

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	05/11/2013
Inspector	Thomas Webber
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	26/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This independent, charitable school is also registered as a children's home. The school follows the principles of care and education developed by Rudolf Steiner. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to a maximum of 42 children with emotional or behavioural difficulties or complex needs.

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**.

The home provides young people with a good and consistent quality of care which results in an overall judgement of good. However, there are some shortfalls in the management arrangements and safeguarding of young people. Some deficiencies identified potentially impact on the safety, well-being and development of young people. Areas of deficiency include staff supervision, appraisals, fire safety and some routines and practices adopted within the home.

Young people enjoy living at the home where they benefit from a high level of care and support from a very committed and dedicated staff team. The progress that young people make is achieved by the multi-disciplinary approach within the organisation. Young people feel safe living at the home and are very positive about the quality of care and services provided.

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
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32 (2001)	take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment. (Regulation 32(1)(a))	07/11/2013
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day to day running of the home and important decisions or changes in the child's life, unless this is contrary to their interests. (NMS 1.1)
- ensure that children take part in age appropriate peer activities as agreed by the home's staff in a way similar to how a reasonable parent might reach agreement with their children, taking into account the framework of the placement plan decision-making and any assessment of risk to the child. (NMS 7.5)
- ensure that all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised in particular to ensuring that their professional development needs are always clearly identified with a timely action plan. (NMS 19.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people benefit from the individual care and support they receive. Staff are highly committed to supporting young people to make good progress through clearly identified goals. The home's boundaries, rules, routines and clear expectations contribute to providing young people with an environment that focuses on positive outcomes.

The home continues to meet the physical, emotional and health needs of young people. The approach of the home is based on the importance of nurture and emotional wellbeing as a basis for development and all young people have individual time to talk through any emotional issues they may have. Young people can also refer themselves to the therapeutic team or be referred by staff to ensure their continued well-being.

There is clear evidence to show that some young people have been helped significantly to reduce the number of restraints and to assist them to improve their behaviour. Where the behaviour of young people changes or where restraint is used, this triggers discussion by the complex needs panel multi-disciplinary team. This enables the home to find alternative strategies for staff to effectively manage the behaviour of young people. This can include the review of medication, therapeutic intervention or change of house.

Excellent communication and close collaboration between the teaching and care staff as well as with the therapeutic team support young people to make progress in

various aspects of their lives. Young people, whose previous attendance at school was poor, are now attending school regularly. However, the educational progress and achievement of young people is hindered by the standard of teaching provided within the home's educational provision.

Young people live in a stimulating environment where they engage in a wide range of purposeful and enjoyable leisure activities both within the home and in the wider community. These opportunities contribute to them developing a positive view of themselves.

Young people develop and gain a range of practical social skills including undertaking their own laundry and cooking. Two of the houses are semi-independent and assist young people working towards independent living. However, there is concern that some routines and practices, such as bedtimes and the unavailability to watch television, are unduly restrictive and are not in line with contemporary or current child care practice.

Young people are supported to maintain appropriate contact with their families, and this is done in a supportive way to ensure young people feel safe. The home usually ensures that the families of young people and their respective placing authorities are kept fully and regularly informed about their progress and well-being. Staff recognise the importance of young people being able to maintain constructive contact with significant people in their lives. As a result suitable facilities are well established to aid this practice. Some social workers commented on the good level of communication with the home regarding the placement of young people.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a warm, caring and nurturing environment. They develop extremely warm, caring and positive relationships with staff. Most of the young people who commented, spoke very positively about the support and care provided and their overall experience of living at the home. They described living at the home as being 'good'. Young people are cared for by a dedicated staff team who are passionate about providing the best level of care to them. Young people were observed as being extremely relaxed and at ease in the company of staff and within their environment.

Young people are provided with a variety of forums to discuss matters pertaining to the running of the home. Each house has regular daily opportunities for young people to express their views through informal meetings with staff. There are also fortnightly house group meetings, chaired by a member of staff. The agenda is focussed on the views of young people about how the house is run, including menus, activities and décor. However a review of records within three of the houses during the course of 2013 showed that records for at least four months were missing. Therefore, it was impossible to fully evaluate how well young people's issues were acted upon. The organisation also arranges meetings attended by representatives

from each house where young people can make suggestions to improve the care and services provided within the home.

There is a robust complaints process which young people can access. Complaints reviewed demonstrated a high level of listening by staff and a resolution of issues that were satisfactory to young people and clearly understood by them. Informal complaints such as young people wanting to move house, are listened to, and where this is thought to be in their best interests these changes are facilitated.

Detailed placement plans are in place for all young people. The placement plans are of a high quality and provide staff with clear guidance on how to effectively work with and meet the day to day needs of young people. They include comprehensive individual risk assessments and strategies for managing challenging behaviour. Young people are also supported to contribute to their reviews.

Most young people are registered with the local health care services. However, those not registered access these services when necessary. Young people are fully supported to access all appointments. These are suitably documented in their records. The organisation provides a range of therapeutic services which young people access to meet their individual emotional and psychological needs. Comprehensive systems are well established for the safe storage, receipt, administration and return of unwanted medicines. These practices ensure the well-being and safety of young people.

All of the houses follow a six weekly standard menu. Young people are provided with the opportunity to influence these. There is always a vegetarian alternative available and flexibility within each house for those who do not like the meal provided. Young people with specific dietary or cultural needs are well catered for. Fresh ingredients are used whenever possible and cultural days are a regular occurrence. Young people are fully involved in the cooking of these meals as well as taking part in other activities relevant to that particular culture. Young people are also involved in assisting with the cooking of meals with staff support and supervision. Most young people, who commented, spoke positively about the quality and quantity of food provided, stating that they receive plenty.

Young people live in one of seven houses. Overall these are maintained to a high standard, being clean and very comfortable. They are also extremely well furnished and in good decorative order. The premises provide young people with excellent communal facilities to meet their individual and collective needs. They are provided with their own bedrooms and, although they cannot choose the colour scheme, they can personalise them with posters and bedding. The premises also provide young people with excellent bathing, showering and toilet facilities and suitable locks are fitted to these doors to promote their privacy and dignity. The houses provide young people with a positive experience and enable them to take a pride in their living environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe living at the home. Staff possess a good understanding of safeguarding matters through regular training. Staff are highly motivated to maintain the safety of young people. The placement plans of young people show detailed risk assessments and strategies on how this is achieved. Senior management with clear safeguarding responsibility for young people maintain a close working relationship with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. All potential safeguarding matters are usually referred promptly to the appropriate agencies. However, a recent safeguarding incident highlighted deficiencies in both initially informing all relevant people and in the recording of decisions made.

The organisation ensures that all staff are thoroughly vetted before commencing employment at the home. This practice contributes to the protection of young people. Where staff are deemed inappropriate to work with young people effective action is taken. Visitors to the site do not have unsupervised access to young people unless it is deemed appropriate.

Young people live in an environment which is kept physically safe and appropriately secure. Young people understand and are fully involved in the fire evacuation procedures. There are effective arrangements in place for the checking, testing and servicing in relation to fire and health and safety. Although the overall living environment of young people is safe, in some houses fire doors are wedged open, which undermine the fire safety standards and potentially place young people and staff at risk in the event of a fire.

The home has well established practices for the safe return of young people when they go missing. Since the last full inspection there have been few incidences of young people going missing. Young people are carefully risk assessed and deterrent strategies are put in place to minimise such episodes. This is strengthened by the high levels of staff supervision within the houses. Robust records are maintained of all incidents where young people have gone missing.

There is a clear anti-bullying policy in place. Staff take all incidents of bullying very seriously. Every effort is made to repair relationships between young people where bullying is identified. Young people and staff do not see bullying as a major area of concern and acknowledged that any incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively. A significant event within the home has led to a change to their policy in relation to cyber bullying. Young people are now not allowed to use internet enabled phones on site, unless one to one work has been undertaken with them by staff to ensure their safe use.

Young people are fully supported to develop and maintain appropriate levels of behaviour. The aim is to enable young people to self-regulate their behaviour by using learned strategies and support methods acquired during their stay. Young people live in a structured environment where there are clear routines, boundaries and expectations. The use of physical intervention, including restraint, is still relatively high. However, these are regularly monitored and analysed with strategies

being developed to reduce the number of incidents. This consistent approach is contributing to a reduction in the number of restraints. Sanctions are only used as a last resort. However, as the same system is used for the recording of restraints and sanctions, the format does not allow for the provision of sufficient details in the use of sanctions.

Leadership and management

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

A new Registered Manager has been appointed since the last inspection who is well experienced and suitably qualified. As a result there have been some changes within the senior management arrangements. The staff teams are well organised within the seven houses and are highly motivated and extremely committed to providing the best care they can to young people. These arrangements ensure that young people receive continuity and consistency of good quality care.

The two recommendations identified at the last interim inspection relating to monitoring the quality of care provided have now been addressed. As a result, the organisation now ensures that effective systems are established for the internal and external monitoring of the services provided. However, three different senior managers dealt with a recent event but could not identify the clear actions taken and decisions made. As a result the safe management of the home could potentially be undermined by the lack of clarity of roles within the senior management team.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose which sets out its aims and objectives and describes the level of care services the young people can expect to receive. There is also a young people's guide which is produced in a suitable format and provides young people with key information about the home.

The home provides good staffing levels throughout the day and night in each of the seven houses. There is always a senior member of staff on duty within each house who is suitably experienced and, in some cases, qualified. These staffing arrangements meet the individual and collective needs of the young people accommodated. A well-established on call system is in place which provides additional support to both staff and young people by a duty manager.

The organisation is very committed to ensuring that care staff are suitably qualified and receive a range of relevant training on a weekly basis. This ensures that they acquire the necessary skills, competence and knowledge to effectively work with young people within the home. Additional training to enhance their skills and knowledge includes providing support to young people with their wider health issues such as sexual health and self-harm. Staff spoke extremely positively about the training opportunities provided to them.

All new staff have a thorough induction programme. All senior managers are suitably qualified. Due to staff changes, currently 50% of the care staff, excluding senior management, are qualified to level 3 of the Children and Young People's Workforce

Diploma. The remaining unqualified staff are currently working towards achieving the required qualification.

There are a range of forums available to support care staff to ensure that young people receive a quality service. These include frequent formal and reflective supervision; regular staff and daily handover meetings. Senior staff are very visible around the home and readily available to staff so that informal issues can be discussed. Staff spoke extremely positively about these arrangements, including senior staff being easily approachable and accessible.

Records checked during the inspection, confirmed the frequency of supervision in line with best practice. However, there are some shortfalls in the quality of the records maintained. There are, currently, no supervision contracts in place which specify the parameters of the supervision process. Records of formal supervision do not always reflect feedback from supervisors as to the performance of individual members of staff. Additionally, actions identified are not always clearly identified or systematically followed up. The organisation recognises this and is taking action to improve the quality of supervision records. Although all staff receive annual appraisals, their professional development needs are not always clearly identified with a timely action plan. Progress is also not always clearly identified in subsequent supervision records. This means that in some cases it could be difficult to evidence concerning or poor performance using the current systems.

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.