on an informal basis as well. As a result young people are confident they can have an influence in the running of the home, for example, in developing the rewards system, menus, decor and choices of activities.

Young people can contact significant others, such as friends and family. If there are restrictions on certain contacts, this is explained to them. Close and sensitive support is given to the young people if family contact is an anxious time for them.

The home has a resettlement coordinator who plays a vital role in preparing young people to move on and in providing guidance and support when they have left the home. The member of staff liaises with placing authorities, and the next placement to ensure that there is a cohesive transition plan. This enables young people to be prepared for a move at a rate commensurate with their abilities and vulnerabilities. Young people have access to independence living skills areas and these enable them to develop their practical skills with staff guidance and oversight.

Shortfalls in young people's education outcomes mean that they do not make good

progress in all aspects of their lives while they are placed in the home.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between members of staff and the young people are of a very good standard. A cornerstone of practice is the restorative justice system which helps to ensure that all parties have their views considered and acted upon. This underpins an ethos whereby everyone's view is valued.

The staff are skilled at explaining to young people why, on occasion, they may not be able to do as they wish. This is done sensitively and the reasons for this made clear, for example, when explaining why certain contacts are not allowed.

The home has an embedded approach, using restorative justice, to encourage respect and tolerance for each other. This, together with the excellent relationships between staff and the young people, enables young people to reflect upon their actions and to put right and address any behavioural issues or conflicts. The system operated in the home has been nationally recognised and accredited and has led to an award being given. The unique approach by the home, especially within the context of secure units across the country, is an exemplar of good practice.

Young people know how to complain and to whom. They are numerous individuals, both based in and independent from the home, to whom they can address concerns. Complaints are addressed to the young people's satisfaction. The approach further embeds the value of young people's opinions and that their opinions are important.

There are good quality care plans which contain detailed information on how each young person should be cared for. These are developed using input from the young people, carers where appropriate, social workers and specialists such as psychologists. Young people endorse the plans enabling them to feel part of the process and to have investment in making time at the home meaningful and positive.

Young people's health is promoted to a high standard. All day-to-day health needs, such as appointments with dentists, opticians, and doctors, are facilitated by the home. Additionally, the home has specialist psychological expertise on site to guide members of staff in caring for the young people and to undertake assessments. Members of staff also undertake training in areas such as child sexual exploitation to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to offer guidance and support to young people who may need it in this particular area.

Combined with ensuring the young people's physical and emotional well-being is nurtured, there is a culture where healthy lifestyles are encouraged. Young people have access to specialists in areas such as drugs and substance misuse. Young people are encouraged to take regular exercise, along with a balanced diet supports the overall approach to improve young people's health.

The value of education is promoted in the home. Attendance in education on site is an expected part of the daily routine. As a result young people have high records of attendance. While attendance is very good, regular homework to promote academic achievements is not consistently embedded into the routine of the home. Wider self-care and independence skills are promoted and the young people are supported very well in this process. The home works very hard to motivate young people to engage in educational and vocational activities in order for them to invest in their formal education. For example, young people are given the opportunity to gain a certificate in food hygiene as part of their independence skills.

Young people enjoy a varied and enriching range of activities. There are choices which ensure that everyone has access to something of interest. The home is also very good at ensuring that young people are able to take part in activities in the community. As a result they are prepared to move on and do not become isolated. Activities enjoyed by the young people include art, football, a large gymnasium, fitness suite complete with dance machine, horse riding and access to karaoke and games consoles.

Each young person has their specific needs known prior to admission. These are also revisited in key work sessions after admission to ensure that the information is relevant and up to date. This approach helps to ensure that all needs, whether based on cultural, religious or medical requirements, are known and met.

The home is appropriately secure. Additionally, it is very well maintained by the staff responsible for this aspect of the service. Décor is of a very good standard and the home has undergone a thorough redecoration program. There has also been a significant extension built since the last inspection although not all areas are yet available for use.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people give unanimous feedback that they feel safe living at the home. They have confidence in the staff to address tension within the group and to ensure that incidents of bullying and aggression are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

There have been no incidents of young people going missing from the home or while out with members of staff since the last inspection in December 2012. This is partly due to the robust risk assessments carried out before a young person is out on mobility with members of staff. The positive and supportive relationships developed between members of staff and the young people are also a significant factor.

There is a clear protocol in place should a young person go missing. This is in line with local police procedures as well as those of placing authorities. The policy and guidance ensure that staff know what to do and who to inform if such an event occurs.

Positive behaviour is strongly encouraged and developed. Each young person has a bespoke behaviour management plan which outlines what strategies should be used to enable the young person to behave and to develop self-control and positive behaviour. Well-structured and sensitive support from members of staff enables young people to significantly improve their behaviours and to reflect upon any incidents.

The approach to minimising incidents of restraint has been very effective. Use of restraint is therefore, rare. On the whole, any incidents are assessed and reflected upon by those involved and young people are able to have their voices and opinions recorded. However, one incident was noted where the recording was not rigorous or clear. Young person also had not recorded their views about the restraint. The action taken by the member of staff involved was effective and protected the young person from possible harm. However, the lack of detail and effective monitoring of the recording means that the incident has not been of the high standard expected in the home and does not meet the regulations concerning this area.

Members of staff who have direct contact with young people have the appropriate checks carried out before they commence work in the home. This ensures that only those with suitable backgrounds work directly with the young people. On occasions, however, the home has used staff from agencies in a support role, such as cooking. These members of staff do not have unsupervised access to the young people, but are nevertheless working in the home and are seen by the young people as well as having the opportunity to interact briefly with them. The agency supplying these members of staff has completed checks such as Criminal Records Bureau or Disclosure and Barring Service. However, they have not had all the checks carried out as required by regulation. This means that comprehensive checks have not been carried out and potentially, adults with poor histories of employment or lacking appropriate references could be working in the home.

The home has a robust and effective system to ensure that any concerns about young people's well-being, especially in relation to child protection matters, are rigorously monitored and pursued. This ensures that all necessary agencies are involved and informed and that clear, detailed records demonstrate how these issues have been resolved.

Members of staff know who to pass safeguarding concerns on to. Where safeguarding issues have been raised, the home has a thorough and detailed process in place to ensure that all relevant agencies are kept informed and how any issue has been pursued and resolved. Liaison with the local authority designated officer (LADO) on a monthly basis, to explore any issues, underpins the robustness and efficacy of the system.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a committed, energetic and highly motivated manager. He is in turn

supported by a very experienced management team.

All complaints received by the home are responded to and resolved to the young people's satisfaction. Formal complaints are rare, with the majority of issues being resolved at a low level.

The home has clear development plans about how it intends to improve the service and the young people's outcomes. Action plans are in place which show how the home has addressed previous recommendations from past inspections. For example, since the last inspection the home has been redecorated and new furnishing provided. This has led to the young people having a very good standard of accommodation. Additionally, the home has reviewed the system and risk assessment approach to carrying out personal searches and this has led to a significant reduction in the need for these to happen. Female young people no longer have to ask for sanitary products if they want them. One recommendation relating to the last inspection does remain. This is with regard to the facilities that the home has in place if a personal search of a young person has to be carried out. This is a building shortfall and while practice has improved in this area, the facility is in need of improvement.

Young people, their carers and their social workers are very clear as to the goals and purpose of each young person's placement. Each young person's placement is part of a vital process to keep young people safe and to improve their life chances. The development of excellent relationships and the value placed on young people's views and feelings enable young people to develop a trust in the staff caring for them.

Regular monitoring visits are carried out by an external manager. These identify any shortfalls and the home then writes an action plan to address these. Continuous reflection on the quality of service delivered means that there is an ethos of promoting good practice and determination to improve where shortfalls are identified. Examples of these are an improvement in the recording of sanctions and major building works, which have increased the home's ability to provide vocational training and an additional multi-functional room for meetings, leisure and family visits.

The home has sufficient members of staff to provide good levels of support to the young people. All members of staff receive regular supervision and appraisals and feel well supported. A good range of training ensures that all members of staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to provide a good standard of care.

Members of staff advocate on behalf of young people to ensure that reviews happen on time. This means that all relevant parties, including the young people and their carers, are up to date with plans and developments which in turn eases the care planning and transition process.

Overall, the quality of most records is good, with one particular shortfall identified in one incident of physical restraint. However, for the most part, records in the home show a good narrative of each young person's time there and how they have

progressed and benefited from their placement.

Outcomes in education and related learning activities

The outcomes in education and related learning activities are **adequate**.

Outcomes for learners are overall adequate. Young people make good progress in certain curriculum areas such as reading and ICT (Information Communications Technology). Adequate progress has been made in writing, use of number within Mathematics, Art and PE (Physical Education). The majority of learners achieve an accredited qualification and for many this includes a personal and social development one.

Attendance has been improved in the last year and it is good at over 95%. Work is often a good record of what the young people have learnt and in Art it is particularly good. There are no significant variations in the progress and outcomes of different groups of learners.

Learners make slow progress with their speaking and listening skills and the same applies to many aspects of Mathematics and Science. The education department has only identified some of these areas of concern and it has not devised yet a comprehensive strategic improvement plan to address all weaknesses in outcomes.

Teaching and learning is adequate. All teachers have good subject knowledge and this is used well to clarify any questions or misconceptions posed by learners. They confidently help learners to extend their learning during the lessons by providing them with occasions to show what they have learnt. However, they do not always plan for sufficient opportunities for the students to apply independently what they have been taught, allowing them to develop resilience by not giving them too much help too quickly.

The availability and access to classroom resources are good. In Art, learners have access to a good range of technology and are able to use the internet safely for study and research topics. Learners' good behaviour and staff's vigilance makes sure that students use tools and equipment safely in areas like Design and Technology and this allows them to extend their learning opportunities in practical subjects. They observe good housekeeping in cookery and follow safe working practices in vehicle maintenance. At their induction, they commit to the home and the school's ground rules and internet safety is well promoted and embedded in classrooms.

Behaviour management works well to ensure learners attend their lessons. Young people benefit from good relationships with staff and most students enjoy their lessons although not all participate well. Some good written and verbal feedback in English helps learners to improve.

Young people's educational initial assessment outcomes are not used sufficiently well to ensure each learner is set challenging and easily measurable targets to progress their education, behaviour and personal and social development needs. Currently,

the school does not plan effectively for the achievement of outcomes over the period of stay of the young people. Instead, learning objectives are set up after regular tutorials and these mostly focus on achieving short term targets.

Tutors focus well on delivering the targets that meet the curricular needs but not all teachers have a complete view of the overall young person's weekly targets. As a consequence, opportunities to embed English or to work on a particular social need, for example, are missed in lessons across many curriculum areas.

Tutors review the progress made in each lesson and link this to a system of reward which clearly motivates the learners to attend and achieve. However, progress is often measured against insufficiently specific targets and not all learners play their part in reviewing their progress failing to take full ownership for their learning and behaviour in the lessons.

The curriculum and enrichment activities offered at the school are adequate overall to meet the needs of learners. The school has established a very wide curriculum where most courses are accredited although many of the accreditations are at a very low level and cannot be used as building blocks for further qualifications once they leave the home.

The school has recently taken action to provide more opportunities for personal development and speaking and listening via the Forest school. Young people benefit from an outside learning space, which does not pose the physical constraints of a classroom, in a large garden. During their well-planned visits to the Forest School, learners continue to develop their social abilities by interacting with each other and developing team working skills, whilst looking after the garden and caring for its chickens.

Recent changes to the curriculum have been implemented such as reading sessions in the evenings although these need further development and a more structured approach as they rely on care staff supporting the young people and the school does not have any data yet on how successful these sessions are.

Enrichment opportunities extend learning very well. Educational trips within the community support young people's learning in English well. In Art, excellent links have been developed with local galleries and artists that benefit the learners' development of their creativity, self-confidence and esteem. In a particularly good case, young people exhibited their creations across a wide range of artistic media brilliantly accompanied by poems they had written.

Good examples of building the curriculum to meet the vocational and career interests of individual young people, where the school has demonstrated flexibility, exist. Several young people have been supported during their time in the unit so that they can continue with their mainstream curriculum, such as design and technology, once they leave. In other cases, the curriculum has been tailored to develop specific skills to meet students' preferred college courses, such as child-care. Transition arrangements into education are much improved and a good number of young people continue engaged in their studies, for a substantial period of time, once they

leave the home.

The curriculum supports learners with developing their confidence and helps them to attend as they enjoy the activities. However, the curriculum does not promote literacy and numeracy effectively and intensively. It does not prioritise literacy, numeracy, ICT and physical development sufficiently ensuring that alongside the low level accreditations that motivate and re engage students, the more challenging ones that lead to academic achievement are also focused on well.

The vocational range of programmes available is wide but not sufficiently focused on developing vocational, practical skills to meet the needs of the learners. The new hair and beauty classroom is not yet sufficiently well developed to deliver a valuable employability qualification as well as developing customer service and selling skills which are transferrable and on demand in the outside.

The Library as a self-study and learning hub concept is under-developed. Although the home has recently created a space for the library this is within the family room which is a multi-purpose room. There is a need to plan strategically the desired function of the library ensuring it provides young people with easy access and good facilities to develop independent study skills.

The school has no structured or systematic programme in place for teaching, reading and spelling that is well understood and implemented by staff in school and in residence. The relationship between care and education is not sufficiently developed to support students' academic achievement over 24 hours, particularly after the school day. The limited links between residential and education staff impair the development of reading and homework to extend and test out what has been learned in lessons and to develop good study skills for all students.

Many young people develop good personal and social skills by choosing from a wide range of short accredited programmes that focus on improving their understanding and awareness of these skills. For example, the drug awareness course is good. A programme commissioned from the local authority supports students' knowledge and understanding of drug misuse well, and provides good opportunities for personal follow up. In cookery, learners prepare well for life after leaving the home by honing essential skills such as shopping for food, nutrition and food preparation and enjoyment.

Teachers are extremely knowledgeable about risk and safeguarding issues affecting the personal circumstances of each learner. They are able to empathise particularly well with the young people they meet and they sensitively persuade them to take part in learning, most of the time. However, in some classes, teachers give too many chances to learners and fail to engage them into a curriculum or learning activity.

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.