

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Dawn Taylor / Martha Nethaway
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

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 Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) for boys and girls aged six to 18 years with severe and complex learning needs. It has 10 residential homes with places for a total of 72 children. 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.

The homes are as follows and accommodate the following number and age range of children:

Beech is a group home that accommodates six children and young people over 14 years,

Birch is a group home that accommodates 11 children and young people under 16 years,

Bracken is a group home that accommodates seven children and young people under 14 years,

Maple is a group home that accommodates three children and young people under 16 years,

Elm is a group home that accommodates seven young people over 14 years,

Firs is a group home that accommodates seven young people over 14 years,

Orchard is a group home that accommodates seven children and young people under 16 years,

Home Farm is a group home that accommodates four young people over 14 years,

Oak is a group home that accommodates six children and young people under 16 years and

Rowen is a group home that accommodates six children and young people under 16 years.

This service is a charitable organisation run by a board of trustees.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This inspection was a key, unannounced inspection visit. The outcome groups relating to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation were assessed.

The students' were present and participated in the inspection process.

The overall outcome judgement is good. Being healthy, enjoying and achieving and positive contribution were all judged to be outstanding. Staying safe, economic well-being and organisation were all judged to be good.

This service has established policies and procedures, which are underpinned by a comprehensive framework of staff training and research. This ensures high quality practice, which is sustained and results in excellent outcomes for young people. Their successes and achievements are nurtured and supported by a dedicated professional staff team. They promote a safe environment where meaningful relationships are developed. Staff are able to provide a high level of care and support for students' and effectively meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. Individual achievements are recognised and celebrated. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding throughout the standards inspected.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations or actions made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Students' are receiving a strong service that clearly focuses on their emotional well-being and health needs. The physical, emotional and mental health needs of each student continue to be actively identified and promoted by a skilled professional team of staff that include a team of nurses, speech and language therapists, psychologist, occupational therapists, an art therapist, care and education staff. From initial assessment, throughout schooling and on through to transition the school provides students' with appropriate guidance, advice and support on health and personal care issues. This is delivered through a range of forums that include social stories, individual discussions with key staff and the school curriculum.

Each individual student's particular health needs are identified in their health plan, which is monitored and reviewed by the nursing team and other core staff on a regular basis. Staff are actively engaging with students' about a range of health related issues, which result in consistent improvements to health and fitness. A social worker stated 'I have always been impressed by the way the young people are encouraged to be active and enjoy physical activities as a group and in an individual way'. Students' good health and well-being is being successfully promoted because staff model and promote healthy lifestyles.

Students' continue to be provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs by a team of experienced catering staff who are integral to the life of the school. Students' are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and fresh fruit is always available in the houses. Menus are on display and students' can choose from a wide selection of meals. Vegetarian and culturally appropriate foods are available. Mealtimes are seen as social events that help students' with differing communication

difficulties improve their social interactions. The school's kitchen retains the top five star rating by the environmental health authority.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Students' safety continues to be effectively promoted because staff listen and take appropriate actions to ensure their welfare. A social worker stated 'work is done with the young people on making them aware of danger and how to address specific risks. This work is done at a level that is effective and also easily understood by the young people'.

Students' privacy is respected because the school has clear guidance on how to work with them at intimate and personal care times. Staff show a very high regard for the privacy of students' and assist them with personal care tasks in a sensitive manner. All staff as part of their induction learn how to undertake personal care, however, they are not able to undertake any intimate care until they have completed behaviour management training and safeguarding training. This rule also applies to agency staff.

The school has an effective complaints procedure and information about this is available to students' and parents' in a range of formats. The process in place manages complaints and concerns quickly and in a manner students' and their families both understand and can agree with. Students' are assisted to communicate their concerns through the use of the 'Listen Up' pack promoted by Mencap. This is specifically designed to help children and young people with learning disabilities complain about the service they receive. Staff are trained in and promote the use of this tool which assists students' in communicating their views. A social worker stated 'young people are given every opportunity to make their feelings known and they all have access to an advocate'.

All staff have robust training that covers all safeguarding issues. In addition, key staff have achieved their local authority's level 2 safeguarding training and all staff have undertaken new on line e-training in safeguarding. This training is additional to existing induction and mandatory training already undertaken by staff.

Students' and parents' receive clear information about countering bullying. Students' are protected from bullying by a high level of staff supervision. Where the potential for bullying behaviour occurs, staff plan activities, mixing carefully chosen small groups of students' to encourage positive experiences and relationships.

Staff are experienced and skilled at supporting individuals and groups of young people with complex behaviours. A social worker stated 'I have observed young people being allowed their own space as well as being well supported. I have also seen them managed in a respectful way when displaying challenging behaviour'. A new system of managing challenging behaviour has been introduced into the school and is having a positive impact on reducing incidents. Behaviour plans are in place

for all students', which identify likely behaviours of concern and appropriate intervention strategies. These are monitored, and staff are supported, by the psychology department. As a result students' benefit from clear and consistent expectations of behaviour.

Students' safety is promoted by an established health and safety policy, which ensures risks are identified and appropriate action is taken to manage and reduce them. Students' and staff are involved in fire drills and there are regular checks on all fire and electrical equipment to ensure it is in good working order. All staff are appropriately trained in health and safety matters including first aid and fire awareness.

Students' continue to be protected by the school's robust recruitment systems that ensures all staff employed complete the necessary recruitment checks and are deemed suitable to work before commencement of employment. A high number of key staff have attended safer recruitment training, this demonstrates the school's continuing commitment to the further development of the staff vetting procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Students' benefit from a service where they receive individual support according to their needs and where education is promoted as an important factor in their lives. Staff are encouraging and positive in their approach to the learning and the individual development needs of each student. Staff contribute positively towards helping students' to develop their maturity and raise their self-esteem. Staff recognise the inter-dependence between health needs, educational achievement and social experiences. Consequently, students' receive a high and excellent degree of support that enables them to make the best of their educational opportunities and achieve outstanding individual outcomes.

Students' receive individualised assistance, with appropriate assessments and plans in place. The individual houses use a variety of communication systems to meet the needs of the students', these include Picture Exchange Communication (PECS), signalong, photos and symbols. This promotes the school's commitment to ensuring students' are presented with genuine and meaningful choices that they can understand.

Students' are encouraged to engage in a wide range of stimulating activities, which enable them to develop their social skills and promotes inclusion. A social worker stated 'the staff are skilled at supporting young people to be active members of, not just the school's community, but also the wider community'.

There is an established policy and ethos that achieves positive outcomes for students' education. Students' receive excellent support and encouragement with their educational attainment. The setting provides a 24-hour educational curriculum and all students' have a Statement of Special Educational Need as well as an

individual plan. Good links are maintained between the residential settings and the educational staff and this positive partnership works to enable students' to reach their full potential.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The care and welfare of students' is outstanding and promoted through detailed student development plans. These cover an extensive range of important matters and are used in conjunction with behaviour management plans and risk assessments. Students' are respected as individuals and wherever appropriate plans reflect their views and wishes. Each student is supported by a dedicated holistic team that include individuals from education, care, health and psychology. They work together to effectively meet students' needs through targets that are regularly monitored and adapted to ensure maximum progress is made.

Students' are encouraged, enabled and supported to contribute to their care by using a variety of communication aids. The school values and includes the views of parents, siblings and families both with regard to individual students and wider school matters. The school has a long established relationship with an independent children's advocacy group, which provides an advocate for each house who visits on a regular basis. Each student has a key worker as well as their student development team. Opportunities to discuss issues are accessible to all, through elected members of the student council, at house meetings, during circle time and in lessons.

Contact with families is positively promoted and an outstanding feature of this school. All staff receive training in a family focused model, which is further enhanced by the family services team and family resource centre. Families are supported by the staff in the house where their child is living, by the family services team and, if they choose, by a 'buddy family' who also have a child at the school. All families have access to two family flats, which are housed in the main school building, which provide the opportunity for the whole family to stay on site and spend time with their child. There is also dedicated private space where families can spend private visiting time with their child. A key strength of this service is the work they undertake with siblings of students' at the school. A social worker stated 'the key worker has regular contact with me and the parents to advise on progress that is being made and any significant incidents that happen'.

Family services also ensure that a student moves into the setting in a planned and sensitive manner and transitions on into adulthood with dedicated support. The team provide outstanding support and guidance to all new students' and their families. Visits are made to the family and a pre admission assessment is carried out to ensure there is a full and detailed picture of the student. Families then visit the site with their child to enable the transition to be successful.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Students' are receiving excellent services that develop the skills they will require as adults. Staff are able to tailor support depending upon the individual's needs and ability. There is a dedicated worker who ensures that the move onto adult placement is well-planned and both the student and their family are well prepared and have a detailed understanding of these next steps in the student's life. Staff complete a profile of the student in addition to a communication passport, thus providing all the relevant details about specific needs to ensure a successful transition. It is the ethos of the service to involve and nurture students' to develop life skills throughout their schooling. Staff are excellent role models and are expert at getting the balance right between encouraging students' to undertake jobs on their own and providing company to make them fun and enjoyable.

The school has a very good standard of accommodation for its students'. Social workers' stated 'there are stringent processes in place to ensure that hygiene of the premises is good', 'the living accommodation is a good standard', 'young people are encouraged to look after their accommodation as well as their own property and take an interest in their surroundings'. Since the last inspection a new purpose built educational building has opened and is now operational, en-suites have been added to some of the residential houses and the main house entrance and reception area has been refurbished. All work is completed to an outstanding standard. The school operates to a development plan that continues to identify areas of development with timescales for completion. Current work includes a new play area and sensory garden. This demonstrates the commitment by the school to continue to enhance the facilities available to students' and staff on site.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Since the last inspection a new principal and head of education have started in post. They are in the process of commissioning an external audit of the school that will only serve to strengthen an already strong service and further enhance outcomes for students'.

The school continues to provide a good service that achieves consistently good outcomes for students'. Social workers' stated 'the young person I support has made great strides and his needs are definitely being met', 'my experiences with the school have always been professional, welcoming and positive', 'the facilities are excellent', 'the school has completely changed the life of the young person by providing her with the routine and structure to manage her daily living and activities in a positive manner'.

A key strength of this service is resources available to ensure the high ratio of staff are skilled in meeting complex needs. All staff are proactively supported and guided

in safeguarding and promoting students' 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 promotes 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. A social worker stated 'the care staff are very dedicated to the children's' welfare. They put the child's' needs first. They have been consistent and stable over a period of years, which speaks volumes as to their commitment and this being a good working environment'.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. The quality and detail of students' plans also supports this commitment. Students' receive an individual service in the school, which is designed to meet their personal needs. All staff have an in-depth knowledge of the students' they are working with ensuring their needs are consistently met. Staff work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure a high quality service where the ethos is centred around meeting the individual needs and aspirations of students'.

Monthly monitoring visits are carried out without fail and students' and staff views are included. Reports are used to inform the quality assurance system of the school, which is undertaken each month. This internal monitoring and regulation ensures praise and acknowledgement of effective practice but also addresses shortfalls with an appropriate measure of rigor. The systems in place are centred firmly around the experiences of students' and whether the school is fully able to meet their needs.

Student'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.