

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	10/09/2012
Inspector	Thomas Webber / Sharron Escott
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	11/01/2012
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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.

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**.

Overall the home provides young people with a good and consistent quality of care with some outstanding features. Young people benefit enormously from living at the home where they receive a high level of care and support from a very committed and dedicated staff team. Care, teaching, and therapeutic services are well coordinated and matched to ensure that the individual needs of young people are met. As a result, young people make good progress and thrive within a warm, supportive and nurturing environment. Very good and supportive relationships exist between staff and young people. Young people are kept safe living at the home and are very positive about the quality of care and services provided. They also enjoy their experience of living at the home. Robust safeguarding practices promote the safety and welfare of young people. Staff fully support young people to achieve excellent school attendance which assists them in reaching their full potential.

This report highlights several deficiencies which need to be addressed. These improvements are to enhance the recording systems for monitoring the care provided to young people.

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
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home and shall supply to the HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of paragraph (1). (Regulation 34(1)(a)& (b) and (2))	31/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children can take up issues in the most appropriate way with support and without fear that this will result in any adverse consequences. Children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress, by ensuring that the outcome is always recorded and young people's views are sought and recorded about the action taken by the home (NMS 1.6)
- ensure that where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure written records are kept by the home when a child goes missing detailing action taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons for running away from the home, and any action taken in light of those reasons, by reviewing the current format and ensuring that detailed individual risk assessments are established for young people (NMS 5.10)
- ensure that where a child requires it, the children's guide is available through suitable alternative methods of communication in a format which is easily understandable to young people (NMS 13.6)
- ensure visits carried out under Regulation 33 include relevant checks set out in regulations and guidance and checks of any disciplinary measures and the use of restraint and records of missing persons reports. (NMS 21.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit enormously from the individualised care and support they receive which helps them to develop a positive view of themselves. Staff demonstrate a very strong commitment to supporting young people to make good progress socially, emotionally and educationally. The home's boundaries, rules,

routines and clear expectations also contribute to providing young people with an environment that focuses on positive outcomes.

Young people are doing exceptionally well in progressing towards reaching their educational aspirations. Their attendance at school is excellent; it is above the national average. The well-established ethos and routines contribute to the achievement of this. Young people benefit from attending the school's on site educational provision. This provides them with the education to meet their special educational needs. The systems in place enable excellent communication and collaboration between teaching, therapy and care staff. This exceptionally supportive approach has led to young people making the most of the excellent educational and therapeutic packages available to them.

The home ensures that young people's families and their respective placing authorities are kept fully and regularly informed about the progress and well-being of the young people. 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. Staff are very committed to supporting and facilitating young people's agreed levels of contact between them and their families in line with their individual placement plans. Young people are able to receive visits from their families at any reasonable time outside of the school day in order to maintain and improve these relationships.

Young people develop and gain a range of practical social skills. Three of the houses are allocated to provide specialist care to support young people in their preparation for semi-independent living. These include becoming involved in the wider community through learning how to use public transport and leisure facilities effectively and in a safe way. These skills help and equip them to cope with the transition into semi-independent living.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from living in a warm, caring and nurturing environment where extremely positive and supportive relationships exist between themselves and staff. Young people spoke positively about the care and support provided to them. The dedicated staff team undertake their duties in a warm, caring, supportive and professional manner. Young people are extremely relaxed and at ease within their company and their environment.

The home operates an open culture of consultation with young people. Various forums are well established where young people can voice their views and feelings about the standard of their care. These contribute to and influence the way the home is run. Clear policies and procedures are well established for dealing with complaints. Young people know how to complain and are supported to raise any concerns or worries openly. Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly. However, the recording of complaints is not sufficiently robust because the

outcome is not always recorded, neither are the young people's views about their level of satisfaction with the action taken by the home.

Young people are extremely well cared for in line with their detailed placement plans. These are produced in consultation with young people and are updated to reflect their changing needs. These documents provide staff with clear guidance on how to effectively work with and meet the day-to-day needs of young people. Young people are supported to contribute to their statutory reviews which are held at the required intervals.

Young people live in an environment where they are fully supported to access various health care professionals. These include access to a range of therapeutic services, where appropriate, to meet their emotional and psychological needs. They are also fully supported to access a range of information, advice and support regarding a range of other health care issues. Robust systems are well established for the safe storage, receipt, administration and disposal of unwanted medication to ensure the protection of young people.

Young people are fully consulted in the menu planning process. Staff also support them to gain an appreciation of a range of international dishes. Young people enjoy and are supported to eat a healthy, varied and balanced diet.

Staff fully promote and support the education of young people to ensure that they are given every opportunity to achieve their educational potential. The well-established boundaries and routines of the home, together with excellent staff support, enable young people to maintain excellent school attendance. Care and teaching staff work very closely together and ensure that excellent communication is maintained between them. This ensures that young people's personal and academic development are fully supported.

Young people live in a stimulating environment where they are provided with every opportunity to engage in a range of purposeful leisure activities both within the home and in the wider community. Holidays and various trips are also organised to enhance the experiences of young people. They are also actively encouraged to pursue any particular interests and hobbies they may have. This helps young people to develop a positive and successful self-view.

Young people live in one of seven houses. Overall these are maintained to a good standard, being clean, tidy and very comfortable. They are also extremely well-furnished and in good decorative order. Young people, with the support of staff, take a great pride and responsibility in the maintenance of the houses. The premises provide young people with excellent communal facilities to meet their individual and collective needs. They are provided with their own bedrooms, which are personalised to their own tastes. All bedrooms are provided with a lockable facility to keep their personal possessions safe. 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. This provides them with a positive experience and enables them to take a pride in their living environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Management take effective steps to ensure that young people feel safe living at the home and are protected from harm. Staff have a very good understanding of safeguarding matters through regular training. This ensures that they are kept up to date with any changes in guidance and legislation which is translated into practice. These practices ensure that all safeguarding concerns are handled in a way that fully protects young people.

A clear anti-bullying policy is well established. Staff take all incidents of bullying very seriously. When incidents of bullying occur, staff take effective and prompt action to address and protect young people.

The home has established practices to ensure the safe return of young people, at the earliest opportunity, when they go missing. Although individual protocols are established with the local police, the individual risk management assessments are not sufficiently robust to ensure that these are always effective. There are also clear reporting and recording systems established which ensure that all relevant parties are kept fully informed when an event occurs, however, the recording system is only adequate. Given the restrictions in these systems, staff take effective steps in respect of all absences where young people go missing. The staffing levels ensure that young people are effectively monitored and incidents of them going missing are not excessive.

Young people are fully encouraged and supported to develop and maintain appropriate levels of positive behaviour. Young people learn to manage their own behaviour with good results. Clear routines and boundaries, together with the very positive relationships with staff and the behaviour incentives, help to contribute to this progress. Clear behaviour management strategies are well established and embedded in practice. These provide staff with effective guidance for the management of young people's behaviour. Staff are also suitably trained in diffusing potentially difficult behaviour. This avoids the escalation of situations and ultimately reduces the number of incidences of challenging behaviour exhibited by young people. All methods of control are suitably monitored and records also indicate that the number of incidents involving young people being restrained are decreasing. However, comprehensive records are not being maintained in relation to the use of restraints.

Robust staff recruitment practices are well established which contribute to the effective safeguarding of young people. These practices ensure that new staff are suitably vetted and do not commence employment within the home until all the relevant checks are carried out. Visitors to the site are not allowed unsupervised access to young people.

Young people live in an environment which is kept physically safe and appropriately

secure, without restricting the freedom of young people. The health and safety policy and practice guidelines are well established to ensure that staff and young people are appropriately safeguarded. Young people and staff regularly take part in the fire evacuation procedures and the various health and fire safety records are accurate and up-to-date.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from living at a home which is extremely well managed. This ensures that young people enjoy stability and consistency of care. The role of the Registered Manager is split between two people as part of a job share. The Registered Managers demonstrate strong and effective leadership. Staff are highly motivated, well organised and clearly understand their roles and the expectations placed upon them. They are strongly committed to providing a high quality service and continue to work vigorously towards improving outcomes for young people.

There were no requirements and recommendations identified at the last inspection which was conducted in January 2012. The managers ensure that any requirements and recommendations highlighted at previous inspections are always fully addressed.

The Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the home. It also describes the level of care and service young people can expect to receive. This information is readily available to placing authorities and other interested parties. A guide for children and young people is also produced. Although this document provides young people with relevant information they need to know about the home, it is not produced in a format which young people can easily understand.

Good staffing levels are maintained throughout the day and night to meet the individual and collective needs of young people. Staff and young people benefit from an effective on call system which maintains their welfare and safety at all times.

Staff are very well supported to fulfil their roles to ensure that young people receive a quality service. Daily handover meetings and regular staff meetings are held to provide staff with the opportunity to regularly discuss matters relating to young people and care practices. These ensure that staff are kept up to date in all matters relating to the home and that staff practice is consistent. Staff also receive regular supervision which appropriately monitors their performance. However, these records are not written to a consistently detailed standard to show that all staff are receiving the same quality of supervision. Annual appraisals are in the process of being completed for all staff.

Young people are looked after by a staff team where the majority of them are suitably qualified. The remaining staff are also working towards achieving the required qualification. All new staff are provided with a thorough induction programme. Staff are provided with excellent opportunities to develop their knowledge, expertise and competence through attending appropriate training. This

includes both mandatory and more specialist courses. Staff were extremely complimentary about the training opportunities available to them.

The organisation ensures that suitable arrangements are in place to monitor the delivery of care provided to young people. However, the quality of the reports produced are not of a sufficient quality. Although the home monitors the patterns and trends of behaviour and disciplinary measures and adjusts their strategies accordingly, these are not reflected in the external management reports. In addition, internal reports are not being completed by the Registered Managers as part of the internal review monitoring process to improve the quality of care provided.

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.