

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC030367
Inspection date	03/08/2011
Inspector	Paul Clark
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	02/12/2010
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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

This independent, charitable school is also registered as a children's home. The school accommodates up to 42 boys and girls, usually aged between seven and 19. The school follows the principles of care and education developed by Rudolf Steiner. The school has residential accommodation in eight houses known as house groups. Four of the school's house groups are attached to the main school campus, the remaining four house groups are all situated within a mile or so of the school. The trust that runs the school has been accredited as an awarding centre for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and new staff training accreditation to replace NVQ is underway.

Overall effectiveness

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

Care and placement planning for children is excellent. Teaching, care and therapeutic services are well coordinated and matched to individual children's needs. There are effective systems in place to ensure that children are consulted about all elements of their care.

Children enjoy good relationships with their staff and view key workers as an additional strand of support. Leisure and recreational activities are popular and extensive and children look forward to them.

There is a general feeling that children have a positive view of a living environment in which they feel safe and nurtured.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that there is a system in place to notify within 24 hours appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events. (NMS 24.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children benefit from good quality planned assessments of their needs and they are involved in the construction of these plans. This helps them to participate in their

care and to establish an understanding of their background and needs. Children receive individualised care from staff who are well informed about their needs and who tailor the support resources to suit individual children. Two of the houses on the campus provide specialist care to support young people in their preparation for independent living. This support includes encouraging young people to safely become involved in the wider community by using such things as public transport and community leisure facilities.

Children receive an excellent level of health care. There is a full time qualified nurse on site and all children receive an initial medical examination by a general practitioner who they are then registered with and from whom they can receive ongoing health care. Children are also registered with an optician and dentist with whom they will receive routine check ups, unless parents prefer to remain with their home services. Children's ongoing well-being is supported by staff that are properly trained in the administration of medication which is properly stored and recorded. All care staff receive first aid training as part of their induction and this training is appropriately updated. Fully stocked first aid boxes are sited in all key areas, the content of which is properly monitored. The organisation has a range of in house therapeutic services including art and play therapy.

Children living in the home benefit from attending the school's on site educational provision which provides specialist education for children who have a statement of having special educational needs. All children have an individual education plan in place which is appropriately reviewed. The systems in place to allow communication and collaboration between teaching, therapy and care staff are outstanding and this ensures that children receive an excellent educational and therapeutic package which is delivered by a whole team approach.

Children are able to maintain contact with their families by mobile phone or by email through the home's internet systems. These systems are properly security monitored and there are clear policies in place on cyber bullying which the staff are mindful of and they will intervene if they are aware that bullying is happening. Children are able to receive visits from their families at any reasonable time outside of the school day. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress by telephone, email or letter depending on their preference.

Quality of care

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

Children's overall care needs are properly assessed and placement plans are made in consultation with the young people to identify how these needs will be met. These plans are appropriately reviewed. Children enjoy positive relationships with their peers and staff. A 'complex needs team' made up of senior managers, school nurse and therapists meet regularly to plan and review the support that children need in addressing challenging behaviour. From the time of appointment staff receive early training in managing challenging behaviour. Children and their families are actively consulted by the home in contributing to the construction of their placement plan

and its review. Placement plans clearly outline children's needs and how these are to be met. There are various forums available where children can voice their opinion about the standard of their care. These include monthly house meetings, meetings with independent visitors and sessional meetings with their key worker. Children use these forums to make decisions about a range of issues including menu planning and activities to be undertaken. Children receive an information pack upon admission which includes details of the complaints procedure and the contact details of other helping agencies including Ofsted. Complaints are dealt with in a timely manner and actions taken are appropriate. Having clear systems of representation ensures that children's opinions are acted upon and that children feel confident in raising concerns.

Children enjoy participating in an extensive activities programme which includes engaging in such exercises as swimming, cycling and canoeing. Summer holidays have been planned for several groups of children who will be supported by adequate numbers of staff. These holidays have been appropriately risk assessed. The school curriculum includes a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme which informs children about taking care of their general health and which gives them information on the appreciation of different faiths and cultures. Children access the organisation's own nearby therapeutic services which include art and play therapy. Access to this extensive range of resources gives children the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Children's personal identity needs and the ways that these are to be supported are contained within their placement plan. Children of different faiths are supported by staff to attend religious ceremonies and services. Children are offered the opportunity to experience a range of international cuisines and there are themed evenings where they can be introduced to a variety of different cultures. These imaginative ways of informing children about their wider community help to promote their sense of citizenship.

The home has eight individual houses where small groups of children can live in mixed gender groups of a varying age range. The quality of the living environment is outstanding with décor and furnishings being of a high standard. Much attention is given to promoting the high quality of the campus both internally and externally. There are carefully tended gardens and any building work or improvements are done in such a way that they are sympathetic to the living environment. Children described the environment as "calm and tranquil."

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children benefit from a range of clear policies, systems and services which inform staff in their role of ensuring that children are kept safe. These policies include safeguarding children, dealing with bullying, making complaints and action to be taken in the event of a child going missing. These policies are routinely reviewed. All

staff receive training in these policies. The home has a written protocol in working with the local police and has established a good working relationship with them. This ensures that children from the school who may go missing are known to the local police who will support them sympathetically. Staff are trained in the use of physical restraint before they work in any of the houses. There are appropriate systems in place to record and monitor the use of physical restraints and the application of agreed sanctions. All staff are properly recruited and vetted. Visitors to the site are not allowed unsupervised access to young people. There is closed circuit television coverage of external parts of the campus and entry doors to all of the houses are suitably secured. Internally, all children's bedroom doors are alarm sensitive during the night thus alerting staff if a child's bedroom is entered. These are excellent safety measure to protect children.

Children are protected from the dangers of the living environment by the appointment of a health and safety officer who monitors and oversees all safety measures on the campus. Electrical and gas installations and equipment are routinely checked and serviced. An officer is responsible for overseeing the safety and maintenance of the home's vehicles and the level of staff driving skills.

Leadership and management

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

Children benefit from the leadership of a well managed service. The Registered Manager of the service and the unit managers of each of the eight houses are all appropriately qualified and experienced. The senior management team meet regularly to determine action on key aspects of the care provision and will make positive changes to support children's care practice. The home has put measures in place to address both of the recommendations made at the previous inspection and there are systems in place to monitor and review ongoing practice. Parents and children are frequently consulted about the quality of the residential care and there are good systems in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the therapeutic services provision. There is a board of trustees of this charitable trust who oversee a development plan for the service and who are responsible for ensuring financial stability which ensures that children will have stability of placement.

There is a clearly written Statement of Purpose which is reviewed annually. The aims and objectives of the home are known to staff and parents. The children are cared for by a good child/staffing ratio and benefit from the care of staff who are properly inducted and trained to a high level. The trust has a dedicated training officer who ensures that all training needs identified in staff personal development plans are met.

All staff personnel records and children's written and electronic records are comprehensive, up to date and clearly written. There are systems in place to ensure that they are kept and stored in a manner which ensures confidentiality.

The home has a designated person and a deputy who are responsible for managing

allegations of abuse and for effectively investigating all external and internal allegations of abuse and these are reported to the local safeguarding children's board where appropriate. Notification of allegations of abuse are not always made to Ofsted within 24 hours which may negatively impact on children's safety.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.