

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspection date</b>	20/11/2013
<b>Inspector</b>	Julian Parker
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	14/02/2013
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## 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 **outstanding**.

Young people receive high quality personalised care that addresses their individual, often complex needs exceptionally well. By putting the safety of young people at the heart of their practice and following robust policies procedures and local protocols young people are well protected from all forms of harm. The behaviour of young people is managed considerately, utilising established low key physical interactions to prevent self-injury. Individualised strategies are considered and effective in respecting dignity and specific care needs. Excellent relationships between staff and young people reinforce behaviour stability. Young people make substantial progress in their education and health while developing confidence and social skills through lively participation in a variety of '24-hour curriculum' activities.

The experienced manager and senior care team efficiently manage the residential aspect of the school to promote positive outcomes. Exceptional levels of training and support enable staff to provide the best possible care for young people.

Significant investment in the school accommodation and grounds provides young people with a high quality living and learning environment.

### Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people feel safe, valued and protected by living in a nurturing, high calibre

environment providing consistent personal routines and behavioural boundaries. From this stable base, young people develop a positive self-image and confidence in their personal skills attaining significant positive outcomes when compared to their starting point, including an understanding of their background. A parent said 'my child has blossomed from a situation where she would not comply with anything before. The school have given her life back and this has made a profound difference to all of us.'

Young people live and learn within a dynamic school setting that provides imaginative alternative and mainstream education opportunities appropriate to individual needs using a 24-hour curriculum. Unrestricted help, encouragement and high levels of staff support ensure excellent attendance and promote unusually good progress in school.

Young people with complex needs benefit immensely from the school's emphasis upon individual well-being. Through active promotion of healthy eating habits, good diet, physical exercise and ensuring specialist medical needs are consistently progressed, young people remain fit and healthy. Access to local and specialist health services, consultants and children and adolescent mental health services comprehensively address health needs including those linked to communication, speech and learning.

Young people participate actively and fully in the day-to-day life at the school, importantly contributing to their plans using a range of communication media, including ipads and communication passports enhancing their already excellent rapport with key workers and care staff. This helps to keep individual care plans meaningful and up to date with children and young people feeling valued and involved.

The school ensures that young people retain regular, valuable contact with family, friends, and other people who are important to them. The scope of arrangements enable 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. Exceedingly effective working relationships exist between staff and the family and friends of young people; developed by supported visits to the school, through home visits and often by providing daily telephone updates. This substantial level of liaison stimulates positive partnerships that inevitably improve outcomes for young people. One social worker commented that 'Contact with family is very much encouraged and is one of the areas in which (name of school) excels. All of the parents I work with are full of praise for the understanding and flexibility shown in making contact arrangements and for the willingness to offer staff support where necessary.'

### **Quality of care**

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

Young people develop and thrive through establishing constructive relationships with care staff, teachers and with each other. Nurturing and predictable quality of care

and consistent support facilitates improved socialisation. Positive role modelling, an understanding of individual disability and the informed approach to behaviour management by staff help encourage young people to self-regulate their behaviour. Young people learn that safe and reasonable boundaries are set and wherever possible the reasons for these are agreed. This enables everyone to feel safe.

Young people's views, wishes and feelings are important drivers in the operation of individual units and the school's overall ethos. Irrespective of individual communication difficulties, young people's feelings, preferences and needs significantly influence their bespoke care plan and how this is delivered. New electronic media and more traditional communication systems formats throughout the school and house units confirm that young people's views influence menus, recreational activities, the décor of their rooms and daily routines in their units. This regular level of engagement helps maximise satisfaction, promote achievement and enhance individual self-esteem.

Young people know how to make any concerns or complaints they may have known, because staff clearly explain, using differing formats, how accessible and child-friendly the process is. Parents, social workers and advocates are confident that any concerns are quickly and efficiently resolved. Parents and other stakeholders can make their views about the care of young people known to the home's management at any time either by call or using the formal complaints procedure. No complaints have been received since the last inspection.

Children and young people are cared for in line with their individual care plan. One social worker commented about the scope of the provision: 'Wrap around' care is provided, in an environment that tries the utmost to ensure young people are part of the process using all the communication tools necessary. Staff are very child focused. The uniqueness of individual children is recognised.'

Continued improvement to the format, content and recording of individual care plans is being trialled by the school to emphasise a person-centred focus and clearer measurement of progress. Existing care plans are comprehensive and give a clear picture of the young person's needs and how they are addressed.

The school provides a healthy, stimulating environment where children and young people regularly access the broad range of services necessary to support their on-going physical, emotional and psychological needs. Regular consultation and input from health professionals comprehensively addresses medical, communication and behavioural issues in partnership with the school's residential and teaching teams.

Young people attend appointments with their dentist, optician and doctor or are seen by the specialist looked after children's nurse for regular check-ups. They are encouraged to be fit and healthy through taking regular exercise using on-site and community facilities such as swimming baths to maintain their physical fitness, enhance self-confidence and mental attitude. Young people's personal identity and feelings of self-worth improve through establishing ordered routines to develop self-

awareness about the benefits of good personal hygiene and cleanliness. A social worker commented, 'There is excellent health care at (name of school) and a proactive approach to any health issues. All health checks are carried out promptly. Young people who have previously refused to engage with health professionals are now involved in regular screening – one young man had never been to a dentist prior to his placement at (name of school).'

Educational engagement and achievement improve significantly for all children and young people because of the improved relationships and working practices developed between academic, residential and support staff. Communication between the school and care staff is excellent. This advances continuity in the learning for children and young people that supports fully the 24-hour curriculum. As a result, children and young people receive practical support to achieve their educational potential in and out of the classroom. The introduction of 'after school clubs' has been a much praised addition providing a further range of creative opportunities in the evening. Where children and young people have not had a stable experience of education, the school is proactive in re-establishing access to on-site classroom education. They do this by providing additional support in classrooms and introducing programmes of gradual reintegration supported by delivering education through settings such as the on-site forest school and green classrooms. 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 an excellent range of resources and facilities that stimulate learning. Young people actively engage with purposeful and enjoyable activities both indoors and using the outside facilities. Having access to an on-site sensory room, hydrotherapy pool, music room and arts and craft facilities, children and young people with learning difficulties readily engage in play that kindles improved communication. The availability of stimulating on-site play equipment, a large recreation hall, spacious green areas including allotments, greenhouses and the woodlands around the school provide copious recreational areas. This helps promote healthy outdoor interests, the opportunity for exercise and fun. Young people enjoy recreational visits and after school activities and clubs that engage them in the broader community. One older student said 'I went to London and saw the Queen's coach.'

Through effective care planning and attention to daily living routines, those needs arising from young people's cultural background, faith, disability and personal identity are integrated into their plan and valued. From the beginning of placement, the school ensures that young people can retain their sense of personal identity by maintaining their cultural and religious beliefs and preserve important routines such as devotional acts. Through focused training, staff can further develop their skills and confidence for responding to young people's diverse needs.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

The arrangements for ensuring the safety of young people are outstanding. 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 measures ensuring thorough scrutiny and interviewing of all applicants prior to employment. Rigorous procedures operate ensuring the risk of unsuitable people being able to have any access to vulnerable young people is significantly reduced.

All staff undertake regular child protection training appropriate to their role. This ensures there is a consistent approach to safeguarding throughout the school. Staff receive additional excellent high quality training that considers the particular challenges of safeguarding children with disability. Staff are confident about their safeguarding responsibilities and the process for making referrals related to child protection matters as a result. There have been no safeguarding concerns arising since the school was last inspected. Investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm or poor staff practice receive transparent, speedy and consistent handling in a manner that maximises protection for young people while providing support to the person subject to the allegation.

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. Social workers say 'protecting children is a high priority with extensive risk assessments that are regularly updated. Staffing levels reflect this also. Keeping safe is seen as an important factor in helping the young people to achieve a degree of independence.' A parent said 'From my perspective and observation of the place, and I visit every week, I would say that the children feel very safe here. There is a continuity of staff on duty and children are not dependent on individuals.'

Staff operate effective and robust systems ensuring they know the whereabouts of young people at all times. High levels of staff supervision, vigilance and school security measures ensure that children and young people never go missing. Young people are protected, if they do go missing, by staff following the school's policies and notification procedures. Young people learn that staff will always take prompt and early action to look for them. The school adheres to the local joint police protocol on children and young people who go missing from home or care.

Individual care plans and risk assessments are completed and regularly reviewed. This enables risks to be identified and minimised ensuring young people can regularly and safely participate in activities, trips and events.

The school generates a culture of very good behaviour by the consistent promotion of clear boundaries. Improved working relationships between education and care staff in the management of behaviour has resulted in greater coherence of practice, and clarity for young people about behavioural expectations. Constructive feedback from the placing authority has influenced the school's reshaping of some aspects of behaviour management practice.

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. Exceptionally well developed behaviour monitoring systems within the school enable key staff to identify particular stimuli that may trigger particular behaviour allowing considered and focused preventative strategies to be put in place for some young people.

A designated member of the senior management team manages the health and safety responsibility for the school. Health and safety checks are all up to date and fully meet requirements. Upgraded fire detection systems and rigorous safety and appliance service checks promote a safe physical environment throughout the school. Fire drills are carried out regularly. Young people always respond to fire drills in accordance with staff instructions demonstrating that they know what to do in the event of a fire evacuation in order to keep safe

The living environment is physically safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the varying needs and characteristics of the young people looked after. 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 young people whose disability does not impair their mobility. Personal emergency evacuation plans are in place for all young people to address unforeseen crisis situations.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The school continues to benefit from efficient management with a clear focus upon service improvement. Knowledgeable and visible leadership promotes high quality care and positive outcomes for children and young people. The school meets the aims set in the Statement of Purpose and associated policies. Young people, their parents, staff and the placing authorities are clear about these aims, services and facilities from the content of the statement and adapted children's guide.

The school is extremely well resourced, as confirmed by the extensive refurbishment, upgrading and improvements across all areas introduced over the past year, underpinning the financial viability of the service provider.

The school effectively 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 access informative systems of monitoring using the data collated to inform on-going improvement.

The school continues to provide all resident young people with exceptional care practice. The senior management team understand the strengths and areas for continuing improvement and have produced realistic development plans evaluating

care practice and further environmental improvements. 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. Frequent visiting opportunities, celebratory open days and parents' liaison group evenings fully invite parents and other stakeholders to express their views about the school. External monthly monitoring commissioned from an independent agency, evaluates and reports upon compliance with regulatory guidance and quality related aspects of the service.

Staff are managed in an engaging style that encourages their continued input about existing practice and service improvement. A sufficient number of appropriately trained and effectively supervised and supported staff operate the home. Regular management support and guidance enables care staff to fulfil their roles and provide a high quality service to children and young people. Staff morale and retention is high because of the supportive team approach and approachable management. Providing a safe and exceptional quality of care for children and young people forms the primary focus of this school. Being effectively motivated and receiving good quality training enhances the ability and drive by staff to consistently deliver this.

A social worker commented 'The school's provision is really well integrated, its education, care, Speech And Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and behaviour management are good and they all communicate very well with the social worker. The school has 'such a good feel'.

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 Manager 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. Case files confirm that young people receive regular statutory reviews and overdue meetings initiate vigorous follow up. Wherever appropriate young people attract high levels of staff support to attend and contribute to any meeting about them. Their views are recorded and shared 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.