

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Dawn Taylor / Jackie Callaghan
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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

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 for boys and girls aged six to 18 years with severe and complex learning needs.

There are 10 residential homes accommodating in total 72 children between the specified age ranges. All students have a statement of special educational needs and are funded, currently, by 38 local authorities. Many 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.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is an outstanding service that positively impacts on young people's lives. The key strengths of this service are its management team and wide range of professionally qualified staff. They are enthusiastic, trained to a high standard and understand the complex needs of young people well. This is reflected in all aspects of consultation, practice and care planning and ensures the individual needs and aspirations of young people lie at the heart of this service. Young people, parents and social workers have consistent positive views about the quality of care provided by the service and relationships with staff.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

All young people receive excellent individualised assistance from an experienced staff team that includes residential and education staff, nurses, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and a behavioural psychologist. A core team of these specialists, appropriate to meeting the needs of each individual, ensure they have appropriate assessments and plans in place. This results in young people's needs being identified, met and regularly monitored and them achieving outstanding progress educationally, socially and emotionally. For example, school attendance is high, young people are proactively involved in meaningful social activities both on site and in the local community and independence skills are developed and achieved in line with individuals' abilities.

Young people are presented with genuine and meaningful ways of making informed choices. The service uses a variety of communication systems to meet the needs of the young people; these include picture methods, signalong, photographs and symbols. This is further enhanced by the service's commitment to gathering the views of parents, siblings and families with regard to individual young people's day-to-day and long-term aims and objectives. The information gathered is proactively used to inform the care of individuals, staff practice and the on going development of the service. Young people stated 'I love it here', 'staff are great' and 'staff always help me'. A social worker stated 'this service does a brilliant job understanding the complex needs of these young people and works sensitively and sympathetically with them to empower them'.

The physical, emotional and mental health needs of each young person continue to be actively identified and promoted. From initial assessment, throughout schooling and on through to transition, the service ensures young peoples health and personal care needs are met. This is made accessible and meaningful to young people because it is delivered through a range of forums that include social stories, individual discussions with key staff and the school curriculum.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy a specialist service that effectively supports them to succeed. They make outstanding progress based on their assessed abilities and needs. Each young person is supported by a core team of professional staff who support them from initial assessment through to adulthood. This holistic approach ensures there is professional support with regard to education, care, communication, physical and emotional health, family support and transition on into adulthood. Young people and their families are provided with excellent support and guidance, which enables them to make informed decisions and life choices. Families and young people are strongly advocated for by the service, for example, providing family accommodation to promote regular contact, providing training for families and, operating a sibling support group.

Transitional support is also provided to families and young people this ensures appropriate adult placements are identified and transitions are planned. There are dedicated staff that support parents on visits to prospective placements. When a placement is identified, detailed transition plans are developed. These include the service providing the staff from the adult provision with specialist training and accommodation during the transition period. This supports young people to successfully move on to adulthood.

A key strength of this service is the professional staff team who have in-depth knowledge of all the young people and their families. This, and their expertise in working with young people with complex learning and communication difficulties, ensures a consistent quality of care. A social worker stated 'the staff team is dedicated. They work in partnership with families keeping in regular contact. They send me detailed reports that ensure I can see the progress and achievements made by the young person'.

The service values the individual and diverse identities of young people and this uniqueness is celebrated in a way that promotes awareness and understanding. Young people's enriched care and educational experience is underpinned by the service's coherent philosophy, values and strong management team.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's safety is promoted at all times. Young people are also effectively supported to develop their individual skills at ensuring their own safety. Staff are well informed and take appropriate action to ensure young people's welfare and that any issues are addressed. All safeguarding procedures are robust and are tailored to meet the specific complex needs of the young people placed. These procedures are regularly reviewed and developed to ensure the well-being of young people remains at the centre of the service's practice. For example, the complaints procedure has been developed specifically for young people with a learning disability to easily access and understand. The psychology department have been supported by the whole school to introduce a new behaviour management package more appropriate to the needs of the young people placed and reduce numbers of incidents. The service continues to undertake research to develop new practice to ensure outstanding outcomes for young people. All current and developing practice results in consistently strong outcomes for young people.

Due to the complex needs of young people placed the service values and advocates the involvement and views of professionals and families with regard to the welfare and well being of young people. For example, the service has a long-established relationship with an independent children's advocacy group that regularly visit the young people in each house and advocate for individuals as well as give feedback to senior management. Each young person also has a key worker as well as a core team of staff who have specialist knowledge of the young person and ensure individual needs are met. There is also effective contact with families strengthened by specific workers who seek their views.

Leadership and management

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

The service was judged to be outstanding at the last inspection and no previous recommendations or actions were made. The service's ethos and underpinning philosophy is strong throughout, ensuring young people are in a supportive and caring home within which they are valued and safe but enabled to thrive and develop. There are clear records, policies and procedures and Statement of Purpose. There is a strong leadership and management team who provide staff with clear and consistent guidance and support. Young people are central to all decisions and make clear progress within the service. Managers and staff provide strong and consistent role models for young people.

A key strength of this service is the high ratio of professional staff skilled in meeting the complex needs of young people. Outstanding investment is given to the development and training of these staff whose deployment and performance are effective.

All staff are proactively supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting young people's welfare and meeting their individual needs. They receive a comprehensive induction, regular supervision and annual appraisals. They are provided with comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance that promote the strong values and ethos of the service. Staff continue to receive an extensive range of in-house training to ensure their childcare practice remains up-to-date.

This service has substantial strengths and a sustained record of delivering outstanding performance and managing improvement. Where areas for improvement emerge the service recognises and manages them well. The senior management team provide effective monitoring and evaluation of relevant records and events such as the complaints, child protection and effective behaviour management. This monitoring and consultation and regular communication ensures proper scrutiny and on going development of all aspects of the young people's care. This quality monitoring and other similar initiatives contribute to reports to the trustees and the service's overall strategic plan and implementation.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.