

Ochil Tower School**Service name**

Ochil Tower School

Service address

140 High Street

Auchterarder PH3 1AD

Type of care service

School Care Accommodation Service

Provider name

Ochil Tower School

Service number

CS2003009785

Date of inspection

18 June 2007

Type of inspection

Unannounced

Care Commission OfficeCentral East, Compass House, 11
Riverside Drive, Dundee. DD1 4NY.**Period since last inspection**

15 January 2007

Introduction

Ochil Tower School is an independent, non-denominational school, registered with the Care Commission since 1 April 2002 to provide 28 residential places for children and young people with special educational needs, aged between five and 18 years. From time to time, the school is part of the programme of integrated inspections of special residential schools being undertaken jointly by HMIE and the Care Commission.

The curative education approach, combining social care, education and therapy, is based on the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, adapted by Karl Konig, the founder of the world-wide Camphill movement. Day to day management is the responsibility of four joint co-ordinators, who, with other experienced and permanent coworkers whose home is the school, form the core group members. Other coworkers, many from overseas, spend a year or more at Ochil Tower providing care and education. There is also a small number of paid staff, mostly ancillary workers.

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

Camphill's three aims and objectives are realised in:

- 'a form of community life which recognises the universality of the human spirit as an essential element in its formation and working. Expression is given to this in the celebration of festivals, concern for the environment and mutual care.
- developing shared living situations which recognise the needs of individuals. The staff/client relationship is replaced by mutual relationships based on sharing daily life in all its manifold aspects, including preparation and sharing of meals, caring for the household and surroundings, creating social events and so on.
- operating financially so that there is a flexible relationship between work and payment for work done'.

Basis of Report

This report was compiled following an unannounced inspection which took place in the late afternoon and evening of a school day.

Before the inspection

The school had submitted its Annual Return, which gives information about the service.

This service was inspected after a Regulation Support Assessment (RSA) was carried out to determine the intensity of the inspection necessary. The RSA is an assessment undertaken by the Care Commission Officer (CCO) which considers: complaints activity, changes in the provision of the service, nature of notifications made to the Care Commission by the service (such as absence of a manager) and action taken upon requirements. The CCO will also have considered how the service responded to situations and issues as part of the RSA.

This assessment resulted in this service receiving a low RSA score and so a low intensity inspection was required as a result. The inspection was then based upon one of the relevant Inspection Focus Areas for 2007-8 and follow up on any recommendations and requirements from previous inspections, complaints or other regulatory activity.

During the inspection process

The inspection was carried out by Rachel Gillespie, Care Commission Officer.

During inspection, evidence was gathered from a number of sources including:

A review of a range of policies, procedures, records and other documentation, including the following:

- Child protection policy
- School policy statement
- Child protection documentation in respect of one pupil

Discussion with a range of staff including

- Three joint coordinators
- Six coworkers

Informal discussion with other pupils, including some at tea.

The Care Commission Officer's observations of

- the interactions between the staff and pupils, and
- the general environment and equipment used in the provision of the service.

The Inspection Focus Area for this inspection was:

- Child protection (including restraint)

The Care Commission Officer took all of the above into account and reported under the following National Care Standards (NCS) for School Care Accommodation Services:

Standard 3. Care and protection

The inspection also took into account the Regulation of Care Act (Scotland) 2001 and the Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002/114.

The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 introduced new regulatory arrangements in respect of fire safety, as of 1 October 2006. In terms of those arrangements, responsibility for enforcing the statutory provisions in relation to fire safety now lies with the Fire and Rescue service for the area in which the care service is located. Accordingly, the Care Commission will no longer report on matters of fire safety as part of its regulatory function, but, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, will alert the relevant Fire and Rescue service to their existence in order that it may act as it considers appropriate. Further advice on your responsibilities is available at www.infoscotland.com/firelaw.

Action taken on requirements in last Inspection Reports

There were no requirements made at the last inspection.

Comment on Self-Evaluation

A Self-evaluation was not required for an unannounced inspection.

View of Service Users

The school was reaching the end of a busy term. Traditional activities included the weekend open afternoon for parents, and a play performed by senior pupils, observed putting together stage scenery and costumes for this year's production of Parsifal. Most pupils had been away at the series of annual camps near Killin for a few days. A pupil journal of photos showed the fun experienced by pupils, some new and some revisiting opportunities such as cooking by campfire and swimming in the lake. The pupils rarely mentioned wet weather among the written comments on what they had liked or disliked. Over tea, other pupils described how much they loved walking, which is a regular activity for many pupils, building up fitness levels to as much as 15 miles a day. The highlight this term had been completing a walk from Auchterarder, along a coastal route, to Aberdeen, achieved by careful planning of staged walking and minibus support spread over nine weeks of the term.

This term was also one of mixed emotions for those pupils leaving Ochil Tower. Even those with clear and constructive plans and a good understanding of their future showed signs of anxiety, requiring constant reassurance. Others were less aware of the uncertainties and were only able to express their apprehension through behavioural signs to which staff could respond.

On the day of the inspection, pupils were well occupied with playing football, reading stories with staff or helping in the long-term class project to renovate some parts of the adventure play equipment. One house went to Perth to enjoy themselves at Noah's Ark play-centre followed by a celebratory birthday meal for one school-leaver.

View of Carers

The Care Commission did not formally seek the views of parents and carers on this occasion.

Regulations / Principles

National Care Standards

National Care Standard Number 3: School Care Accommodation Services - Care and Protection

Strengths

Not all elements of this standard were inspected on this occasion. The inspection focussed on Child protection, including use of restraint, this being one of the Inspection Focus Areas for school care accommodation services for 2007-8.

Child protection

The annual inspection report of January 2007 covered child protection in some detail and should be referred to.

The joint coordinator responsible for child protection indicated that the content of the child protection policy contained within its main document, The School Policy Statement, had been reduced considerably. The purpose was to simplify its range of publications by use of one document for different interested parties, including coworkers, parents, placing agencies and regulatory bodies. She also used the first visit from parents to highlight safeguarding responsibilities, as part of discussion about meeting vulnerable pupils' needs. Several coworkers confirmed that training in child protection had taken place this year, new coworkers also being introduced to it first during their induction.

The joint coordinator reiterated how their main focus was on empowering pupils to have a voice to express their views and be listened to. She believed this approach had been successful in one pupil making a disclosure within months of arrival. According to the joint coordinator, child protection related issues such as bullying, children's rights and discussion of feelings being raised by teachers across the curriculum and by coworkers within the houses. Some pupils, when asked, knew about the Childline number and posters were displayed in each house next to the phone. One was able to describe his understanding of how children could phone it anonymously if they had a concern they could not share, even with a trusted adult. During a discussion of the Children's Charter, one pupil confirmed how in practice coworkers adopted its key messages, such as: Get to know us; speak with us; listen to us; take us seriously; and help us be safe.

Restraint

The annual inspection report of January 2007 covered restraint in some detail and should be referred to.

Areas for Development

On this occasion the contents of the child protection policy were assessed against specific criteria set down by the Care commission. In hindsight, the joint coordinator reflected that some useful information had been removed. Omissions included: a description of the information to be recorded and specific telephone numbers of local police and social services units for investigating child protection concerns.

(See recommendation 1.)

The school generally did not have an awareness of the national reform programme Protecting Children and Young People: Children's Charter and Framework for Standards (Scottish Executive (SE) 2004). The latter are also cited in related guidance, namely: a pocketbook Safe and Well: Good Practice in Schools and Education (SE 2005) and How Well are Children and Young People Protected and their Needs Met (HMIE 2005), a self-evaluation tool using quality indicators.

(See recommendations 2. and 3.)

At the last inspection, the joint coordinator intimated she had supported the priority of her fellow joint coordinators acquiring necessary qualifications for Scottish Social Services Council registration in recent years. She had pursued other development opportunities related to her responsibilities, such as training on the Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004, in connection with admissions, reviews and future needs planning. Since the last inspection she had also attended the biannual Care Commission Forum and Making a Difference (Promoting and Sharing Good Practice) organised by CAERSS (Care and Education in Residential Special Schools and Secure Accommodation Services). However, she had not had a similar opportunity to update her knowledge of developments in child protection in which she played a lead role within the school.

(See requirement 1.)

National Care Standard Number 11: School Care Accommodation Services - Eating Well

Strengths

The following recommendation was made in the inspection report in January 2007: The school should draw up clear management guidelines for food, fluid and nutrition which comply with best practice.

Two joint coordinators and the chairperson of the core group confirmed that this had been discussed at their meetings. They were familiar with the Scottish Executive's national guidance document, 'Hungry for Success - A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland and felt their own approach fully met its recommendations, which now are enforceable in the independent sector, following recent legislation. The school planned to prioritise time on nutrition in the summer holidays to draft a policy and procedures.

Areas for Development

At present the school does not have the following:

- As part of the school's initial care planning, a written assessment of individual children's nutritional needs, taking into account health, cultural and support needs, and individual preferences, the latter based on asking children to choose from a dish directory, a comprehensive list of foods and drinks.
- Sample recipes and menus for meals/snacks (including lunch), which provide an overall balanced, healthy diet based on knowledge of the five food groups.
- A policy describing the aims and objectives of nutrition within the service, relating this to the aims and objectives (including values, educational and social aspects) of the service and referenced to national and local guidance.
- Written procedures setting out how food is provided, including planning, shopping, preparation, cooking, serving (assistance and support to specific pupils), education and involvement of pupils and training for staff
- Implementation of Hungry for Success as part of a whole school approach, across care and the curriculum, as outlined in Being well - Doing well: A Framework for Health Promoting Schools in Scotland (SE 2004).
- Reference to Eating Well for looked after children and young people (The Carolina Walker Trust 2001) and other guidance or specialist advisors
- Training in the above for coworkers involved in menu planning and food provision
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluation, including use of care planning and pupil reviews

(See recommendation 4.)

(See requirement 2.)

Enforcement

There has been no enforcement action against this service since the last inspection.

Other Information

Requirements

1. Staff must be appropriately trained for the work they perform, specifically the child protection coordinator in respect of recent developments in child protection.

This is in order to comply with SSI 2002/114 regulation 13 (c) (i) - a requirement to ensure that persons employed in the provision of the care service receive training appropriate to the work they are to perform.

Timescale for implementation: - within twelve months of publication of this report

2. The school must ensure staff who have input to children's food and nutrition wellbeing are appropriately trained and persons specifically responsible for planning the menu undertake training and have a demonstrable understanding of menu planning to meet the needs of children.

This is in order to comply with SSI 2002/114 regulation 13 (c) (i) - a requirement to ensure that persons employed in the provision of the care service receive training appropriate to the work they are to perform.

Timescale for implementation: 4 months from publication of this report

Recommendations

1. Some minor additions should be made to the child protection policy, which should be included in the handbooks for parents and pupils.

National Care Standards - School care accommodation services: Standard 3.3: Care and protection.

2. Staff, children and young people should be made aware of the Children's Charter.

National Care Standards - School care accommodation services: Standard 3.3: Care and protection.

3. Staff, children and young people should be made aware of the Framework for Standards for child protection

National Care Standards - School care accommodation services: Standard 3.3: Care and protection.

4. The school should develop food and nutrition policy and procedures which support best practice guidance to ensure that staff have clear guidance on the food and nutritional care provided to children.

National Care Standards - School care accommodation services: Standard 11: Eating well.

Rachel Gillespie
Care Commission Officer