

Inspection report for children's home

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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

The centre is registered as a children's home, operated by a local authority and is approved by the secretary of state to provide secure care and accommodation. Education is provided on site within a purpose-built school facility. The centre is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 42 young people of either gender. At the time of this inspection 39 young people were resident.

Overall effectiveness

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

This inspection has the purpose of informing the Secretary of State on the continuing suitability for this provision to operate as a secure unit to restrict children's liberty.

The move to a purpose-built facility in August 2011 has presented the centre management and staff with a range of challenges. However, these have been addressed competently and the stated aims of the centre and the needs of young people have continued to be met. A development plan is in place which details the required actions to meet identified targets. The new building allows young people to experience a high quality of accommodation, security and care.

Despite a recent influx of new admissions the centre has remained calm and stable and staff and managers have worked hard to ensure the expectations of behaviour and boundaries remain consistent.

Young people receive individualised care and safeguarding practices are robust ensuring that they feel safe and are safe. Integrated assessments mean that the health, resettlement, contact and safeguarding needs of young people are identified fully.

Young people benefit from an experienced staff team, many of whom hold professional qualifications. A contribution to the running of the centre is able to be made by young people, whose views are sought on a variety of day-to-day issues.

Areas for development include improvements in some areas of formal education, the co-ordination of intervention work with young people, the revision of the young people's guide and the process which is followed during Regulation 33 visits.

An additional requirement and recommendation has been made relating to the frequency of supervision for staff and the reliability and consistency of behaviour management data.

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
27 (2001)	ensure that suitable arrangements are in place that allows for all staff to receive regular and consistent supervision and appraisal (Reg 27(4)(a))	02/01/2012

Recommendations

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

- review the effectiveness of the arrangements for tutorial and the daily reading sessions. Improve the implementation of tutorial so that all young people are ready for school at the start of the day and that there is more impact from these sessions on young people's learning. Ensure that all young people benefit from support to improve their reading. (NMS 8.4)
- take action to minimise disruptions to lessons. (NMS 8.4)
- improve the management and coordination of additional learning support so that all young people receive the help they need to improve their levels of literacy and numeracy. (NMS 8.4)
- enhance the arrangements for quality assurance of teaching and learning so that they have quicker impact in improving satisfactory teaching. Identify and share best practice in lesson planning so that young people experience consistently good standards across subjects. (NMS 8.4)
- ensure that visits to the centre carried out under Regulation 33 include relevant checks set out in regulations and guidance, specifically reflecting the views of staff and parents (NMS 21.7)
- update the young person's guide to include a summary of how a young person can contact the Children's Rights Director, their Independent Reviewing Officer and the amended Ofsted contact details (NMS 13.5)
- ensure all staff understand, share and implement the home's ethos, philosophy and approach to caring for children. Specifically the need for all direct intervention work to be consistently coordinated (NMS 3.4)
- ensure that records and data produced relating to behaviour management occurrences are consistent and reliable. Specifically, so that young people's behaviour can be reviewed and a prompt response made where any issues or

trends emerge. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, Para 2.92)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in relation to their starting point across all aspects of their welfare and development.

Young people are encouraged to develop a positive self view and increase their understanding of their identity. They are helped greatly to have a knowledge and understanding of their background. Young people increasingly gain confidence and say they feel better about themselves since arriving at the centre. They are supported to think about their health, relationships, how their behaviour can affect others and to consider the needs of others. Young people learn about difference, the importance of understanding diversity and the impact of prejudice and discrimination on others, which means they learn how to be tolerant of others.

Young people's health needs are identified and packages of proactive care put in place. Young people receive balanced healthy meals and they are encouraged to consider the choices they make in relation to diet. All meals are taken in the dining areas in the house units and young people are encouraged to participate in socially positive mealtimes. This means that young people are able to live healthily while in the centre.

Young people regularly attend education and achieve good attendance levels. As a result many young people achieve formal educational qualifications and receive positive opportunities for learning. This gives young people a sense of pride and increases their life opportunities for the future.

Young people feel safe at the centre and their welfare is protected by a robust child protection system.

Young people and staff are actively involved in raising funds for national and local charities. The most recent event saw young people host a coffee morning raising funds for charity. This helps young people to consider others and feel the benefits of making a worthwhile contribution.

Contact with people important to the young person is encouraged and actively supported. Many parents have to travel long distances to visit their child. The centre is flexible and approachable when it comes to making arrangements for visits. Telephones are available for young people to use in their bedrooms in private. Young people benefit from been able to maintain relationships with their families. This helps them to settle at the centre.

Young people are active stakeholders in the development of the centre. They have influenced menu planning, the incentive scheme and the range of activities and leisure pursuits available to them. Young people were consulted about various

aspects of the new building including bedroom design.

The resettlement of young people back into the community is given a very high priority. New guidance and improved procedures ensure planning for all aspects of the resettlement plan is discussed at every review meeting, including plans for education or training post discharge. This means that young people are able to benefit from a comprehensive plan for when they leave the centre.

Young people have their practical independent skills thoroughly assessed as part of the admission assessment. A plan is then devised to address the identified practical skills young people need to develop in order to eventually be able to care for themselves. This enables young people to acquire a range of self-care and life skills which prepares them for their future.

Quality of care

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

Young people are able to benefit from a modern, light and airy environment which is equipped with suitable furnishings. The centre operates from a new build premises which offers a range of resources and facilities. The centre is appropriately located and maintained and provides the required security for its stated purpose. The new accommodation provides very good education facilities for all areas of the curriculum. Classrooms are spacious and well equipped with very good furniture and equipment. The library is also spacious and light and has a good range of reading, research and careers books. Facilities for sport are excellent and accommodation for vocational courses such as in beauty, hairdressing and construction are very good. Managers are aware that more needs to be done to exploit fully the potential of areas such as the garden and to ensure that the food area and construction workshop are used efficiently. All classrooms have access to modern information and learning technology which teachers are using with increasing confidence to enhance their lessons.

Staff are able to build strong and meaningful relationships with young people as soon as possible after admission. Young people receive appropriate reassurance and support. Two young people recently admitted to the centre said that staff had carefully explained to them what they should expect and had made them feel welcome and comfortable when they arrived.

Young people are encouraged to consider the needs and feelings of others including their peers. Understanding and meeting the welfare needs of all the young people is a well-embedded core objective of the centre. Young people receive good emotional and practical support from all.

Young people's needs are comprehensively assessed. The process for identifying and setting targets for work to be done with young people is very good. However, this is not consistently coordinated as some direct work interventions are undertaken without the knowledge of key staff. This lessens the effectiveness of some

interventions.

Young people's individual and diverse needs are consistently well considered as part of the delivery of care. Young people are able to have their needs met by staff who understand the importance of individuality.

Young people are aware of how staff work with them and their role in addressing identified issues, meaning they are able to benefit from direct interventions. Group and individual sessions are undertaken. Targeted sessions are monitored and evaluated by a psychologist to assess impact.

Case managers are responsible for the oversight and coordination of work with young people. They have a positive impact on ensuring a high quality of planning for reviews and meetings. However, the role of key workers is not so clearly defined, meaning young people receive a varying level of input

A range of meetings are held to discuss young people's progress. This allows for detailed discussions with external health agencies. However, only those young people who are being supported by the mental health service are discussed. Detailed discussions are held monthly in regard to all young people. However, this does not always provide opportunities to review the work being done or to focus on young people's targets.

Young people are consulted fully about their lives and the day to day running of the centre. They feel able to influence developments and are aware of the house representatives who take their views to various consultation forums.

Planning for discharge and where the young people will live when they leave the secure setting is the decision of the placing agency. However, staff support young people to make their wishes and feelings known. Young people are also able to access advocates to support them if they wish.

Young people's parents are very positive about the care provided, the way they are welcomed and how their views are considered. One parent stated on a survey form, 'I am pleased with how my child has been cared for and am happy he has excelled with his schooling at the centre'.

The health care services provided are excellent. Good support is available from external agencies. Nursing staff have a very effective oversight of the management of medication at the centre. Young people benefit from these arrangements with positive improvements in their health.

The child and adolescent mental health services available to the centre are excellent. All young people are screened and those requiring support receive it within a reasonable timescale.

Young people are encouraged to have regular exercise and to try new skills which will develop their self confidence. There is a range of enrichment programmes planned throughout the year. Each programme includes an element of understanding the different and diverse needs of individuals.

Education outcomes for young people are good. The majority of young people who leave the centre attain qualifications that are appropriate to their often very short length of stay in the centre. Whilst over the last year most qualifications were short or very short awards these helped young people to gain self-confidence. Young people who are capable, and whose length of stay in the centre is long enough, are able to follow a good range of GCSE options. As a result of an increased focus on reading a good proportion of young people improve their skills in this area and can understand the importance of developing these for future employment. Young people are also successful in gaining foundation level adult literacy and numeracy qualifications. Managers have introduced new qualifications from the start of this academic year that support a whole school approach to setting challenging targets for young people and to reviewing their progress. These new qualifications are also designed to help young people to progress to further education when they leave the centre.

Overall young people make good progress at school. In some lessons, such as in beauty therapy, physical education, art and design, and construction, teachers are very good role models for young people and have high aspirations and expectations for their achievement. As consequence young people develop good practical skills in these subjects. For example, in physical education young people gain self-confidence in developing their individual technical skills and also learn to support one another through team activities. Teachers of beauty, construction and childcare value young people's written work and set high standards for the organisation of their portfolios. In these subjects young people produce good written work and they develop a good understanding of the standard of skills needed to secure employment. In a minority of lessons the lack of relevance and challenge in the work teachers' set results in lower standards.

Young people's attendance and behaviour at school are very good. Young people are supported very well by teachers and teaching assistants to adopt positive attitudes to their studies. Relationships between staff and young people are generally mutually respectful. Young people's attitudes to learning improve significantly during their time in the centre.

Teaching and learning are good. However, the quality varies significantly across subjects and in some it is not improving quickly enough to ensure that young people receive a consistently good or better experience. Some teachers, in for example, beauty therapy, art and science work very hard to plan lessons that are challenging, relevant and interesting for the young people. For example, young people made very good progress in a beauty therapy lesson on how to carry out a facial. The teacher and the young people wore professional uniforms and adopted the correct health and safety procedures. The teacher carefully explained the differences in working with clients in beauty and hairdressing and then young people carried out a facial

with confidence and enthusiasm. In a physical education lesson on football skills the teacher had planned a very good range of activities that ensured that the lesson moved very quickly and that the young people developed the skills needed to take part in a team competition. Young people in these subjects benefit from vocational teachers who have up-to-date industrial knowledge. In a small minority of vocational areas teachers and young people do not wear appropriate protective clothing.

Most teachers and support staff provide young people with supportive feedback during lessons that helps them to understand the purpose of what they are doing and this encourages them to stay on task. Teaching assistants provide very good support to young people in construction and physical education lessons. In these lessons the roles and responsibilities of the teaching assistants are clear. For example, in construction the teaching assistant helps young people to produce their portfolio of work and this allows the teacher to concentrate on providing very good individual support that is effective in supporting young people to develop their practical skills. In other lessons the role of the teaching assistant is not sufficiently focussed on helping young people to achieve their learning targets.

A minority of teachers do not plan their lessons well enough to ensure that there are challenging tasks for young people to complete. On occasion teachers talk for too long without engaging the young people in a discussion or in completing interesting learning activities. In these lessons young people fail to see the relevance of the work and become bored and disruptive. In a minority of lessons young people are allowed to play games on computers and to listen to music, which distracts them and inhibits their learning. Some lessons are disrupted by staff from other areas of the centre collecting young people for appointments and by maintenance staff repairing equipment.

The curriculum young people are offered is good. Young people benefit from being able to follow a timetable of subjects that develops their core skills of English, maths, science and information and communications technology (ICT). In addition they are able to follow a good range of vocational options that are very helpful in preparing them for the future. This includes construction, plumbing, motor vehicle, horticulture, hairdressing and beauty therapy. An excellent range of sporting activities are available including swimming, fitness training and indoor and outdoor team sports. As a result of recent developments all courses are leading to appropriate accreditation.

While care staff work well to move young people from living units to school in the morning and at break times the changes to the arrangements implemented since the move into the new accommodation means that some lessons start late and some young people are not collected promptly at the end of the lessons. The length of lessons is appropriate for core and practical lessons. The day begins with a tutorial session carried out by teachers and care workers; the informality of this session, which takes place on the living unit, does not ensure that all young people are ready for school promptly and delays to the start of the school day can occur. The tutorial is followed by a daily reading activity which is helpful for those young people who need additional support. However, the sessions for young people identified to have

the skills to be independent readers are not well-planned.

Young people receive satisfactory support and guidance during their time at school. Arrangements for initial assessment are comprehensive and are carried out rigorously and very quickly after young people arrive in the centre. Initial assessment is very effective in identifying young people who have special education needs, those who need extra help to reach their potential and individuals who are gifted and talented. The outcomes from initial assessment are used to place young people in groups that reflect their age and level of ability. Those with special education needs or who are not ready to be a member of the other groups join a nurture group. Young people in this group receive very good additional learning support. However, there is insufficient one-to-one support for the other young people identified to be in need of extra help and for gifted and talented young people who have previously not attended school regularly. The provision of additional learning support is not well coordinated across the school and insufficient use is made of teaching assistants in supporting young people's learning across subject areas. Not all teachers make sufficient use of the outcomes of initial assessment to plan learning resources that meet the widely varying needs of the young people. For example, some young people are given activities that they do not understand and in other lessons the work is too easy. Guidance to help young people prepare for the future from vocational teachers is very good and additional support is provided by Connexions staff.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people state that they feel safe at the centre, one said 'staff make sure that I am alright'. A robust child protection system is in place which includes strong links with the Local Authority Designated Officer and members of the safeguarding board. Referrals are made appropriately and advice is sought when necessary. A number of meetings are held within the centre to look at how work with individual young people can be undertaken to ensure they are kept safe. Individual risk assessments are in place for young people which identify where they may be at risk from themselves or others. Actions required to keep young people safe are recorded and updated on a regular basis. All staff receive training in safeguarding practice and procedures. The routines in place ensure that young people's welfare is protected.

A strong and consistent approach is taken to safeguard young people from any bullying. The anti-bullying scheme in operation at the centre has received national accreditation. Proactive work undertaken with young people includes group and individual sessions on a range of issues relating to relationships and differences. Programmes in place enable young people to feel confident in raising any concerns. Young people state that staff deal with any occurrences of bullying quickly.

Positive behaviour is encouraged both by confident staff interactions and an established incentive scheme. Young people are given individual targets to achieve which are tailored to their abilities and assessed needs. Young people contribute to reviewing this scheme and therefore are more likely to invest in this. This helps to

ensure it remains effective and continues to reward sustained positive behaviour rather than be used as a disciplinary measure.

Any sanctions which are issued following disruptive behaviour are appropriate. On many occasions staff will follow restorative principles to avoid the use of a formal sanction and encourage the young person to think about their actions and consequences on others. All sanctions are recorded and monitored by managers. The number of recorded sanctions is artificially high as the centre managers include any use of restoration and reparation where these are used as an alternative in the data. The use of separation or removal of young people from a main group has decreased and when used this is appropriate. Staff are increasingly using the many facilities the centre has to offer to engage a young person as an alternative to isolating them from a group following disruptive behaviour.

A comprehensive restraint minimisation policy is in place. Although not yet sustained in the longer term, in the last two months the number of restraints has decreased. All staff receive training in the use of physical intervention along with diversion and diffusion techniques. Restraint is only used as a last resort and records are fully accountable and each incident is reviewed by a manager as well as being available for audit by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Young people are routinely offered the opportunity to see a health professional following any physical intervention.

Young people know and understand how to make a complaint. Complaint forms are child-friendly and easily accessible for young people without recourse to staff. Young people receive prompt responses and they are given the opportunity to raise their concern with an external person should they be unhappy with the outcome. Young people are able to raise issues with confidence and also have regular access to a visiting independent advocate.

Policies and procedures are in place to assist staff practice should a young person go missing without authority. There have been no absences since the last inspection. Comprehensive risk assessments are carried out prior to any young person undertaking mobility outside of the centre which is agreed with the relevant placing authority.

The vetting of visitors and the process for recruitment of staff remain appropriate. Systems are robust and rigorous, follow relevant guidance and offer protection for young people at the centre.

The environment is safe and secure, and staff are suitably trained in fire safety and security awareness. Young people know what to do in the event of an emergency. A range of graduated risk assessments ensure the safety and welfare of the young people and staff. Good links are in place with the fire service who visit to familiarise themselves with the building and offer advice. Fire drills are held regularly and all fire prevention equipment is new and tested appropriately.

Leadership and management

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

The centre is now accommodated in new premises situated on the same site. The meticulous planning led to a successful transition. An influx of a large number of new admissions shortly after the move was handled well by staff and managers meaning minimum disruption to the day-to-day running of the centre.

Since the previous inspection the number of team leaders has increased. The role now includes direct management oversight of each house. House units receive more direct and focussed management. This has sharpened accountability and young people benefit from living in house units that are better organised and receptive to meeting their needs.

Staff say they feel well supported. Recently efforts have been undertaken to reintroduce the supervision programme and carry out missed appraisals. However the level and frequency of supervision taking place remains inconsistent.

The staff team is relatively experienced and all have completed or are undertaking a relevant professional qualification. Training continues to be available and is quickly arranged where necessary to meet specific needs of young people admitted. For example, training for dealing with diabetes to ensure staff possess the competences and skills to effectively meet young people's diverse needs.

Both internal and external monitoring of the centre occurs regularly. A revised system to collate the information collected and present it in a format that takes account of the revised children's homes regulations is in place. A large amount of data is collated in relation to behaviour management. This is used to identify trends and areas for development. Some of the data produced is however unreliable and presents as contradictory. The information is collated using differing counting rules and final calculations can differ. While there is no direct effect on young people, this does not enhance the ability to evidence progress and amendments made to behaviour management practice.

The reports from external monitoring visits are detailed and comprehensive, providing elements of quality assurance and making specific recommendations where necessary. Young people contribute and can discuss their views. However, these reports do not contain specific sections that reflect the views of staff and parents.

Arrangements for quality assurance of formal education are effective in informing actions for improvement. Senior managers have developed useful arrangements for collecting and analysing data on the performance of young people which they are using well to inform self-assessment. Managers carry out observation of teaching and learning which records what individual teachers need to do to improve. However, the outcomes from observation have not been sufficiently effective in improving the performance of teachers judged to be satisfactory. Managers have made good progress in developing and implementing key processes such as for curriculum

development, improving external links, initial assessment and for seeking and using young people's views through the school council. However, they have not placed sufficient priority on quality assuring the daily learning experience provided for young people. This includes the use of learning materials, the management of classrooms and work scrutiny of young people's files.

The strategic manager is well supported and demonstrates an understanding of the strengths of the centre and areas in need of refining and improvement. There is a will and capacity for continuing improvement. An additional area of positive change is the recent introduction of a formal changeover period which allows staff teams coming on duty to meet with those ending their shift. This has improved communication and ensures that young people's immediate needs can be made known and addressed.

The Statement of Purpose has been revised to take account of the recent developments. A new version of the young person's guide has also been introduced. The guide can be accessed by young people interactively in their bedrooms as well as in a written format. However, the details for the Children's Rights Director and independent reviewing officers are not available for young people. In addition the details for Ofsted are in need of review.

The centre has a good record of compliance and has successfully addressed the two recommendations carried over from the previous inspection. This has resulted in young people's future education placements now being included in re-settlement plans and improvement in the assessments undertaken enabling independent living skills to be focussed more on the individual needs of young people. Young people benefit from a centre that is stable and striving for continued improvement. This gives them a sense of direction, security and belonging.

Leadership and management of formal education is good. Good planning has ensured that the school's curriculum responds well to local and national guidelines. For example, the vocational curriculum has increased and meets the needs of young people of different ages and genders. Plans for new accreditation being introduced this year have been considered carefully and are significant in moving the school forward.

Managers and teachers work well together to ensure that the day-to-day operation of the school runs smoothly. However, the management of the entrance to the school needs to be enhanced to provide a more welcoming introduction to learning. Most teachers are appropriately qualified; some bring up-to-date industrial experience and fresh approaches to teaching and learning.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.