

Bladon House School

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC372504
Inspection date	12/01/2011
Inspector	Jackie Callaghan / Dawn Taylor
Type of inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	16/08/2010

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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

The home's accommodation is currently situated on two sites. The main site is set in extensive grounds where there are seven houses/units. The number of beds in each house varies from one to 16 beds. The offsite satellite provision is one mile away and provides a further 12 beds. Young people are accommodated either according to their gender, age and compatibility. Each house has its own lounge, dining room and kitchen.

Young people living at the home receive education at the provision's school. The home is near to a town centre and within commuting distance of a large city centre. The home has its own transport which is used to enable young people to access community facilities.

Each unit has its own team of care staff and waking night staff. The home is registered to provide 54 places. There were 46 young people present at different times throughout the inspection. Young people interacted with the inspectors at meal and activity times. Twenty young people completed symbol questionnaires contributing to the inspection via this media. A further five young people contributed verbally to the findings in this report.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

During this full inspection which was unannounced, all key standards were inspected. The inspection covered all outcome areas from the Every Child Matters framework. The inspection also assessed the capacity of the home to promote equality and diversity.

The overall quality rating is good with many outstanding features. Young people's views and wishes are central to decision-making in the home and staff help them to have a voice about how they are cared for. The staff demonstrate excellent practice in assisting young people to gain the skills they need to become as independent as possible in adulthood. Staff are committed to improving the lives of the young people. The home also has a clear focus on ensuring young people are protected and that known and potential risks are managed in a way that supports their safety and well-being.

Three recommendations have been raised as a result of this visit. They are in regard to the behaviour management process, consulting placing social workers and parents on acceptable security and the maintenance programme.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the Registered Manager was asked to ensure that the behaviour management recording is in line with national minimum standards and to develop the reward systems. The home was also asked to ensure any physical restrictions on young people's movement is in their placement plans and that any agency staff involved in physical restraints are trained to do so.

All measures of control are now recorded in a volume that meets regulations. Each house now firmly celebrates young people's achievements. For example, one house hands out certificates to young people, while another runs a house system where young people identify one of their peers for an award.

The provision has created a written system which evidences that only agency staff that have received training on the use of physical restraints, are permitted to assist when intervention is required. This helps to safeguard young people's welfare.

All young people that are unable to safely manage having their own key to the front door of their home, now have a clear statement in their placement plan and the policy is defined within the Statement of Purpose. This promotes young people's welfare by ensuring that the placing authority and parents are fully aware of this safety measure.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are provided with a balanced and varied diet that meets their individual dietary needs. Menus are compiled in consultation with young people and their likes and dislikes are listened to. Any special requirements, or dietary needs are always accounted for within the menus. The food provided always takes into account young people's cultural, ethnic and religious requirements. Young people are actively involved in preparing their own meals and cooking. One young person commented that 'I am shopping tonight for ingredients for when I cook my meal. I cook my meal once a week, staff help me. I enjoy cooking it is good'.

The provision has an extensive range of internal and external professionals that work directly with the young people and alongside the home's staff. As a result, the physical and emotional health of young people is truly promoted. Young people's health care plans incorporate detailed information about any existing health conditions and clearly identifies the specific support needed in relation to physical and emotional health.

Medical and health records are comprehensive and clearly show that medical appointments are arranged according to needs and circumstances. All staff have up-to-date first aid and safe medication handling. On site nursing professionals oversee staff's competency to administer medication. This process is extensive and provides robust safeguards for all young people. A parent confirmed this view as they

commented that 'the staff are highly qualified and provide proficient care to meet my child's health care needs'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Written guidance is in place for the staff regarding privacy, confidentiality and care practice. Staff are sensitive to the individual circumstances of young people and maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality. For example, non-verbal communication techniques take place in a manner that respects the young people's privacy and confidentiality.

There are very robust procedures for managing complaints. Young people receive appropriate information and say that they know how to make a complaint and that staff deal with issues properly. Young people say, 'I like sleeping here it is nice, staff are good' and 'I do tell staff if I'm unhappy, they ask me why I'm unhappy and I will explain. Once I have told staff they sort it out'. The home has a clear bullying policy and sufficient staff are on duty to ensure the young people are appropriately supervised at all times.

There are clear procedures for safeguarding young people from abuse. Staff receive appropriate child protection training on induction which is then refreshed annually for all staff. This helps staff protect young people from abuse and ensure they respond appropriately to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. A parent commented that 'the care they give my daughter is exemplary. I trust them implicitly'.

Staff develop good positive relationships with young people. All young people have individual profiles that focus on their behaviour, development and disability needs. Interaction between staff and young people is observed to be caring and supportive. Training in behaviour management, including de-escalation techniques and the use of physical intervention, is provided to staff, together with written guidance. There have been occasions where staff, due to the changing challenging behaviour of young people, have used an approach that is not in-line with the provision's procedures. It is recognised that the strategy that has been used is a last resort to prevent significant harm to staff or other young people. In response to these incidents senior staff and the young people's multidisciplinary team have met to review the young person's behaviour management programmes. However, these meetings have not always taken place promptly and the revised behaviour programmes have not always provided staff with clear alternative strategies. Therefore, the risk is that staff will revert to using the emergency response which the provision recognises is inappropriate.

Young people who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance. However, there have been no incidents where young people have left the home without permission.

The systems in place to keep young people and adults safe from the risk of fire and

other potential hazards are robust. Staff carry out regular fire drills and checks on the fire equipment. Appropriate service contracts are in place for fire and electrical equipment. Staff also carry out a range of recorded risk assessments covering, for example, general health and safety matters.

Recruitment records show that young people are cared for by adults who have been selected through a robust recruitment procedure, and no one starts work without enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance. A record of visitors is maintained and proof of identification is requested where appropriate. These measures contribute to young people's safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's placement plans are exceptionally detailed and comprehensively address how support for individual needs will be provided. Key workers work closely with young people to identify targets and plans. Key workers then ensure these are implemented. The plans take account of young people's needs in relation to culture, religion, gender, personal history and disability. By focusing on the unique character of each young person staff are able to respond to young people's changing needs. This supports young people to achieve good outcomes.

The provision has an extensive multidisciplinary team of professionals on site which includes; speech and language, nursing, behavioural specialists and occupational therapists. These individuals work alongside existing care staff and provide in-depth specialist support to young people. A parent confirmed this view as they stated; 'the support given to my son around enjoying and achieving has been outstanding. The staff are enthusiastic and very motivated'.

There is a child-centred approach to care and education. Education is an intrinsic part of life in residence. Young people are well supported to achieve according to their ability. Most young people attend the provision's school. The exception to this is when young people, who are able, attend classes at a local mainstream school. The support which enables young people to attend a mainstream school is stunning. Parents, care and teaching staff work in partnership to enable the young person to fulfil their potential. Parents speak highly of the provision and comments include; 'I am extremely pleased with the progress my child has made during the last two years'. 'We have never had any cause for concern and both teaching and care staff are incredibly motivated and dedicated'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person has a placement plan which is used alongside other information to ensure the staff are fully informed about individual needs. The available information is of an excellent quality and details the support required resulting from

assessments of individual needs and risks. Case files contain a range of information including weekly and monthly reports that provide an overview of events, routines and how the home is supporting young people. Reviews are undertaken in-line with statutory requirements and the provision is creative in enabling young people to partake in and attend their review meetings.

Significant work is undertaken prior to and at the point of admission to ensure the needs of the young person and the needs of others already living at the home are taken into consideration. For example, staff meetings and meetings held with the therapist look at young people's behaviour, compatibility, key worker and the behaviour plan of any new admission. This has meant that that young people settle quickly when moving into the provision. Parents comment that, 'staff are lovely and know my son really well'. Another says, 'my son regardless of his disability has been encouraged to try lots of new activities. This is because the staff have worked hard on his communication and they have successfully supported him to achieve'.

Staff use a variety of communication aids such as signing and pictures to enable each child to make choices and express their feelings. Pupils also take part in regular house meetings. Staff enable young people to raise points for discussion through a variety of ways which include artwork, symbols and signing. This work with young people clearly demonstrates that staff value and listen to the views and wishes of young people.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The accommodation ranges from houses with single occupancy to those that accommodate up to 16 young people. Each house provides a safe and comfortable home which are domestic in style and layout. However, the condition of each house ranges from satisfactory to outstanding, with some providing a more homely feel. The Registered Manager and senior staff recognise this and there is an ongoing refurbishment and maintenance plan in place to address any shortfalls in accommodation. The maintenance team prioritise their workload using a risk assessment approach. However, there are handles missing on some external doors which means that young people and staff have to use their key to pull the door shut. This had been raised in October but has yet to be resolved and does cause the young people some degree of anxiety.

All young people are provided with individual bedrooms which are suitably maintained, with most being personalised to their own tastes. Young people have access to sufficient levels of communal space which gives them choices regarding their recreational and leisure time. Each unit provides young people with sufficient bath, shower and toilet facilities with appropriate locks to ensure their privacy is maintained. Placement plans have been written in for each young person about front doors being locked and a risk assessment approach is taken as to which young people are able to have their own key. However, neither placing social workers or parents are currently involved in this process. Involving parents and social workers

provides independent knowledge and understanding of young people's abilities, as well as providing an open and transparent debate between balancing the risks and young people's freedom.

Any young people who are leaving care and moving back home or onto an adult provision are fully supported. Young people do benefit from a staff approach that is practical and realistic and which incorporates learning through the day-to-day domestic routines of the home. Independence programmes are in place and provide young people with the skills and understanding of budgeting, cooking and living independently.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Registered Manager and staff are very clear about their role, aims and ethos. The Statement of Purpose and other literature provided by the home clearly communicates this to young people, their families and social workers. Staff ensure young people have access to a range of information that is informative and easy to understand when they are preparing to move into the home. As a result, young people, their parents and social workers are able to make well-informed decisions about whether the home can meet their specific needs.

Young people are provided with a service that includes a stable and committed team of staff who deliver consistent care and support. The commitment from staff is a strength of the provision. Most staff absences are covered from the existing team who are already known by the young people. When there is a need to use agency staff, the provision tries to use the same staff. This ensures continuity of care for young people. The number of staff on duty is always enough to meet the needs of young people and support their welfare and protection.

The management of the home is competent, committed to the well-being of the young people and supports the staff while having high expectations of the quality of care they provide. There are effective monitoring systems to ensure national minimum standards are met and the quality of care provided to young people is continually improved. There are good training and support programmes that provide staff with the skills and knowledge to comprehensively help young people through their placement.

Staff are well supported through weekly team meetings and by a Registered Manager and senior staff who are available and approachable. Staff shift handovers are well planned to ensure all information is exchanged and shared. Staff consider the open door policy to be very useful, supportive and that it allows for the development and reflection of their practice.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. This is promoted very effectively in all aspects of the service. The Registered Manager and staff are committed to ensuring the home carefully meets the individual needs of each young

person living in the home and provides them with equality of opportunity to achieve their aspirations. Staff are aware of their responsibility to provide equality of opportunity to all young people regardless of race, culture, gender, disability and sexuality. Staff ensure young people access services and resources which can help them to achieve in line with their peer group in the wider community. These excellent practices enable staff to meet young people's diverse needs and to offer equal opportunities for all young people to achieve their goals.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where the behaviour of children is regarded as unacceptable by staff, it is responded to by constructive, acceptable and known disciplinary measures approved by the registered person (NMS 22.1)
- consider developing the precautions taken to ensure the security of the home and the safety of young people include discussions with placing authorities and for young people with limited verbal communication skills, significant others. For example, their parents (NMS 23.5 and 23.9)
- review the maintenance programme to ensure that any repairs or improvements to the building are carried out promptly. (NMS 24.3)