

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	20/06/2013
Inspector	David Martin
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	18/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This provision is a residential special school and is owned by a private organisation. The school can offer accommodation for up to 46 children and young people between the ages of eight years to 19 years. Children and young people have complex needs and severe learning difficulties, including autism. The residential accommodation is registered and inspected as a children's home by Ofsted.

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**.

Young people thrive in the nurturing environment provided in this setting. They enjoy warmth, respect and high levels of individual attention. As a result, young people are making exceptional progress in school and enjoy a broad range of enjoyable activities which promote good health and healthy lifestyles.

The staff are patient and calm, enabling young people to achieve their full potential, while allowing them to make individual progress at their own pace. Young people make as full a contribution as possible to day-to-day decisions within the school. The school strongly promotes a culture in which the safety and wellbeing of young people are the priorities for all staff. Young people learn to regulate their own behaviour over time and positive behaviour strategies are embedded within the school.

Staffing levels are good, ensuring that the individual needs of young people are safely met day and night. The school has recently employed a manager on a full-time, permanent basis. She has made an application to register. As a result of this inspection there are no statutory requirements and one recommendation concerning monitoring processes within the school.

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 visits carried out under Regulation 33 are effective; specifically checking that case records and reports are signed (NMS 21).

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people say they enjoy living at the school. Over time, they form strong and trusting relationships with the staff. This helps them to develop a sense of security and a positive self-view. One parent said, 'At last I feel my son is safe and getting the care he deserves, I am so relieved.'

Young people lead healthy lifestyles and enjoy a wide range of individually tailored activities which promote good health. Young people develop a strong sense of emotional well-being and benefit from insightful input from the organisation's clinical services team. This is strengthened by regular paediatric and psychiatric surgeries held in the school. Young people's health care needs are met exceptionally well.

Young people make excellent educational progress and thoroughly enjoy school life. Their attendance level is high and many are achieving above expected levels in core subjects. This is impressive given young people's starting points. The high standard of education is valued by parents, leading one to comment that their child's 'educational progress has been fantastic'.

Although many of the young people have impaired communication skills, all are enabled to make a positive contribution to day-to-day life in the school. They have individualised communication aids, ensuring that they can share their views and be as widely understood as possible. They are strongly supported to make choices. For example, the school held a creative and enjoyable day in which young people voted for their favourite activities and directly influenced the activity programme for the forthcoming year.

Young people maintain positive contact with their families. Parents are welcome to visit the school and spend time with their children. They described how the staff go 'the extra mile' to support them and their children. For example, staff accompanied one young person and their parent on holiday abroad. This enabled the family to enjoy their time together without any pressures. The school's approach ensures that young people continue to have positive relationships with people who are important to them.

Young people acquire good self-care skills, overcoming limitations on their abilities. They enjoy a wide range of activities which help them be as independent as possible. Young people are supported effectively to make a positive transition to adulthood and to fulfil their aspirations.

Quality of care

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

Staff have warm and affectionate relationships with young people. They interact with exceptional patience, calmness and good humour. As one social worker observed, the school provides a strong 'nurturing environment'. This enables young people to achieve their full potential, while allowing them to make individual progress at their own pace.

The school ensures that all young people are able to express their views and wishes. As noted above, the young people have a direct say in the day-to-day life at the school. Staff work closely with young people and quickly come to understand the significance of particular gestures and behaviours. This enables them to respond promptly and effectively to any signs of discomfort or distress, and to share in their achievements and happiness. Pictorial and symbolic communication aids are used imaginatively to help young people make the most of school life. Young people's opinions are highly valued.

Information about making a complaint is widely available to young people and their parents. Complaints from young people rarely occur. Complaints from parents are also infrequent but when they are made, they are promptly investigated, referred to other agencies as appropriate and resolved effectively.

Placement plans are excellent. They are organised well and set very clear objectives and desired outcomes. The plans address key issues relating to the educational, social, emotional and health care needs of each young person. All plans are subject to regular, high quality evaluation. This ensures that they can be modified quickly as young people's needs change as they develop and mature.

Care staff provide young people with high levels of educational support. They accompany them throughout the school day and provide individually tailored classroom assistance. This ensures good school attendance and exceptional levels of achievement. The school's approach ensures that young people make the most of their time and have fulfilling opportunities to learn.

Extra-curricular activities within the school and local community are organised with enthusiasm and creativity. They make a direct and effective contribution to young people's good health, emotional well-being and sense of enjoyment. The activities programme reflects young people's interests and enables them to make constructive use of their free time.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel very safe and that staff are helping them to keep out of

trouble's way. This view is echoed by parents and social workers. The school environment and high levels of supervision make a significant contribution to young people's feelings of safety and security.

The school strongly promotes a culture in which the safety and well-being of young people are the priorities for all staff. All staff complete on-going safeguarding and child protection training which addresses the specific needs of young people with a learning disability. The staff are confident about reporting any safeguarding concerns or disclosures. This helps to protect young people from harm.

The school responds effectively to any safeguarding issues when they arise. It has a strong track record of working together with all partner agencies to investigate and resolve concerns. Allegations against staff members are thoroughly investigated and interim measures, such as suspension, are applied as appropriate to keep young people safe. The school has a proactive approach to protecting young people from harm.

Young people rarely, if ever, go missing from home. This is attributable to the high levels of supervision and young people's sense of security within the school. The school has well thought out contingency plans and procedures to manage any incident should it arise.

Young people make excellent progress in self-regulating their behaviour. They are given time and space to work through issues at their own pace. In previous placements, many young people have displayed challenging behaviour resulting in high levels of restraint. It is to the school's credit, therefore, that physical intervention is used infrequently and only in exceptional circumstances. Staff are thoroughly grounded in positive behaviour strategies and are highly effective in using de-escalation techniques. The school's approach protects young people and promotes positive outcomes.

All staff are thoroughly vetted prior to taking up post and are subject to on-going checks of their suitability to work with young people. This contributes to young people's safety.

The environment is safely maintained. There are regular checks on the safety of equipment and appliances, including fire protection systems. This also contributes to the overall safety and well-being of young people.

Leadership and management

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

The school has recently employed a new manager in a full-time, permanent capacity. She has submitted an application to register, which will be processed in due course. Prior to her appointment, the head-teacher, with support from the Registered Manager of the school's sister service, was temporarily responsible for overseeing residential services. This ensured continuity of management and minimised

disruption. During this period, the head-teacher monitored activity in the school, using monthly monitoring processes robustly to maintain high standards of care. The temporary management arrangements were effective, ensuring that the delivery of care was not compromised.

The school has effective procedures for managing complaints. Any complaints it receives are taken seriously and, whenever appropriate, changes to practice are made. This contributes to improving outcomes for young people.

The school's Statement of Purpose is a high quality, informative document that is fully compliant with regulations. The children's guide makes good use of pictures and symbols to ensure it is as accessible to as many young people as possible. Both documents set out clearly what young people, their parents and placing authorities can expect from the school.

Generally, monitoring of activity in the school is good. This includes monthly visits carried out on behalf of the provider. The organisation has identified that the subsequent reports need to demonstrate greater consultation with external stakeholders and parents. In addition, the visits have not picked up the fact that some case records are unsigned. The visits are, therefore, not fully contributing to the overall drive for improvement within the school.

Staffing levels are good and ensure that there are sufficient numbers of people on duty to meet the needs of young people both day and night. The staff make good use of supervision to reflect on practice. The organisation is strongly committed to staff training and provides them with an impressive range of opportunities. This ensures that staff are aware of the latest developments in their field and that their practice is up to date. This contributes to the well-being of young people.

All records are stored securely, ensuring that confidential information about young people is safe.

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.