

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC020193
Inspection date	10 November 2009
Inspector	Vivien Slyfield / Joanne Vyas
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	17 February 2009
--------------------------------	------------------

© Crown copyright 2009

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.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This school is situated in a small village in a rural location approximately five miles from the nearest town. It provides residential care facilities for up to 23 boarders and several day students from various areas of the United Kingdom. The children and young people who live at the school have varying degrees of learning disability, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, autism and/or autistic spectrum disorder (some with associated attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). The ethos of the school is based on individualised support to children and young people. The school works with a multi-disciplinary approach and employs a nurse, occupational therapist and speech and language therapists.

The building is a listed building and the care units are divided between five areas of the school. The children and young people use leisure facilities in the nearby towns.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection that considered all the key standards. This is a well-run school, which values monitoring and feedback, which it uses constructively. There are some deficiencies in recording, with the lack of a sufficiently detailed daily log and the clear multi-agency agreement to short-term restriction of liberty to safeguard young people.

The staff and managers are committed and enthusiastic about their work. They are well supported through regular supervision and on-going training. There is good communication both within the school and with other professionals as well as a strong commitment to maintain contact with young people's friends and families. One member of staff underlined the focus of the school saying, 'the kids come first.'

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations following the last inspection. However, there have been a number of changes and developments in the school, which are detailed in the body of the report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There are effective systems in place that ensure young people's health needs are well met and that good health is promoted.

The school provides a balanced and varied diet for the young people. Menus are well recorded and reflect the meals that are actually eaten. Specific dietary requirements are clearly recorded and identified and include allergies and phobias. The regulation 33 reports identify the need for young people to have greater involvement in menu planning. Some action has already been taken in relation to this and young people are involved in a 'plan/shop/cook' activity. Most young people have their evening meal in small groups in their houses.

There are clear, very detailed health plans in place, which the nurse contributes to and updates. Medical procedures are robust and secure, supported by a meticulous medication policy. The record of accidents is excellent.

A trained and qualified nurse is employed and supports staff in the administration of medication. All staff are trained in first aid and the seniors who administer medication are appropriately trained. The nurse is supported by the speech and language therapist but does not have the professional guidance and consultation from a named senior nurse or doctor as recommended in the national minimum standards.

A team of therapists is employed by the school, and as well as the nurse, there is an occupational therapist and speech therapists. Effective links are well established with local community health services. There is a creative use of contacts with services such as opticians and dentists to prepare and support young people when they use these services.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school has clear policies and procedures which protect the young people from harm or abuse. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and understand their part in safeguarding young people.

The recruitment systems for staff are robust and well organised. All aspects of the checks required in Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations are met and exceeded in the verification of references. All staff receive an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check and are not allowed to start work until this has been received. New staff undergo induction training lasting at least two weeks. This training includes behaviour management, first aid and safeguarding. Staff are made aware of the school's policies and procedures and there is evidence that they are able to implement them effectively. There are effective systems in place that ensure refresher courses are attended by staff when appropriate.

Young people's privacy is respected by staff. The young people at the school have a range of communication needs and staff work hard to ensure that communication is established and maintained. Staff knock before entering young people's bedrooms and signs and pictures are in place to support the respect of privacy.

Considerable work has been done to ensure the anti-bullying policy is effectively implemented. It is creatively addressed in house meetings and cyber-bullying is included in the work done. The local authority has given the school an award for anti-bullying. Surveys from young people reflected that they felt bullying was addressed; one young person said they had been bullied 'but staff stopped it.'

There is a clear child protection policy in place, with staff aware of their responsibilities and to whom they should report. The staff with responsibility for safeguarding are clear about their roles and are available to staff when needed. There is an effective system to deal with complaints, which are well recorded and there were examples of thorough investigations.

The school has a missing persons procedure and a system for recording these incidents. However, there have been no incidents of young people going missing since the last inspection. The secure nature of the environment and the range of young people at the school means that such

incidents are rare. There is a greater risk during community based activities and these are addressed through appropriate risk assessment and are included in young people's individual plans.

Staff have comprehensive behaviour management training, which includes restraint as part of their induction programme and is annually updated. Records are maintained of all physical interventions and sanctions. The approach is to minimise sanctions and focus on and reward the positives. Records of restraints are closely monitored and trends are identified with action taken to reduce the need for this type of intervention. The records show that there are occasions when a young person is prevented from leaving a room until they have calmed sufficiently in order to prevent injury to themselves or others. This constitutes a restriction of their liberty. The use of holding a door shut has not been agreed within a multi-disciplinary forum or identified in individual placement plans.

Staff are clear about the school's fire procedures. Fire drills are regularly undertaken and take place at different times of the day and night. There are records of the checks of equipment and the fire risk assessment was reviewed by an external company in September this year. The records show that the emergency lighting is tested every half term rather than monthly as identified in the school's risk assessment. Portable appliance testing and checks of gas and electrical appliances are up to date. At the last visit from the environmental health officer the school was awarded four stars.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people at the school are actively supported and encouraged to fulfil their potential both in education and leisure activities.

Support is provided for young people by a professional, knowledgeable multi-disciplinary team of staff. The needs of individual young people are clearly identified in their placement plans and the support required is well detailed. The focus is very much on the interests and abilities of the individual. A social worker for one of the young people commented: 'there is plenty of evidence that staff develop activities to engage the young person's interests.' There is a wide range of activities available to young people and staff actively work to encourage and facilitate interests and preferences shown by the young people. The cultural and religious needs of young people are identified in their plans. There is evidence of young people being supported in practicing their religious observances and a social worker wrote in a survey: 'young people are supported to integrate into the local community with the support of staff and adequate forward planning.' Young people's surveys repeatedly made reference to involvement in local football clubs and other local leisure provision.

There is close liaison between care and education staff, which is supported through clear communication. Staff are child-focused. There is evidence from the surveys received of young people making significant progress and of support being provided by staff to develop young people's individual skills and abilities. A social worker wrote of the young person he works with: 'the school has helped to improve his levels of participation and self-esteem,' and another that, 'the school has undertaken some excellent work with him.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's needs are clearly identified and they are actively supported to establish and maintain positive relationships with their families and with staff who care for them.

There are detailed, well written plans in place, which identify the needs of the young people and translate this information into comprehensive plans with manageable targets to work towards. The plans are effective tools in direct work with young people. There is an effective key worker system in place supported by key care meetings. There is documentary evidence of clear recording of information about young people and of the progress they make. The way information is recorded, accurately reflects significant interaction with young people so that development is clearly identified. The plans are regularly reviewed within the statutory timescales and used effectively to monitor progress and identify future plans.

House meetings are used effectively to engage young people. Staff have been creative in their approach to these meetings with a strong commitment to ensure that the meetings are of use to the young people. They have worked enthusiastically so that the meetings, as more than one member of staff said: 'are not just a paper exercise, they must mean something.'

Young people are very well supported to stay in contact with their families and friends. There is evidence from staff and families of real efforts made to maintain the flow of communication between the school and family. One social worker commented: 'Contact with family members is promoted. The young person I work with has an open door policy for direct and non-direct contact with their family. Staff have accompanied the young person to his home town to maintain his identity and strengthen family relationships. The school also promote the young person having lots of photo albums.' A parent commented that, 'overall the school is very good and my son is happy here.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people live in an environment which meets their needs well. They are given opportunities to be involved in the day-to-day tasks of running the houses. Activities such as shopping, planning what to eat and cooking the meal take place regularly. They are supported and encouraged to develop skills that will be useful in the future. There is close work with other appropriate agencies in preparing young people to move on. One of the houses for young people over 16 has begun to create a small flat area to allow greater independence for one of the young people, with a view to his future placement needs.

The overall accommodation is good and meets the needs of the young people well. There is good access to all parts of the building. The style of the decor and furnishings is domestic and is clean and well maintained. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms and some have been involved in selecting colour schemes for their rooms. Some of the bathroom facilities are a little shabby but the general presentation of the school is good.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation and management of the school is good and maintains a clear focus on the needs of the young people living there.

The statement of purpose for the school has been reviewed and is compliant with the regulations and national minimum standards. Clear written information is provided for social workers and young people's families. There is an attractive children's guide, which is provided in different communication formats and made specifically for each young person. This is a creative response to preparing young people to live at the school and addressing them as individuals with their particular skills and abilities.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The practice of the staff values both young people and colleagues and celebrates difference. There is respect for all individuals. Young people are empowered and supported to extend the range of their abilities and maintain their religious and cultural interests.

The staff are well managed and communication is good between care, education and therapy staff. There are systems in place that facilitate and support the effective professional relationships that are established. Staff are clear about the management structure and their roles and responsibilities. Staff said they feel well supported by both informal supervision when requested and planned supervision every six to seven weeks. There are an appropriate number of staff available with a range of knowledge, skills and experience. An independent professional commented: 'staff have a good knowledge of challenging behaviours and how important it is to have the correct response/approach with each individual.' A number of staff and some parents commented that there are fewer changes in staff than there had been previously and staff commented on the better retention of workers. Some staff commented that managers are supportive and acknowledge and work around individual staff needs. Training is valued both by staff and the organisation. All staff are entered on the National Vocational Qualification course. There are annual refresher courses and training is appropriately updated. Staff are well motivated, caring and committed. One member of staff said: 'I love the way we're always improving,' and, 'the kids' welfare comes first.'

Monthly monitoring visits are consistently undertaken and their findings considered and responded to constructively. There are effective monitoring systems throughout the school with findings used to develop the care provided. However, there are two exceptions seen relating to the emergency lighting checks and a lack of a daily log as specified in Schedule 4 of the Children's Homes Regulations. Young people's files are well organised and the information easily accessible.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
34	ensure that the registered person shall maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and that they are kept up to date, with particular reference to the daily log. (Children's Homes Regulations 29, Schedule 4 (12))	31 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the nurse has access to a named senior nurse or doctor for professional guidance and consultation (National Minimum Standard 13.6)
- ensure that the measures of control, discipline and restraint used by the home are made clear to the placing authority, in relation to the need to hold a door shut, which may involve the restriction of liberty for children who are accommodated (National Minimum Standards 22.12)
- ensure that there is regular testing of emergency lighting, in line with the fire risk assessment for the school (National Minimum Standards 26.8)
- ensure that the home is maintained in good structural repair, with particular reference to some of the bathrooms. (National Minimum Standard 24.3)