

Inspection Report

Follow-up Inspection 2003/04

Service Name	Ochil Tower School
Service Type	School Care Accommodation Service
Title of Applicable Standards	School Care Accommodation Services
Service Provider	The Management Council of Ochil Tower School
Location	140 High Street, Auchterarder, PH3 1AD
Date of Original Registration	1 April 2002
Date(s) of Inspection	30 June 2003
Period since most recent Inspection	Announced Inspection 12-13 December 2002
Type of Inspection	Unannounced
Care Commission local office	Second Floor - Central East – Perth and Kinross, Compass House, 11 Riverside Drive Dundee, DD1 4NY

INTRODUCTION

Ochil Tower is an independent, non-denominational school, originally registered by Perth and Kinross Council to provide 28 residential places for children and young people, aged between 5 and 18 years, who have moderate and severe learning disabilities; 37 pupils were on the school roll, 26 of these residential, at the time of the inspection. The school is also registered with the Scottish Executive and in March 2002 invited HMI of Education to carry out an inspection of its educational provision. The latter will be reviewed next year as part of the programme of integrated inspections of special residential schools being undertaken jointly by HMIE and the Care Commission during 2003-4.

The 'curative education' approach, which combines social care, education and therapy, is based on the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, adapted by Karl Konig, the founder of the Camphill movement, and is practised in a network of schools world-wide. Day to day management is the responsibility of 6 Joint Co-ordinators, who, together with other experienced and permanent co-workers whose home is the school, form the Core Group Members, with provision of care and education shared with a large number of other co-workers, many of whom come from other countries to spend a year or so at Ochil Tower. There is also a small number of paid staff, mostly ancillary workers.

There are five houses and two school buildings set in the grounds of the school which is located unobtrusively off the main street of Auchterarder, 14 miles west of Perth, enabling the school to be part of the local community, while also providing facilities for gardening and animal husbandry as well as for play activities, as part of the curriculum.

BASIS OF REPORT

This inspection was a follow-up visit to inspect the progress of the actions required following the last inspection in December 2002, which took into account the five National Care Standards for School Care Accommodation selected for the year 2002-3 although the report format took that of a concise inspection against the Regulations SS1114.

During the inspection, the following methods of inspection were used:

Three interviews with three of the Joint-Co-ordinators

One interview with a pupil

A meal shared with the pupils and co-workers of one house.

General observation and discussion with children and co-workers, within three houses and around the grounds.

Inspection of some documentation.

ACTION TAKEN ON REQUIREMENTS IN THE LAST REPORT

During the annual review of the statement, the school should ensure that all the details listed in Standard 1 'Arriving for the first time' are included in respect of the information for pupils and their parents.

The policies and procedures are to be reviewed later in year, when this standard will be taken into account. The school has developed its admission process latterly, to include up to 6 visits at the pre-admission stage, especially effective for younger or less able children. Senior co-workers also often visit the child in his/her own school or care setting, and will invite the child and relatives to call in at the school during the summer holidays to sustain continuity prior to arrival.

More formal risk assessments should be devised in respect of activities, both outdoor and indoor, especially where dangerous equipment is in use, such as hammers; promoting individual potential needs to be tempered by health and safety considerations, including safeguarding others.

All significant accidents should be recorded, together with those where an injury has been incurred, irrespective of the need for First Aid and medical treatment. In respect of staff being inadvertently but regularly injured by pupils in the course of daily caring, there should be a record of incidence in a format which meets the requirements for name, date, times and nature of injury but is not cumbersome or degrading to the pupil.

Some minor amendments to medication recording proformae, as discussed during the inspection are required

The Complaints procedure should be reviewed to ensure it meets the requirement of this Section 25 of Regulation 114, especially in relation to timescales

Consideration should be given to the Standard requiring a fire drill at night and how this can be met without compromising the welfare and security of the pupils

As indicated below, risk assessment (RA) has quite a high profile among both children and adults within the school, which is commendable, with proformas for their documentation now being utilised increasingly. Two RAs in relation to physical restraint (a rare but not unforeseen occurrence) of two pupils were noted, along with those for cycling, hillwalking and canoeing.

The school has purchased new accident recording books which are being used for both children and adults. They also contain a body chart, whose use has been adapted as a tool for recording any marks noted during the week, each dated and signed, as a further safeguard for all parties.

One Joint Co-ordinator has developed a special interest in medication since the last inspection, involving considerable research and consultation with a range of other agencies such as pharmacists (local, Camphill homeopathic and Care Commission representatives), and the local GP and a range of specialist consultants. The major developments have been:

Written policies and procedures are now drafted, A new system of supply, administration and recording of medication, including controlled drugs, is to be introduced in August;

All co-workers have received some general training in medical conditions and their implications for medication, behaviour, illness etc. This training will form an integral part of induction training each year;

All medical personnel have agreed to 6 monthly reviews of medication by completing a letter at routine appointments; this will be monitored through pupil statutory reviews.

The procedure will be modified accordingly at its next review. It was agreed that all parents and pupils would be advised that they had recourse to the Care Commission.

Four of the houses have had a fire drill at night, usually in the early morning when there is least disruption.

Views of Service Users

The young people were enjoying their last week of the summer term. Three pupils were setting off for a summer camp for a few days, the last of several groups, enabling all pupils to participate in a week's experience of outdoor pursuits such as canoeing and gorge-walking, living either under canvas or at a Camphill Trust property at Killin.

On the day of the inspection, the end of the school day involved some pupils in further work on a school project, started this term and containing, namely the creation of an adventure playground, building on previous facilities, such as a flying fox, but adding a variety of new ones to stretch the imagination and meet the needs of a wide range of pupils. The Phoenix ship was to be 'launched' in a ceremony later in the week, the rope bridge will lead to a tree house and there will be seating in the form of a train and a sheltered 'circle', as well as an obstacle course. All this activity, along with excitement about the camps had been the talking points of the term. Some children were also able to articulate the educational components, in terms of measuring, counting, using tools as well as raising awareness of risk assessment, both in the construction and its eventual use.

One young person was especially able to voice his views on his year's stay at Ochil Tower School, having experienced comparable care settings. He appreciated that while Ochil Tower, initially selected for its homely orientation, was not able to fully address his educational and peer group needs, in that he does not have a learning disability. However, the adults had supported him in dealing with his frustrations during the interim period while another resource was identified. He had developed considerable respect for his house parents, believed he had been fully involved in all decisions and valued the opportunities to develop his interests and talents, especially on a practical level in the garden and grounds. The school had also enabled him to keep up good links with his family and community. Finally, he also expressed an intention to return to Ochil Tower some day as a co-worker!

Views of Careres

Complaints

There have been no complaints to the Care Commission since the last inspection.

Enforcement

There have been no enforcement actions in the last 12 month period.

Other Issues

Ochil Tower School has now decided to use the adjacent site it acquired 2 years ago to build a new house for five children as a substitute for the Coach House which has become increasingly 'unfit for purpose', the school's identification of the need for single rooms for almost all its pupils becoming a specific objective. Plans have been drawn up which meet the twenty-first century needs and expectations for privacy, dignity and safety of both children and co-workers, for whom this is their home. It is envisaged the house will be completed by 2004. The coach house complex will be re-developed into school premises, conveniently situated next to the other two buildings, creating spaces for individual work areas as well as classrooms.

Over the summer, two established Joint Co-ordinators are moving on to develop their careers along related but different paths from those at Ochil Tower. They are to be replaced by two houseparents from a sister Camphill community, Glenraig, in Northern Ireland, a favourite recruiting ground for the school, who are known to some co-workers, which should assist them to quickly settle into their new roles, one also being a teacher. A former co-worker, newly qualified as a social worker from Stirling University, is also joining the school, providing extra support as a houseparent in the Priory, especially as two of the house parents will be undertaking social work placements off site during the day, as part of their studies.

Recommendations

Requirements

The school should notify the Care Commission of any changes of manager, so that the certificate of registration can be modified in due course SSI 2002/114 regulation 23(1)(b) and 17(2)

Rachel Gillespie
Care Commission Officer

Signed: *Rachel Gillespie*

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