

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC020594
Inspection date	26/10/2011
Inspector	Dawn Taylor
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	10/02/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

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.

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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The centre is located in an isolated and rural location. Set in a former agricultural property, the centre functions as a base from which young people in crisis aged from 11 to 17 years are supported to undertake a wide range of adventurous outdoor activities in which the staff are trained and licensed to provide leadership and guidance. The centre offers placements which are short term for up to 10 young people, most of whom are placed on an emergency basis following a recent history of placement breakdown and difficult or risky behaviour. The placements are aimed primarily at helping young people to gain some stability and control in their lives.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

This is a good service that positively impacts on young people's lives. Its key strengths are achieving positive outcomes for young people in crisis and the strategies in place for successfully reducing behaviours that put young people at risk. The staff team are professional, and effectively use their specialist knowledge and skills in outward bounds activities to help young people address their short term needs. This is reflected in consultation with young people, feedback from social workers, staff practice and care planning. Leadership and management is satisfactory. There is a strong and effective management team in place at the service. They are skilled at supporting a large specialist staff group who are constantly working with young people at various stages of crisis. The service has recently been taken over by Keys Education Limited and there has been a period of change. New policies, procedures, training programmes and other systems are being introduced and are taking time to bed down and become established and known to all staff.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
25 (2001)	ensure all existing staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. All new staff engaged from the commencement of the NMS (in April 2011) are to hold the level 3 Children and Young People Workforce Diploma which must include mandatory social care units; or be working towards the	31/12/2011

	Diploma within 6 months of confirmation of employment (Reg 25 (1) and 27 (4)a and NMS 18.5)	
34 (2001)	ensure there is a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. (Reg 34 (1)(b))	31/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure the wishes, feelings and views of children are taken into account in monitoring staff and in developing the home (NMS 1.7)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the overall number, competence and deployment of staff, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, can fulfil the home's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children resident in the home (NMS 17.1)
- ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme which staff are supported to undertake. It includes post-qualifying and in-service training to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up to date with professional and legal developments (NMS 18.1)
- ensure staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Young people, placed at a time when they are in crisis, make good educational, social and emotional progress whilst at this short stay children's home.

Young people who have been excluded from school or not attended, are supported to re-engage in learning and achieve vocational and academic qualifications. This is imaginatively managed by the services' teacher working in partnership with residential staff. Short practical qualifications are achieved by young people whilst undertaking outdoor activities, these are then combined with a planned staged return to school and class groups. Priority is given to the best short term and long term goals for that individual. For example, catching up on course work and completing exams or attending school and functioning in a class group.

Those young people who have historically had inappropriate social links, or are choosing not to positively engage, learn new skills and participate in a range of tasks and activities. When a young person first arrives at the service they spend four days with two staff camping and completing a range of outdoor activities. These four days

enable staff to undertake an initial assessment and establish an individual placement plan. During the placement young people become involved in more complex tasks that require more effective and complex communication skills. As they demonstrate good progress they then complete structured tasks in partnership with peers and over time staffing levels will be reassessed and where appropriate reduced.

Young people experience and learn a wide range of new skills and hobbies, which enhance their social development and self esteem. The home is licensed with the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority, and this, along with the appropriately qualified staff at the home, provide the young people with a varied set of activities that include gorge walking, open canoeing, climbing, orienteering, mountain biking, hydro boarding, sea kayaking, mountain expedition, rafting and caving.

A central feature of this service is the use of healthy physical outdoor activities to engage and stimulate young people. Young people who have not accessed health care or lead healthy lifestyles are living in an environment where their health needs are identified and services are provided to meet them. As a result young people learn skills to enable them to make informed decisions about their own health and lifestyles in the future. Young people who have historically not attended medical appointments understand the importance of accessing services and see the positive impacts of seeking guidance and taking appropriate medication.

Young people develop their life and independent skills during their stay at the home. Although placements are short in duration the high level staffing and task focused programme supports and encourages personal development and achievement. Young people who have moved on from the home give positive feedback about their experiences 'I like nearly all of you and that's not normal for me...I got to admit you lot helped me a lot with my drugs and just to grow up a bit more,' 'safest I felt for a while to be honest,' 'these last three months have been the best three months of my life.'

Quality of care

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

Young people at this service make a complete break from their previous routines and behaviours and learn new skills based on their assessed needs. They receive specialist support from a professional staff team to help them successfully participate in a challenging and engaging outward-bound programme.

The service is flexible and each placement plan is tailored to the specific needs of the young person. Young people work through a three stage development programme over a 12-week stay. Although some young people will stay for shorter periods of time, the time each young person spends on each stage is based upon their individual progress. Some will not move beyond stage one, whilst others will move successfully to stage three. The high ratio of staff means that each young person can progress at their own pace and support is appropriate to that young person's

emerging needs.

Activities are well planned and organised. Staff are able to shape their support and manage the environment according to each young person. Young people are on the whole positive about their experiences and achievements. They benefit from a proactive culture of engagement and dialogue, which means individual needs are well known and risks are managed effectively.

Staff listen to young people and ensure arrangements exist that allow them to express themselves and share their views. This happens in a number of different ways; for example, through informal one-to-one discussions with staff and at young people's meetings. Regulation 33 visit reports highlight that young people's meetings are not happening in line with the organisation's policies and procedures. It was acknowledged in discussions with the management team, that due to the complex behaviours of the young people, group settings are not always the most productive way of seeking young people's views and opinions. The service's management team are exploring how to progress these meetings so they become productive and meaningful for those able to participate as a member of a group.

Young people are provided with satisfactory living accommodation. It has benefited from periodic improvements in terms of décor and furnishings but is tired and worn in a number of areas. The accommodation has adequate facilities but lacks personalisation and a homely welcoming feel. The communal living areas are tidy but in need of a deep thorough clean. Young people's bedrooms were untidy and dirty. The effectiveness and placement of locks throughout the accommodated is not adequate to safeguard or promote the privacy of young people. For example, bedroom door locks are not robust and some bathroom doors do not have locks fitted.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home effectively promotes each young person's welfare and ensures their safety is paramount. Due to the high risk behaviours young people present when they are placed there is a high ratio of staff on duty at any time. They are skilled at managing the environment and activities in ways that safeguard the young person, themselves and others. There are effective systems in place that support the staff team including handovers, behaviour management plans and assessments of risk. All ensure up to date information is effectively passed on, which enables staff to make informed decisions and manage difficult situations reducing risk.

This effective management and high staff ratios mean that significant incidents such as absconding, criminal or violent behaviour, in the majority of cases reduce over time. However, incidents do still occur. These are managed well, often in partnership with external agencies. A social worker stated, 'I felt the home worked well with the young person's behaviour. There was a high level of staffing who were very

proactive in handling situations between peers. Staff promoted positive relationships with other young people...worked well with parents in facilitating contact. I felt they succeeded in breaking negative behaviours and prepared him for a long term placement.'

The service provides young people with appropriate levels of physical safety and security. A strong emphasis is placed on delivering safe outward-bound activities by qualified instructors who are well informed about the risks associated with each activity. This is achieved through an established risk assessment process that is overseen by managers. Outdoor equipment is checked frequently by competent staff and regular audits take place to inform the managers of any replacement needs. In addition, health and safety checks are made of the accommodation, fire drills and evacuations are practised regularly and fire equipment is serviced at appropriate intervals.

Leadership and management

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

The managers and staff team have a very clear view of the aims and objectives of this service. In turn they communicate this effectively to the young people who come to the home.

The Registered Manager manages the staff team effectively and is well respected. The staff team are experienced and clear about their roles and responsibilities.

All recommendations made after the last inspection have been met.

Since the home has been purchased by Keys Education Limited the number of permanent staff on each shift has increased. These permanent staff are professional and skilled at supporting often challenging young people. These numbers are, however, not adequate to cover staff sickness, annual leave and the home operating to its full capacity. The staff used to make up those numbers are either staff covering from others Keys Education Limited homes, bank staff or agency staff. This presents a number of risks, for example agency staff are not always trained in the appropriate physical intervention and de-escalation techniques and therefore young people's behaviour intervention strategies can not be followed. Or cover staff from other homes are late on to shift due to travel, which means young people are waiting around for their activity to start, which is potentially a trigger for challenging behaviour.

All staff receive a programme of induction and the Registered Manager is currently ensuring all existing staff have a programme of refresher mandatory training in place with Keys Education Limited. The staff team are, however, not aware of a programme of post-qualifying and in-service training to enhance individual skills and keep up to date with professional and legal developments. There is also not a programme of refresher and development training to ensure the staff team's outdoor pursuits qualifications are maintained and developed. Not all existing staff have

attained a minimum level 3 Children and Young Peoples Workforce Diploma nor are they working towards it within 6 months of confirmation of employment. This means staff are not equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the young people and the purpose of the setting.

The staff team is well informed of practice and communicate effectively, however, supervision sessions are not taking place on a regular basis. This has been repeatedly highlighted in Regulation 33 and Regulation 34 reports. The large staff team and complex nature of the young people makes meeting the organisation's objectives difficult. The management team discussed exploring different methods of supervision and ways of ring fencing time for staff to be available for supervision.

The Registered Manager has a clear overview of the strengths and weakness of this service. There are established systems in place to monitor matters under Regulation 33 and Regulation 34. These are robust and provide detailed information that is used to inform practice. The baseline of good practice in this home is maintained, however, there are no systems in place to improve the quality of care provided.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.