

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC048552
Inspection date	05/03/2014
Inspector	Lynn O'Driscoll / Elaine Clare
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	03/12/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2014

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned residential special school, which is also registered as a children's home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation to 41 young people of both genders, 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**.

Most of the young people are happy and settled at this home and are pleased with the recent positive changes introduced since the appointment of a new Registered Manager and Headmaster. In particular, the relationships between the staff and young people have significantly improved. The home has also secured regular and positive contact arrangements for the young people, which is particularly important to them in maintaining a strong sense of identity. A marked reduction in restraints means young people feel more safe and secure.

The quality of care provided at this home promotes improved outcomes for all the young people. Young people are treated and respected as individuals in their own right in line with their up-to-date and personalised placement plans and risk assessments. Consequently they are all making at least satisfactory progress educationally, developmentally, socially and emotionally.

The new management team are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of their service and comprehensive development plans are in place.

There are five requirements arising from this inspection and one recommendation. These are to ensure that: the statement of purpose and the sanction records includes all the legally required information; all staff are trained in fire prevention; the use of alarms on bedroom doors are carefully risk assessed to ensure appropriate use; a report is forwarded to the regulator Ofsted following a review of the quality of care provided in the home; and there are effective systems in place for regularly

ascertaining the views of parents, social workers, independent reviewing officers and other stakeholders on the quality of care provided in the home.

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 sanctions records include the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure (Regulation 17B(3)(f))	31/03/2014
32 (2001)	make arrangements for persons working at the home to receive suitable training in fire prevention (Regulation 32(1)(d))	30/04/2014
22 (2001)	demonstrate that the use of surveillance is only used for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting young people's welfare and has regard to the young person's need for privacy, it has been agreed by the placing authority, discussed with the young person and included in their placement plan (Regulation 22)	30/04/2014
34 (2001)	supply to Ofsted a review report in respect to the quality of care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34(2))	31/03/2014
5 (2001)	revise the statement of purpose to include the number, relevant qualifications and experience of persons working at the children's home. (Regulation 5 Schedule 1(5))	31/03/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people receive care which helps them to prepare for and supports them into adulthood, so that they can reach their potential and achieve economic wellbeing (NMS 12.1)
- ensure night staff are supported and guided to fulfil their roles and provide a high quality service to young people; with particular reference to the use of sanctions for unacceptable behaviours (NMS 19)
- ensure that all young people's bedrooms are well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- demonstrate that the views of young people's families, social workers and independent reviewing officers are regularly sought on their care. (NMS 1.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

The young people living at this home are treated and respected as individuals in their own right. They benefit from highly individualised care to address their unique needs and personal preferences. A good range of appropriate specialist services are also provided in a timely manner to meet any specific needs. Consequently, they are developing more confidence, self-esteem and emotional resilience.

Most of the young people are happy and settled at this home and are enjoying contributing to new developments in the home. The new morning refreshment break is very popular. A number of young people are particularly pleased that they have now got their own pets.

Young people benefit from trusting relationships with the majority of the staff. They feel comfortable discussing any concerns with them, knowing they will be effectively addressed.

Recently young people are having more regular constructive contact with family and friends which is especially important to them and maintains their strong sense of identity.

Some significant risk taking behaviours including offending, drugs and alcohol misuse have ceased in this placement. Consequently, some legal orders related to youth offending have been rescinded early due to the excellent progress made. The majority of the young people enjoy good physical health and take full advantage of the regular physical activities on offer. However a number of young people smoke. This was recognised by the young people at a recent school council meeting and a variety of support packages introduced to try to help individuals to stop.

School attendance is excellent and young people are making good progress especially given their starting points. Some benefit from tailor made education programmes to suit their individual needs and abilities. They are also pursuing both academic and vocational qualifications to support their future employment prospects. However, some young people do not feel adequately prepared both practically and emotionally for independence. Consequently, they are feeling vulnerable and scared about the future and this is negatively impacting on their behaviours. This is acknowledged by the service and appropriate development plans are in place to address this weakness imminently.

Young people really enjoy the increased range of activities they can now take part in. They particularly appreciate their new off-site independence. During the summer holidays young people who did not go home enjoyed a camping holiday. They took the opportunity to try out a range of stimulating and challenging activities including raft building, canoeing, sailing, climbing and abseiling. Other recent group activities include caving and mine exploring which all develop team building skills.

Many young people particularly love working on the farm. Others help in the kitchen

to develop their skills and widen their career prospects. Contributions to the home's magazine offers young people the opportunity to demonstrate their many artistic talents, including drawing, photography and creative writing. This significantly increases confidence and self-esteem.

Young people are actively encouraged to be sensitive to others. Consequently they are involved in regular fund raising events for local charities. Residents have praised the young people for their polite and courteous manners. They have also joined local clubs where they have made new friendships. This increases their sense of belonging.

Quality of care

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

Young people are increasingly more positive about the quality of care provided at this home. They are cared for in line with their up to date and individualised placement plans which are regularly reviewed and revised as necessary. Young people's wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care. This reinforces the fact that their opinions matter and are valued, which in turn increases their self-esteem and confidence.

The staff are strong advocates in ensuring young people benefit from regular and constructive family contact and they actively encourage parents to be involved in care planning. This has enabled young people to be more settled in placement and has reduced challenging behaviours and restraints.

However, there are inconsistencies in respect to the use of sanctions for unacceptable behaviours and rewards for good behaviour and effort. Night staff have no input into these decisions and say communication with them is often limited and unclear. Moreover, records suggest that the effectiveness of the sanctions imposed are not consistently evaluated to ensure they are always fair and proportionate to the particular misdemeanour.

There are increased opportunities for young people to positively contribute to their daily lives and futures.

This includes regular house meetings and individual key workers sessions where highly relevant issues are explored. Young people are also encouraged and supported to participate fully in their statutory reviews. More recently they are now actively involved in the future development of the service, staff recruitment and annual staff appraisals. Young people describe staff as, 'nice', 'easy to talk to', 'listens to what I have to say' and, 'helps me.'

Young people and staff benefit from the expertise of a qualified nurse on site to ensure good health is actively promoted. She also ensures all young people receive timely statutory medicals and attend routine eye and dental checks. A key strength of this home is young people's timely access to an excellent range of appropriate specialist services to meet their unique physical and emotional needs. The

arrangements for the storage, administration and recording of medicines are safe and effective. Rotas are carefully planned to ensure there is a qualified first aider on duty at all times to attend to any minor injuries.

A significant new development is the establishment of a clinical team to improve young people's emotional well-being. An independent psychologist who regularly visits this home confirmed, 'The staff are very friendly and supportive and give us a good space in which to work where we remain undisturbed.' Young people also benefit from direct access to dedicated pastoral support.

The home provides a particularly good range of purposeful and stimulating activities both on and off site. The most recent clubs are rock climbing and kayaking. Individual interests and talents are actively encouraged and supported. Examples include animal care, gymnastics and mechanics. This is significantly increasing young people's competence, confidence and self-esteem.

Staff encourage and support good school attendance and achievement. Additional sessions are provided to improve upon particular subjects. New rotas enable a handover between education and care staff at the end of each school to ensure consistency of care.

This service currently provides a satisfactory standard of accommodation within substantial grounds. An on-going programme for the redecoration of young people's bedrooms is planned to commence in March 2014.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say over recent months they have felt much safer and more settled at this home. The general atmosphere is more relaxed and young people are more open and trusting of the staff. One young person said, 'It's really good here now. The new head and manager are really nice. Restraints have stopped and we go on lots of trips.'

Staff have a good knowledge of the young people and are able to recognise potential triggers and successfully diffuse challenging behaviours. Consequently restraints have significantly reduced. Moreover, young people have the opportunity to talk through these incidents and record their views to try to avoid a re-occurrence.

A worker from the youth offending team is highly complimentary about the co-operation and communication with this service. He said, 'My relationship with this service is outstanding. I'm invited to relevant meetings, copied into documents and any concerns I have are addressed immediately. I always get a room and privacy to talk to the young people. The staff are incredibly supportive with some highly vulnerable young people. Three orders have been rescinded early and some young people have moved back home. It's great to see the progress made.'

All the staff are trained in safeguarding to ensure they respond appropriately in the event of any disclosures of abuse. The revised course is interactive and informative. The main change is more emphasis on whistleblowing. Moreover, safeguarding is now incorporated into every session of a full induction week for new staff. Effective working relationships with external agencies are now firmly established to safeguard young people. Investigations are undertaken independently. Protection and support is provided for the young person, the person making the allegation and the person subject to the allegation.

The environment is kept physically safe and secure and young people take part in regular fire drills so they know exactly what to do in the event of a fire. However, the majority of the night waking staff have not completed fire safety training. Courses are booked for March and April and in the meantime rotas are carefully planned to ensure the person sleeping-in is suitably trained.

Recruitment processes are now more robust and staff files are in good order to demonstrate a safe workforce. The service is actively seeking applicants with relevant experience given the complexities and vulnerabilities of the young people placed.

The police report excellent working relationships to keep young people safe. Consequently, incidents of young people going missing have markedly reduced in the last three months. There is also clear documentary evidence of timely direct work with young people on their safe return to try to prevent re-occurrence.

Alarms on bedrooms doors are used to alert night staff that young people have left their bedrooms. However, this form of surveillance is not consistently agreed by placing authorities, discussed with young people prior to their use and individually risk assessed. These are legal requirements. Therefore, the home has not demonstrated that the measure is no more restrictive than is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of the young person concerned and having regard for the young person's privacy.

Leadership and management

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

The new Registered Manager is suitably qualified and highly experienced. She has an excellent knowledge of young people's individual needs and personal preferences and is pro-active in ensuring social workers take an active role in care planning. She leads by example. Regular meetings with staff ensure they have ownership of all the positive changes taking place. Consequently staff morale and confidence is improving.

Good deputising arrangements are in place. These two individuals have remained resilient during a very unsettled few months and supported staff through significant organisational changes.

This service remains financially viable and the significant improvements being made and challenging future plans are fully endorsed by the Directors of the company. This motivates the staff.

This home is now demonstrating a capacity to improve. The six requirements made at the last interim inspection on 3 December 2013 have been mostly addressed. Consequently, more robust monitoring systems are now in place. This includes monthly comprehensive reports from an independent visitor. However a six monthly report by the manager on the quality of care provided in the home is overdue.

The home is now sufficiently staffed to safeguard and protect the welfare of the young people and to meet their diverse needs and personal preferences. Improved systems are now in place to ensure all staff benefit from regular supervision, on-going training opportunities and timely annual appraisals. Restraint records are now satisfactorily maintained and young people's files include all the statutorily required documentation. Moreover, there are satisfactory arrangements in place to ensure that all young people can make and receive telephone calls in private without asking permission from staff.

Three recommendations were also made at the last inspection. In response missing from home records are now satisfactorily maintained. There is also an effective system in place for ensuring that all unqualified staff are working towards the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma within six months of confirmation of employment. Surveys were sent out to young people's families, social workers and independent reviewing officers to ascertain their views on the quality of care provided at this home. However, no replies have been received to date so this particular approach is ineffective.

The management team are clear about the strengths of their service and areas for development. A comprehensive and challenging development plan is in place to address the latter.

This home keeps the regulator Ofsted well informed of any significant events which evidences that appropriate action is taken to safeguard and protect young people. External agencies confirm good collaborative working.

The home's statement of purpose accurately reflects the current aims, policies, practices and organisational structure. However it does not include the qualifications and experience of the staff to demonstrate a competent workforce. Young people are given a user friendly children's guide during the admission process so they understand the services provided and the expectations on their behaviour.

The night staff are particularly pleased to have recently been offered, 'None stop training opportunities'. This includes undertaking the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma. However, they still feel communication could be improved upon. Moreover, they say some on-call staff are more responsive than others when additional support is required at night.

Young people's files are securely stored. They provide an accurate and positive account of their background, progress, achievements and future goals. Young people actively contribute to their records and sign to acknowledge their understanding and factual accuracy. The appointment of an administrator has ensured all required documentation is satisfactorily maintained.

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.