

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC020558
Inspection date	22/06/2012
Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	05/03/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

The privately owned school is registered as a children's home to accommodate 22 children and young people. The school provides education and care to children and young people who present with severe learning disabilities, challenging behaviours, autistic spectrum disorder and sensory impairment.

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**.

The school effectively provides exceptional personalised care that addresses the individual and complex needs of each child and young person. The school follows robust policies procedures and protocols that ensure children and young people remain safe and protected from harm. Behaviour management strategies are considered and effective in respecting the dignity and particular needs of individual children and young people. These are effectively supported by excellent relationships between staff and children and young people. Children and young people make good progress in their education and health and develop practical social skills and confidence through participation in a variety of activities.

An experienced manager and senior care team efficiently manage the residential aspect of the school. All staff are well trained and supported.

One requirement and recommendation result from this inspection relating to the need for more consistent recording of staff support and the regular inclusion of education plans within children and young people's case records.

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
27 (2001)	ensure that accurate written or electronic records are kept detailing the time, date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff. (Regulation 27(4) (a))	23/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that educational achievement is promoted by including a copy of all education plans within the child's case records. (NMS 8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people are actively helped and encouraged to develop a positive image of themselves, and wherever possible an understanding of their background and developing confidence in their personal skills. They feel safe, valued and protected by being provided with very good quality care within a nurturing environment established through the provision of consistent personal boundaries. From this stable base, children and young people attain positive outcomes when compared to their starting point.

Children and young people live within a school setting that provides education opportunities appropriate to their individual needs; where they attend consistently, make unusually good progress, and receive help and encouragement to achieve. They receive staff help with all aspects of communication including topical and project work to broaden their horizons. For example, children and young people have access to a range of stimulating resources and areas such as hydrotherapy pool, forest school, light rooms, reference books, craft materials and staff who help them develop artistic abilities and musical skills. Children and young people enjoy recreational visits and after school activities and clubs that engage them in the broader community.

The importance placed by the school upon individual well-being through the active promotion of healthy eating, access to exercise and attention paid to meeting all of their specialist medical needs thoroughly ensures all children and young people remain fit and healthy. Children and young people fully enjoy the variety and presentation of freshly cooked meals each day that ensure balanced dietary needs are consistently met. The availability of stimulating on-site play equipment, a large recreation hall, spacious green areas and the woodlands around the school provide copious recreational facilities that helps promote a wide range of healthy outdoor

interests, the opportunity for exercise and fun. Access to local and specialist health services including consultants and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services comprehensively address health needs including those linked to communication and learning.

Children and young people fully participate in the day-to-day life at the school, importantly contributing to their plans using a range of communication media alongside their excellent rapport with key workers and care staff. This helps to keep care plans timely, meaningful and children and young people feeling involved and valued.

Considerable efforts made by the school ensure that young people retain valuable contact with family, friends, and other people who are important to them. The arrangements in place enable children and young people to meet with their family, at the school where this is appropriate, or in other venues that ensure contact is safe and supported. Staff are exceedingly effective at working with the family and friends of children and young people by facilitating visits to the school, making home visits and providing ongoing telephone updates. This liaison enhances positive partnerships that improve outcomes for children and young people. One social worker commented that 'parents regularly comment on how much they appreciate the support of staff.'

Quality of care

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

Children and young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with the staff and teachers and with each other. With high degrees of care and consistent support they improve socially. Staff demonstrate their confidence and skills by taking an agreed consistent approach when helping children and young people to modify difficult behaviour. This includes ongoing evaluation of its effectiveness. Children and young people learn that safe and reasonable boundaries are set and wherever possible the reasons for these are understood. This enables everybody to feel safe.

The views, wishes and feelings of children and young people are actively sought and taken into account informing both the running of individual units and the school's overall ethos. Irrespective of individual communication difficulties, children and young people's views receive respect as these influence how the bespoke package of care is delivered. Evidence promoted in the form of posters and positive Picture Exchange Communication System messages throughout the school and residential units confirm that children and young people's views influence menus, recreational activities, décor and the daily routines to maximise satisfaction, promote achievement and enhance esteem. Children and young people work towards incentives that have a positive impact on their outcomes.

Children and young people, irrespective of any learning or communication difficulty, know how to make any concerns or complaints known because staff clearly explain, using differing formats, how accessible and child-friendly the process is. Children and young people, and parents and advocates are confident that any concerns are

resolved quickly and efficiently. Parents and other stakeholders are regularly invited to make their views about the care of children and young people known to the home's management to ensure that any concerns are resolved in a transparent manner.

Children and young people are cared for in line with their individual care plan. The contribution of the home to plans is ongoing, of a very good quality and involves children and young people and those people who are significant to them. Most children and young people understand how they receive help to create positive change in their lives. Staff are skilled with communicating and helping children and young people to make positive choices.

Talking about joint working when developing care plans, one reviewing officer said that the 'emphasis on a 24 hour curriculum with close working between school and care settings has undoubtedly contributed to the success of the placements that I supervise.'

The school provides a healthy, stimulating environment where children and young people are able to access the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Young people have access to regular professional help that comprehensively addresses medical, communication and behavioural issues in partnership with the residential and teaching teams.

Children and young people's health including physical, emotional, and psychological health receive considerable support. They attend regular appointments with their dentist, optician and doctor or are seen by the specialist looked after children's nurse for check-ups. They are encouraged to be fit and healthy through taking regular exercise using on-site and community facilities such as swimming baths that helps to maintain their physical fitness, enhance self-confidence and mental attitude. Children and young people demonstrated through their posters and ubiquitous artwork the ongoing practical preparations for celebrating the forthcoming Olympic games, including how this linked with being fit and healthy. Healthy eating is actively encouraged so that young people know and understand the benefits of eating vegetables and fruit in well-balanced proportions. Young people enjoy working with staff making simple meals and baking cakes as part of their broad curriculum, particularly when practising emerging self-help skills.

Children and young people are encouraged through establishing ordered routines to develop self-awareness about the benefits of good personal hygiene and cleanliness to improve identity and feelings of self-worth.

The educational engagement and achievement improve significantly for all children and young people because of the positive and supportive relationships developed between academic, residential and support staff. Communication between the school staff and care staff is excellent. This means there is continuity in the learning for children and young people. As a result, children and young people receive practical support to achieve their educational potential. Where children and young people have not had a stable experience of education, the school has been instrumental in

re-establishing access into on-site classroom education by providing practical support in classrooms or programmes of graduated reintegration supported by introducing education through venues such as the on-site forest school. As a result, many children and young people have resumed full attendance, achieved remarkable achievement, some even making the transition into community education.

The setting provides excellent resources and facilities that afford a broad range of learning opportunities. Children and young people actively engage with purposeful and enjoyable activities both inside and outside of the school. Having access to an on-site sensory room and arts and craft facilities, children and young people with learning difficulties readily engage in play that stimulates communication.

The school is well maintained and decorated throughout, with children and young people being proactive in the choice of decoration and contents of their bedrooms. It offers excellent facilities that recognise the differing needs and abilities of children and young people and effectively provides for them within one of its five residential units. These provide a home base and areas where children and young people can relax. Outside of the individual units, the schools extensive gardens, allotments, greenhouses, sensory and wooded areas provide an expanse of additional facilities where children and young people can experience a broad range of natural stimuli.

By effective care planning and receiving attention through daily living situations, those needs arising from children and young people's cultural background, disability and personal identity are valued. From the beginning of placement, the school ensures that children and young people develop a strong sense of personal identity by helping them to retaining their cultural and religious beliefs and preserve particular routines. By receiving relevant needs focused training, staff develop their skills and confidence when responding to the cultural and diverse needs of children and young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people know that they are safe and communicate by their relaxed demeanour that they feel safe. Parents and placing authority social workers are confident about the safety of care provided by this service. One parent said 'my son is very happy at the home and I am very happy with the level of care my son receives there'. The school assertively meets its responsibility to keep children and young people safe by ensuring that the quality of care they experience consistently prioritises the well-being of everyone. Children and young people benefit from explicit routines and structures that recognise the schools duty of care. Staff demonstrate sensitivity when applying intervention strategies to successfully help children and young people modify their risk taking behaviour.

High levels of supervision, staff vigilance and school security measures ensure that children and young people never go missing. Children and young people are

protected, if they do go missing, by staff following the school's policies and notification procedures. Children and young people are aware that staff will always take prompt and early action to ascertain their whereabouts. The school adheres to the local joint police protocol on children and young people who go missing from home or care. Children and young people have no need to absent themselves recognising that someone they can confide their problems to is always nearby and available.

Staff constantly encourage and praise acceptable behaviours. Children and young people understand that staff take full account of their medical difficulties and experiences when endeavouring to help them. Children and young people receive help, learning to act with consideration for others; particularly those who may have difficulty in controlling or communicating through non-verbal behaviour. Children and young people make considerable progress in this area because staff are experienced at engaging with those people with learning disabilities to establish and maintain socially acceptable levels of behaviour. Should children and young people's behaviours fall below the acceptable standard, staff engage with them using a non-confrontational approach including the recorded use of a safe room. All children and young people have a comprehensive care plan including agreed strategies about the management of their behaviour and the circumstance in which the use of an approved method of physical restraint may be necessary. The monitoring of behaviour forms an exceptionally strong feature of the schools practice. This approach helps children and young people to adjust their behaviours and keep everyone safe, progressively reducing the frequency of intervention to improve outcomes.

All staff employed by the school are subject to careful selection and vetting to ensure that only appropriate, safe adults are engaged to care for children. The school uses robust procedures ensuring thorough scrutiny and interviewing of applicants prior to employment.

Investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm or poor staff practice receive fair, speedy and consistent handling in a manner that provides effective protection for children and young people and at the same time provides support to the person subject to the allegation. Staff receive regular excellent high quality training. They are confident about the process for making referrals related to child protection and safeguarding matters because of this input. There have been no safeguarding concerns arising since the school was last inspected. Valuable training based on well-embedded policies and procedures and the particular care needs of needs of individuals places the welfare of children and young people at the centre of the school's practice at all times.

The living environment is physically safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the varying needs and characteristics of the children and young people cared for. Some environmental adaptations such as wheelchair accessible bathrooms promote inclusion within the academic areas. The original main hall building has been adapted as far as is possible to meet the needs of children and young people whose disability does not impair their mobility. The welfare of children and young people receives

attention at all times through the application of exemplary health and safety, maintenance and precautionary procedures.

Leadership and management

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

The school benefits from efficient management. There is competent, knowledgeable and visible leadership that promotes high quality care and positive outcomes for children and young people. Staff are managed in a manner that encourages their input about service improvement. The school meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose and associated policies. Children and young people, their parents, staff and the placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides from both the statement and the adapted communication children's guide for the school. The school is demonstrably well resourced, confirming the financial viability of the service provider.

The school demonstrates its capacity for continuing improvement, based on its track record and performance since its previous inspection and the continuing registration of the manager. The residential care team of the school have informative systems in place to ensure ongoing monitoring takes place and that the data collated informs improvement and development.

While being able to identify and work towards further areas for practice improvement, the school continues to provide resident young people with exceptional care practice. The management team understand the strengths and potential shortfalls of the school and have ongoing development plans in place covering care practice and further improvements to the environment. The registered person actively and regularly monitors all aspects of the service and the quality of care provided, including consultation with children and young people and their advocates about their home and welfare. Frequent visiting and open days enable parents to express their views about the school and encourage care staff and children and young people's families to share ideas that can facilitate improved outcomes.

A sufficient number of appropriately trained and effectively supervised and supported staff run the home. The manner in which staff support is provided is however inconsistently recorded. Staff receive informed management support and guidance enabling them to fulfil their roles and provide a high quality service to children and young people. Staff morale is very good and turnover remarkably low because the Registered Manager actively engages with her team. Providing an exceptional quality of care for children and young people forms the primary focus of the school. Being effectively motivated and receiving good quality training to enhance individual skills, assists the staff drive to deliver this.

Children and young people's records are clear, up to date and stored securely, helping contribute to an understanding of each person's life. The registered person notifies the appropriate authorities of all significant events relating to the protection

of children and young people, confirming that correct actions follow any significant incidents. Files confirm that children and young people receive regular statutory review and any overdue meetings initiate vigorous follow up. Wherever appropriate children and young people receive key worker support to attend and contribute to any meeting about their ongoing care. Importantly their views are acknowledged and recorded confirming their central role in this placement.

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.