

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC038435
Inspection date	02/05/2013
Inspector	Dawn Bennett / Clive Lucas
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	19/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This provision is a children's home registered by Ofsted and a 52-week independent residential special school, registered and approved by the Department for Education. It is for boys and girls aged 6 to 17 years with severe and complex learning 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 **adequate**.

This full inspection has judged the home as adequate overall. The home had maintained an outstanding judgement at the last full inspection, with good progress at interim inspections, for the last two years. This inspection was brought forward following information received by a local authority. Outcomes for young people and quality of care are good. There are individually tailored systems in place that result in young people making significant personal educational and social progress. This is expertly facilitated by well informed, professional staff. They are supported in this task by established policies and systems. The inspection found that some of these systems are not consistent or effective across all homes on site. This has resulted in adequate outcomes in safeguarding and leadership and management.

Six requirements and four recommendations have been made to address these shortfalls. These are to ensure quality assurance, behavioural development plans and risk assessments are detailed. That staff receive the support they need to do a good job through regular supervisions, specific training and meaningful de-briefing after difficult incidents. The records are detailed and well maintained.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that with 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline the person using the measure has been spoken to about the measure used (Regulation 17(b) (3) (h))	31/05/2013
32 (2001)	ensure there are arrangements for persons working in the home to receive suitable training in fire prevention (Regulation 32 (1)(d))	30/06/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of restraint, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include all matters listed in Regulation 17b (3))	31/05/2013
27 (2001)	ensure all persons employed receive appropriate supervision (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	31/05/2013
34 (2001)	ensure the registered person establishes and maintains a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34)	30/06/2013
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation. (Regulation 24 (5))	31/05/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that reports of actions taken to improve quality of care, as a result of internal monitoring, are completed at six monthly intervals. This is in relation to sending copies of the reports to Ofsted (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)
- ensure a child's plan sets out any specific strategies that have been agreed to reduce the incidences of any negative behaviour exhibited by the child (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.88)
- ensure there is a proportionate approach to any risk assessment, this specifically relates to the safety and well-being of staff and infection control (NMS 4.5)
- ensure staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting, this specifically relates to specific training in aspects of challenging behaviour and in related infection control (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people express their views, feelings and wishes because they are provided with clear and consistently-implemented communication strategies, including verbal, symbols, photographs and sign language. As well as day-to-day opportunities young people also use formal processes, such as house meetings and school council, to put forward their opinions. Regular visits from an independent advocate service ensure that young people are also able to voice their concerns and worries. As a result they grow in confidence and have influence over their daily routines and activities.

Young people develop a positive sense of worth because their successful achievements and experiences are consistently reinforced and celebrated. They have records of these, including photos and film footage. They enjoy sharing these with parents and with social workers.

Young people are clear of their routines and daily plans. As a result they become calmer and more focused. Some young people can do things they could not do before coming to the service. These include enjoying going for a haircut, going out for a meal, going shopping and attending medical appointments.

Young people are actively engaged in school and educational activities. They have excellent attendance and continue to make positive progress. They achieve by working towards targets that are individually set.

Young people enjoy good health. They develop knowledge and understanding of their own health and medical conditions. For example, this includes brushing teeth, attending the dentist, dressing appropriately for the weather and healthy eating. Young people who find routine health examinations threatening have additional visits so that they become familiar with the places, people and processes involved.

Young people stay in contact with their families. There is dedicated accommodation within the grounds of the home for families to stay in, with their child, for overnight stays. There is also private accommodation available for shorter day visits. There is also the facility for young people to contact families via computer who cannot visit as often.

Young people develop age-appropriate independence skills. For example, older young people go to community-based clubs and plan and prepare their own meals.

Quality of care

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

All young people have a statement of special educational needs. A highly skilled and caring staff team are committed to meeting the complex needs of young people. The relationships between young people and staff are excellent and young people enjoy living at the home.

Young people's physical and emotional health is successfully promoted and monitored. There are comprehensive medical procedures and effective staff training. The school's medical team and staff have excellent knowledge of learning disabilities, associated medical issues and health promotion awareness. Where a young person has a specific medical condition the health team review and revises practice. This ensures the home can fully meet the young person's needs as well as supporting the staff team and family. There are effective working relationships with other medical agencies.

The staff team maintain good quality records for each young person. These records detail the individual preferences of young people, their dietary and cultural needs and any specific risk factors. Where able to do so, young people are encouraged to share their views about their care and these views are recorded and acted upon. Where young people are unable to do this, the staff team consult with parents and social workers. Most young people make considerable progress as a result of diligent staff teams who meet young people's individual needs, wishes and preferences.

The home has presented its complaints system in an attractive and child-focused way for the young people. In addition, the home has engaged an independent charity to visit the young people in each residential unit each month. The home also employs a dedicated complaints officer. Complaints records use pictures to support young people's understanding. These provisions illustrate the home's commitment to listening to young people, and their families, when concerns and worries arise. Complaints are listened to and fully investigated. However, not all records relating to each complaint investigation are kept together. This makes monitoring the quality of the investigation or any patterns and trends difficult for the home's senior management team.

On the whole there are positive relationships with external agencies. This ensures that the needs of young people are at the forefront of staff practice. The staff team maintain regular dialogue with parents, social workers and health professionals. This ensures that progress is shared; concerns identified and agreed plans are followed.

There are eleven residential homes on site. At the time of this inspection, one was closed while being refurbished and another was empty. Nine were occupied and inspected. The vast majority of young people who enter this service have had several unsuccessful placements in previous schools. Each home is managed by a team leader and line managed through the care management team and the head of care. Young people benefit from a service that is well presented, homely and attractive. Communal areas are comfortable and homely. As a result, young people are able to explore the environment and choose from a range of interesting and stimulating activities. The provision of sensory and quiet areas means that young people exercise choices in their activities and are able to maintain and develop their interests. Young people's rooms are pleasantly decorated and personalised to the individual tastes and needs of young people. Photographs, film footage and young people's art work is on display around the school, homes and grounds and this further adds to the warm, homely feel.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe. Vigilant staff teams ensure that the individual needs and vulnerabilities of young people are identified and catered for. Where young people pose specific risks, suitable adaptations are made to ensure their safety. For example, staffing levels are increased and improved security measures are put into place. A key strength of the service is the attention given to providing a safe and appropriately secure environment. Young people are therefore enabled to take risks to maximise their progress, develop their interests and nurture their talents.

There has recently been one occasion of a young person going missing from the home. This incident was appropriately managed by the staff team, ensuring the young person's welfare and safety. As a result of this incident, the staff made changes to risk assessments and there has been no repeat occurrence. This shows that the staff are keen to reflect on incidents and further improve young people's safety. Furthermore, changes to the physical security of the service have further enhanced the safe environment.

Young people's welfare is at the centre of the home's practice. This is achieved by a 'team around the child' approach and a 'behaviour watch' monitoring system. The home uses these established systems to set targets, introduce behaviour management strategies, monitor progress and incidents and identify trends and concerns. There are regular 'team around the child' meetings involving various specialists, such as psychologists, therapists, teaching, health and care staff. In the majority of cases this enables the home to manage challenging patterns of behaviour and achieve improvements. However, these systems have not been consistently applied across all eight homes. This has resulted in staff not being fully equipped with the guidance, training and skills required to best meet young people's needs.

Behavioural development plans are in place for all young people but the quality is not always good. These plans do not always describe the detail or duration of strategies to be used or strategies for all situations. Behavioural development plans are not always being monitored or reviewed when patterns of behaviours are not improving or when staff need more guidance or support. In a specific case not enough work has been done to protect staff through effective infection control. Behaviour development plans and risk assessments have not identified all hazards or how to reduce risks. Staff managing behaviours that present specific risks have not had additional training or advice on how to safely protect themselves and this places them at risk of harm.

Staff are not always being de-briefed after incidents and have not in all cases been provided with training specific to the behaviour they are managing. In some cases this has resulted in staff not being skilled to meet the specific needs of young people and young people's behaviour not being proactively addressed and to some low staff morale.

Records of restraint are not adequate because they are not consistent across site. Some of the written records are not fully completed within 24 hours and one of the home's restraint books was missing at the time of the inspection and had been for some time. These records are monitored by the homes' line managers through quality assurance reports but not on a day-to-day basis. Records are also maintained through an electronic system which means missing information can be found but not all information is in one place as required. All staff receive training in de-escalation and restraint and this is regularly refreshed. In addition there are monthly sessions in team meetings to ensure that staff are provided with knowledge and skills to manage challenging behaviour and that these are kept up to date.

Effective pre-employment checks ensure that only suitable adults have contact with young people at the service. This ensures that young people are protected from harm. Fire safety is appropriately managed in the home. Fire drills are regularly conducted and young people are encouraged to develop their safe evacuation skills. This ensures that all young people and staff are fully practised in emergency escape procedures. The home environment is safely maintained and any defects are identified and quickly resolved. All required checks on electrical and gas appliances are up to date. The home environment is safe and adapted to meet the differing and often complex needs of young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home was judged to be making good progress at the last inspection in March 2013. One recommendation was made at that time for the management team to collate their various monitoring and evaluation checks and produce periodic reports that they copy to Ofsted. The Registered Manager is currently working to complete this recommendation. The situation is complex in this home because there are currently eight residential houses. An evaluation of records in one house may lead to a different conclusion to another house. The Registered Manager is currently working towards the implementation of this recommendation. In the meantime, the home's existing system continues to collect and evaluate records from the houses. They do not, however, cover all the required quality assurance elements. The improvement of these systems and the input care managers have into the operation of the home's they line manage would supported them to observe and address such issues as highlighted in this report.

This service has the resources available to ensure a high ratio of staff are skilled in meeting young people's complex needs. Staff are supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting students' welfare and meeting their individual needs. They receive a detailed induction and are provided with comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance that promote the strong values and ethos of the school. Staff continue to receive an extensive range of in-house training to ensure their childcare practice remains up to date. However, while the majority of staff have their fire awareness training refreshed on a regular basis, a few staff have not. However,

there are regular fire drills so staff do have this opportunity to maintain their awareness of fire safety issues. In addition, formal support for staff is not consistent. Care manager's monthly monitoring identifies gaps in one-to-one supervision but these shortfalls have not been addressed. The training department have identified the staff who require refresher fire awareness training but some repeat non attenders have still not attended. Until this is addressed, young people are looked after by staff that are not always trained or sufficiently supported to meet their needs.

External monthly monitoring visits are carried out without fail and young people's and staff views are included. Reports are used to inform the quality assurance system of the school, which is undertaken each month.

Young people's individual case files are reviewed regularly and kept up to date by the staff team and their key workers, and monitored by the home's Registered Manager and regulation 33 visitor. They are confidentially stored and are arranged in a manner that makes them readily useable by staff.

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.