

Inspection report

Ochil Tower School School Care Accommodation Service

140 High Street
Auchterarder PH3 1AD

Inspected by: Rachel Gillespie
(Care Commission Officer)

Type of inspection: Announced

Inspection completed on: 28 January 2008

Service Number

CS2003009785

Service name

Ochil Tower School

Service address140 High Street
Auchterarder PH3 1AD**Provider Number**

SP2003002133

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Ochil Tower School

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28 January 2008

Period since last inspection

18 June 2007

Local Office AddressCentral East
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Introduction

Ochil Tower School is an independent, non-denominational school for children and young people with additional support needs, aged between 5 and 18 years. It provides education for day pupils and is also registered with the Care Commission since 1 April 2002 to provide 28 residential places. 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 announced inspection which took place over three days. It was conducted as part of a number of trial inspections to develop and improve the inspection process. These developments form part of the Care Commission's Regulation for Improvement project. The Care Commission is grateful to this service for volunteering to take part in this trial. Before the inspection

The Annual Return

The school had submitted its Annual Return, which gives information about the service. The Self-Assessment Form

The service submitted a Self-Assessment form, providing information about its strengths and areas of development for the service, as requested by the Care Commission. Views of service users

The Care Commission did not use questionnaires. The Care Commission Officer met with pupils informally and at meals and the Lay Assessor joined two classes.

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 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 (CCO), over a period of three days. At the end of the inspection, the CCO gave feedback to five members of the core group, including three of the registered managers. David Hill, a Lay Assessor also spent part of a day during the inspection interacting and speaking with pupils. A Lay Assessor is a member of the public, working in a voluntary capacity, who knows about services and may have used a similar one. He/she focuses on the experience of people or families using the service.

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

- Three joint coordinators
 - Two house parents
 - Seven co-workers
- A review of a range of policies, procedures, records and other documentation, including the following:
- Parent information Book
 - Welcome to Ochil Tower School - photographic information for pupils
 - Child protection policy
 - School policy statement
 - Training records
 - Supervision and support meeting minutes
 - Tutor assessments
 - Sample SSSC Record of Achievement
 - Core group meeting minutes
 - Sample House meeting minutes

- Board of Directors meeting minutes
- Pupil survey January 2008
- Parent survey on education 2007
- Four pupil files

The Care Commission Officer's observations of

- the interactions between the co-workers and pupils, and
- the general environment and equipment used in the provision of the service. The Inspection Focus Areas for this inspection were:
 - SSSC Codes of Practice and Staff training
 - Mental health and well-being
 -

The Care Commission Officer took all of the above into account and reported on whether the service was meeting a range of relevant National Care Standards (NCS) for School Care Accommodation Services associated with the Quality Assessment Framework themes of: Quality of Care and Support

Quality of Environment

Quality of Staffing

Quality of Management and Leadership

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

The Care Commission received an action plan from the service detailing how it would meet the requirements/recommendations arising from inspections in January and June 2007. Two requirements, relating to training in child protection and nutrition, made at the time of the last inspection had been met, as described in this report.

Comment on Self-Evaluation

The service was requested to complete a Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) Self-assessment prior to the inspection as part of the trial. The documentation was completed and highlighted areas of strengths and developments with sources of evidence.

View of Service Users

Comments are included within this report, in particular within the Lay Assessor's report.

View of Carers

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

Regulations / Principles

Regulation :

Strengths

Areas for Development

National Care Standards

National Care Standard Number 1: QAF Other Service - Quality of Care and Support

Strengths

Ochil Tower School, as part of its ethos, placed strong emphasis on facilitating ways of pupils expressing their views. Accordingly, the school had responded positively to the invitation to use the new inspection framework, with its strong focus on user and carer participation, by carrying out a pupil survey prior to the inspection. Most of the 33 pupils (day/residential) participated in an interactive computer questionnaire. Those less able to communicate verbally could indicate their views through selecting photographs of activities. Co-workers assisted pupils, as required. Questions related appropriately to this inspection's quality statements and almost everyone expressed a very high degree of satisfaction with the school. Pupils had a choice of Yes/OK/No, and some had not registered any preference, especially for some more complex questions, so findings should be read with some caution. The school indicated one pupil's responses were influenced by his circumstances at the time. The survey took place immediately before the inspection, so the school had not had an opportunity to plan how to address any elements of dissatisfaction. Specific comments from the survey will be included in this report.

The Self-assessment also referred to a parent survey (April 2007), which, while focussed on education, reflected general views about the quality of the service. One commented that 'the care, personal one to one attention and education are of exceptionally excellent quality'.Quality of Care and Support

Not all quality statements were inspected within this quality theme. On this occasion, the statements inspected against were 1.1 and 1.3. 1.1 We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of care and support provided by the service. Pupil files evidenced they and their families had very good opportunities to influence the planning and delivery of the service. Parents attended statutory reviews throughout to share equally in decision-making alongside key professionals, with pupils participating according to ability and wishes. LAAC (Looked After and Accommodated Children) 'Having Your Say' forms, the presence of the child's keyworker, individualised communication skills and aids, and the option of a Children's Rights Officer or other advocate facilitated pupils expressing their views. For example, one pupil, in his Having Your Say, said, 'I like everything at Ochil Tower School - the class, the animals. For me, (my wish would be) to stay on and continue in Seniors with...as teacher'. These inclusive processes properly enabled families to ensure short term targets and approaches for care and support were relevant to their needs. Between reviews, the organisational structure of Camphill communities, with co-workers living side by side with pupils and each other, provided natural channels of daily communication and monitoring of pupils' progress. Such informal means

were complemented by dialogue at co-workers' weekly house meetings or individual support and supervision meetings of keyworkers with their house parents. In turn, most parents in the survey commented positively on phone-calls, letters and school-home diaries as effective forms of communication. All parties suggested this minimised any difficulties in care and support in the weekly and termly transition between home and school. 1.3: We ensure that service users' health and wellbeing needs are met

This statement related to the Inspection Focus Area Mental Health and Well-being; and progress on a requirement and recommendations on Nutrition Ochil Tower School made very good provision for promoting pupils' mental health and well-being. Curative education (care/education/therapy) placed great emphasis on personal, social and spiritual development, enhanced through Ochil Tower's school and community life, cultural activities and specific therapies. Menus, observation of routines and school timetables confirmed the school promoted aspects of healthy living recognised as contributing to good mental health. Some pupils spoke knowledgeably about what made them fit, healthy and feel good about themselves. The pupil survey showed almost all felt co-workers listened to them and helped to sort out their problems. For example, one child responded: 'Especially....(co-worker), he sends me to my room and lets me watch a DVD'. Individual school reports indicated a range of adults in different roles, not only keyworkers, knew individual children very well. Daily logs evidenced how co-workers sensitively monitored mood changes, talked to children and planned how to relieve stress immediately, through quiet time-out or some distracting activity, and in the longer term. For many new pupils, the school recognised that the first goal was to feel at ease in class and house settings. At this and previous inspections, the Care Commission Officer noted how co-workers spent some weeks forging a relationship and building up trust with individual pupils through activities outside the classroom. Observation at later inspections confirmed the value of this approach as children appeared happy, confident and sociable, and able to initiate conversation with visitors. Discussion with co-workers confirmed the positive impact of training input on mental health awareness. They illustrated how this had helped them to support particular pupils. Attachment theory, self-injurious behaviour and personality disorder were some of the topics from the in-house Foundation course. Some co-workers used knowledge and skills acquired in student placements in mental health settings to understand the impact on pupils affected by mental health problems. Similarly, ongoing professional and post-graduate courses equipped co-workers very well in their specialisms, where information was cascaded through their training role to improve outcomes for children. Theoretical input strengthened co-workers' understanding of separation and loss so they could engage purposefully with pupils coping with the effects of divorce or being accommodated. Traditional international cultural activities - plays, singing and rituals - as part of curative education, provided symbolic means of expressing emotion for pupils with limited communication. For example co-workers described how pupils experienced the loss of a pet or neighbour through lighting a candle and saying a prayer. Equally, Ochil Tower valued individuals' contribution to school life, celebrated with leaving parties and end-of-term assemblies. These featured written and pictorial 'biographies', along with photographic mementos, when pupils moved to other houses or elsewhere, so even those with limited comprehension had a sense of 'leaving'. These same communal activities - ballroom and country dancing were currently popular - and sport also provided an opportunity to experience physical contact. Pupils learned about touch appropriate to different settings, personal space and emotional expression. Again, co-workers spoke about awareness through initial training, and the openness of shared living, as safeguarding pupils in this area. The joint coordinator with responsibility for health and therapy continued to develop her expertise in this area. She was familiar with the key strategic government document, The Mental Health of children and Young People - A Framework for promotion, prevention and care (Scottish Executive 2005). Others kept up to

date through subscription to the Government's Well magazine. Additionally, the joint coordinator was undertaking a two year course in counselling. This was directly in response to parental demand and the absence of such a service specifically for children with additional support needs who also have mental health issues. One parent stated, 'this (counselling) will enable my child to sort out his emotions and feelings regarding his past'. Files showed the school worked hard to maintain links with several CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) teams and other professionals in relation to specific pupils. The joint coordinator also advised she collated evidence of mental health concerns for referral via the local GP to Tayside CAMHS with whom there was a very effective partnership. Indeed, the psychiatrist and his colleagues preferred to meet pupils, their families and co-workers in the safe, familiar setting to optimise completion of any assessment. Stakeholders in correspondence often testified to the school's unique service for children with very severe and complex needs. A psychiatrist, in correspondence, indicated it was difficult to imagine a setting more suitable than the Steiner organisational provision at Auchterarder for certain children. The January 2007 inspection reported fully and positively on the school's approach to nutrition, and made a requirement and recommendations. The school had subsequently reviewed its written policy and procedures to make more explicit how it promoted healthy eating. Additionally, each pupil file had a nutritional information record and all co-workers had been trained, as reflected in meal-time references to salt reduction during the inspection. Three-quarters of pupils surveyed stated the food was healthy and they liked it. One pupil admitted the food was healthy even though he did not like it. The school was aware that some pupils ate different foods at home and had difficulty adjusting to change, so they worked with this in a planned, measured way.

Areas for Development

The Self-assessment indicated the school intended to further investigate approaches to involve all young people assessing and developing the service. They felt that current systems seemed to favour young people with verbal communication skills. While only a few parents expressed dissatisfaction with the current level of communication about their child's educational progress, the school had initially reconsidered the benefits or otherwise of resuming parents' evenings. As a result, they planned to re-instate feed-back forms for School Reports.

The school had a number of means of collating assessment information, including its own risk assessments, admission form completed by parents, LAAC health assessments, and access to reports from professionals. Despite co-workers' good working knowledge of pupils, the school did not have a specific mental health and well-being assessment for them.

(See recommendation 1) The school only occasionally enrolled pupils affected directly or indirectly by substance misuse. The joint coordinator felt the school could competently respond and access information and support services should the situation arise. Specialist training was provided on a pupil needs-led basis, as exemplified previously on the developmental affects of foetal alcohol syndrome. However, co-workers as a whole did not have much specific expertise or training in this area. Substance misuse should be considered for inclusion in various aspects of the school's provision - health assessments, training, personal and social education programmes and relevant policies.

(See recommendations 1 and 2.) Co-workers were not aware of publications such as:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health - Theory and Practice Cooper, Hooper and Thompson (2005)

· Young Minds: looking after the mental health of looked after and accommodated children in Scotland and

· The Mental Health Needs of Looked After Children Joanna Richardson and Carol Joughin (2000)

(See recommendation 3.) Minutes evidenced the school had arranged for further nationally recognised training in food and health for the Core group in 2008. Its Self-assessment also identified further moves to whole food products and reduction in salt and sugar. The school now needed to develop its approaches as part of becoming a health-promoting school under new legislative requirements.

National Care Standard Number 2: QAF Other Service - Quality of Environment

Strengths

Not all quality statements were inspected within this quality theme. On this occasion, the statements inspected against were 2.1 and 2.2. 2.1 We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of environment provided by the service. As detailed in the January 2007 report, Ochil Tower School offered very good resources to families, with ongoing improvements to meet the changing needs of pupils and national priorities. The school advised it continued to give new parents a General Information book. Moreover, they felt their new photographic Welcome to Ochil Tower, featuring facilities and pupils enjoying themselves, had proved a more meaningful introduction. Attendance at reviews and the annual Family Day provided opportunities for parents to view the school as a whole. The 2007 inspection report included comments from one parent: 'The child's progress had been remarkable and his current quality of life was incomparable with that before. She spoke positively about the whole environment, the wonderful grounds and physical activity outings, as well as the very homely accommodation'. Board of Directors' minutes confirmed the Self-assessment evidence that the school prioritised a high standard of physical environment and ongoing development, comprising 22% of income. The Care Commission had witnessed an ongoing programme of new building (Sycamore and Rowan houses) refurbishment (Coach House for use in independent living) and repair (latterly new roofs on school halls). Children were involved in laying foundation stones and opening ceremonies, while parents could monitor progress of major developments through photographs on the frequently-updated website. Similarly, senior pupils were consulted about priorities in spending a Scottish Executive grant in 2007, where their views on computers and football were taken into account. 90% pupils consulted said they enjoyed living in Ochil Tower and liked their house and room. They were involved in personalising their rooms. Similarly, more able pupils contributed to the care of their living space, whether helping with dishes, tidying rooms or gardening, as observed. The school reported it had extended its provision of individual 'safe spaces' to four pupils to reflect their success in meeting pupils' needs. This individualised approach to provision of resources was reflected in other aspects of Care and Education Plans (CEPs): food, intimate care, communication and activities. Pupils were able to list a variety of activities they enjoyed: walking, gardening, football, painting, and the playground, in addition to those organised elsewhere such as horse-riding and theatre trips. Again, classroom projects provided pupils with opportunities to plan, effect and evaluate new ideas, on a team or individual basis, building confidence as well as skills. For example, previous inspections noted their direct participation in the design and construction of the adventure playground. Discussion and the Self-assessment described how recently Ochil Tower School had registered with Eco School Scotland. Co-workers explained how this raised pupil awareness and involved them in more responsibility for the local and wider

environment. This built on the school's ethical approach to sourcing and tradition of recycling.2.2 We make sure the environment is safe and service users are protected.

This statement related progress on a requirement and recommendations on Child ProtectionThe Self assessment confirmed the strengths identified in the January 2007 inspection report were being maintained and provided very good support and protection for children. Almost all pupils in the survey said they felt safe. Further to the June inspection's recommendation, the School Policy Statement showed the child protection policy had been revised to include specific information, such as local telephone numbers. Additionally, training records and co-workers demonstrated the school was now aware of the Children's Charter and Framework for Standards. The school also accessed other useful guidance in the national reform programme Protecting Children and Young People, according to a joint coordinator's comments and observation. A joint coordinator advised the appointment of its own Speech and Language Therapist had had a positive impact on co-worker and pupils skills in augmentative communication, especially Makaton. The Lay assessor noted the use of Makaton in the classroom. Pupils were able to help each other, providing additional safeguards for passing on concerns. A certificate of attendance evidenced the Child Protection Coordinator (CPC) had undertaken a two day SIRCC (Scottish Institute for Residential Childcare) course, with a focus on safe caring. This included exploration of the professional boundaries in interaction between service users and staff, which she viewed as significant for the shared living at school. Inspired by discussion at the last inspection, the CPC spoke very enthusiastically about her return to study, namely, SIRCC's MSc in Advanced Residential Childcare, which was challenging and relevant to her role.

Areas for Development

The Self-assessment indicated Elmtree house was to have a new roof. The houseparent in Priory advised room changes would create a second public room, enhancing opportunities for privacy and quiet activities.The Self-assessment needs to evidence how it involves pupils and families more systematically in identifying areas for improvement in the environment, and how this is translated into its development plan.The CPC was advised of a local Independent Schools Child Protection Group which enables school child protection officers to network and share information on national and local developments and resources.The school was reminded that those co-workers registered with the Scottish Social Services Council as social workers must demonstrate they have undertaken five days of professional development in identifying, assessing and managing risk in vulnerable groups.

National Care Standard Number 3: QAF Other Service - Quality of Staffing

Strengths

Not all quality statements were inspected within this quality theme. On this occasion, the statements inspected against were 3.1 and 3.3. 3.1 We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing provided by the service Ochil Tower School attributed much of its success to the quality of its staffing. Accordingly, it was very responsive in taking the needs and views of its pupils and parents into account in relation to staffing. The survey showed almost all pupils were positive or felt alright about their keyworker, houseparent and teacher and felt that they and other children were well looked after. There had been no complaints from parents or pupils to the school about the service. Several parents in the 2007 survey commented very favourably on the attentiveness of houseparents and keyworkers in maintaining constant contact, as noted above. Another referred to the hard work and perseverance of co-workers in helping a new pupil become comfortable in the setting, to learn and to feel accepted.The Self-assessment stated that it

was the pupils' needs which dictated the staffing arrangements. A joint coordinator spoke of its organisational structure, with overlapping roles of keyworkers, teachers, classroom assistants and therapists acting as a protective and nurturing circle of concern and care. Successive inspections had noted how access to five different houses facilitated some differentiation of service appropriate to the age, stage and personality for each pupil during his/her stay. For instance, Belvidere had a number of experienced co-workers better equipped to work with senior pupils who might be verbally or physically challenging at times. Equally, co-workers spoke of communal living contributing to very effective communication, with frequent opportunities for daily exchanges, supplemented by efficient recording, preferable to formal handovers. Records showed the school's flexibility in providing fortnightly respite care on a regular or crisis basis offered continuity of care to pupils and reassurance to families. Similarly, admission and review documents evidenced a willingness to engage with families to identify issues - sleep, eating and insecurity - and provide solutions. Co-workers said that this required them to communicate very sensitively with parents who may have struggled for years or still be experiencing difficulties at home. House parents spoken with evidenced they were also very good at listening to children and advocating for resources to help families at home.3.3 We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to NCS, legislation and best practice

This statement related to the Inspection Focus Area: Training Ochil Tower School provided excellent opportunities for co-workers to develop as individuals and professionals within a strongly supportive learning environment, a process described as using 'community living as a path of learning'. Building on an intensive residential induction week, all those new to Camphill took part in a one year in-house Foundation Course in Curative Education and Social Therapy. Joint coordinators stressed this now focussed less on traditional Steiner anthroposophy and increasingly on more practical training extending across the wide aspects of care, within a strong values approach. The Foundation programme evidenced four sessions a fortnight, ranging from standard child protection, First Aid and legislation to therapeutic interventions, communication and reflective practice. One co-worker commented in his probationary assessment: 'I found the training course valuable and useful in applying the theory to practice'. Records showed how the school updated Foundation Course input annually to appropriately reflect the specific needs of current pupils. Evaluation forms for each presentation, at initial induction and at the end of each term, led to subsequent modifications, according to the joint coordinator. Individual contributors also spoke of researching further materials as part of their own knowledge development. This was reflected in one joint coordinator's SSSC Post-Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) Record of Achievement. The impact of a learning culture was clearly evidenced by a more recent innovation by younger co-workers. The latter voluntarily met on alternate Sundays as a Brunch Group, a social gathering to explore issues like trust, leadership and touch through role-play, games and discussion. The group of co-workers interviewed expressed great enthusiasm and were highly motivated, because they could identify how such self-reflection made a difference to their work for children. The Care Commission Officer had noted through comments over recent years how more experienced co-workers throughout the community set a very good example for personal study, using free time after children went to bed, weekends and holidays. The Self-assessment, supported by records, stated 94% of co-workers were either in training or had acquired a relevant qualification within the previous two years. This represented a huge shift towards qualifications recognised by the Scottish Social Services Council from five years ago, when only a few were suitably qualified. It had influenced retention of younger co-workers who now often stayed beyond one or two years, creating a more experienced team of carers and continuity of care. Records showed all four joint coordinators (and three of the core group) had a social work qualification or BA in Curative Education, with a plan to achieve the equivalent of their Registered Manager Award

in the near future. Three joint coordinators were undertaking post-graduate qualifications, two as referenced elsewhere and the third also linking to his specialist responsibility of training and development, through a focus on research. According to Board of Directors' meeting minutes, the school also welcomed enquiries from research students, such as an ethnographic study of Camphill rituals. A further 11 co-workers, who had been at the school or another Camphill community for at least 2 years, were at various stages of study for the BA in Curative Education. This professional training, mainly through Camphill Rudolf Steiner School and Aberdeen University, but also OUP, SIRCC and other institutions of choice, was a huge investment of money, time and personal commitment. The school felt it was essential to enhance the skills levels in order to manage the challenge of pupils' complex needs and improve their quality of life. The school had excellent systems for evaluating the impact of its training, as evidenced through various co-worker meeting minutes. This included a probationary assessment within 8 weeks, to identify those struggling, and termly appraisal tutorials, involving the class teacher and houseparent as well as an independent tutor. The joint coordinators said this established the good learning practice of student self assessment and feedback from others. It continued in regular supervision and support from house parents and class teachers, university tutorials later on and annual appraisals. Senior workers, role models in themselves, explained how they also evaluated effectiveness of training in influencing outcomes through constant interaction as a consequence of living together as a community. This scrutiny and sharing of ideas included house meetings, whose minutes referred to some practice issue as a focus, as well as discussion of individual pupils or events-planning. The school believed these systems also ensured any poor practice was quickly noted and addressed.

Areas for Development

The Self-assessment indicated that the needs of pupils would continue to strongly influence training and staffing issues. The school traditionally had a parent representative on its Board of Directors, though there was a vacancy at the time of the inspection. Discussion suggested that the school needed to explore more ways in which it might engage parents in assessing and improving the quality of staffing specifically. This might involve participation in the Foundation training or co-worker studies, or more systematic recording of their views, positive or otherwise, at points of contact like reviews. It was recognised the service had tried parents' evenings in the past, with limited success, and had linked up new parents with others where this was welcomed. Equally, many families did not live within easy reach of the school and had other commitments.

SSSC Codes of Practice

The January 2007 inspection report evidenced examples of good practice in ensuring co-workers had a good understanding of the application of the Codes. The school should consider how it might take the Codes into account during Self-assessment and internal audit. The training and development policy did not address all aspects to provide a more robust framework in terms of expectations and accountability of the school and co-workers respectively. It did not have:

- more detailed information on the content of the Foundation course

- indication of how identified learning and development needs might be met other than through specific training - internet, reading, mentoring etc

- participation in the learning activity - referenced to SSSC PRTL
- application of learning in the workplace and
- evaluation of the effectiveness of learning (including reflective practice and outcomes for pupils)

(See recommendation 4)

National Care Standard Number 4: QAF Other Service - Quality of Management and Leadership

Strengths

Not all quality statements were inspected within this quality theme. On this occasion, the statements inspected against were 4.1 and 4.2.

4.1 We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of management and leadership provided by the service. About two thirds of pupils surveyed felt co-workers and houseparents got on well with each other and co-workers did a good job running the school (some pupils may not fully have understood the question). Likewise, most of those parents who responded to the questionnaire focussed on education were very positive about the service as a whole. Pupils spoken with and observed knew who was 'in charge' and had very good direct access to managers, enabling them to communicate views, ideas and concerns more easily. The pupil council had been replaced by more effective use of the senior class group, class assemblies and house meetings. These, as observed, provided a safe forum for pupils to become confident in expressing opinions about the running of the school. The Board of Directors minutes evidenced that, on occasion, pupils gave presentations, such as their 'favourite things to do', and the Board also shared a meal in the houses. Some retired members still lived as part of the community, so pupils spoke to them regularly. A strong children's rights approach provided a positive framework for respect for children's views. In turn, the learning culture, and ethos of self-reflection and positive regard for families created an environment where co-workers and managers believed they were receptive to feedback. Pupils, as observed, enjoyed spending time talking with co-workers and friends in the kitchen. Some were comfortable popping their heads round doors and being invited to join in discussions with visitors when this was appropriate. The school had welcomed a Lay Assessor on Care Commission inspections to speak with pupils on three occasions, and had agreed to participate in this trial of a different kind of inspection, with little time to plan. This cooperation evidenced their openness to scrutiny. The updated School Policy Statement and handbooks for families, alongside the website with its photo profiles of current pupils and co-workers, enabled families to have information about personnel and main developments. The website also included inspection reports from 1998, which the school valued as an important reflection of the school's strengths and progress, albeit of more interest to professionals. Members of the core group expressed the view that families judged management and leadership of the school by its success in effecting improvements for their own child. They referred to parents' sense of relief, knowing their children were happy, felt safe, wanted to be at Ochil Tower and were able to work to their potential. If the school achieved this, parents said they too could relax. From their own informal feedback, the school felt they had succeeded in this. The Care Commission Officer observed that pupils were happy, self-confident, and active in pursuing their objectives and had a capacity to communicate effectively with a wide range of people.

4.2 We involve our workforce in determining the direction and future objectives of the

service. The school had very good arrangements for co-workers at all levels to make a contribution to the strategic direction of the service. Co-workers interviewed spoke of the school's collaborative approach to its work and ideas for improving the service. They advised that the school's small size and daily contact with colleagues, along with a range of formal meetings, provided both informal and formal opportunities to express their views. Co-workers at all levels clarified that joint coordinators, house parents, teachers and others were not seen as line managers but rather as people carrying specified responsibilities. They spoke of everyone having a moral responsibility for the overall wellbeing of the school and not just for a keyworker's individual pupil. Senior co-workers spoken with valued their colleagues' opinions and specific knowledge of issues. They cited the Brunch Group as a significant element of co-workers' professional development, and co-worker's individual contributions to school life such as introducing cultural celebrations from Brazil.

Policy, confirmed by co-workers, stated joining the core group was not based on length of service or experience but a willingness, interest and ability to share ideas, review policy and practice and take on responsibility for different parts of the service. The school expressed pride that all age groups were now represented. Likewise, the school viewed training and ongoing professional development as a personal as well as an organisational responsibility. Core group members stated they, especially joint coordinators, could also join the Board of Directors, the external governing body which made decisions based on recommendations by joint coordinators and the Core group. Minutes demonstrated the Board heard presentations by joint coordinators from time to time on. The Self-assessment cited one example, Children's Legislation and Moral Leadership as forming part of the school's review of its aims and objectives. A minute commented that it was 'very thrilling to see how enthusiastic everybody at Ochil tower is and their ability to use their intellect to reach common decisions in their thinking'.

Areas for Development

This inspection focussed on identifying how the school engaged pupils and parents both in planning and delivery of the service and in assessing and improving the quality. Findings suggested the questionnaire had proved challenging, especially in exploring why pupils had responded 'yes' or 'no'. The school felt it needed to identify relevant and effective ways of gathering evidence which were efficient and did not detract from time spent on providing direct care and support to pupils. In fact, methods of collating evidence might efficiently use processes already in place. In future, the school will have the course of the year in which to work on the Self-assessment, not just a few weeks. The school should consider how to share current information about the effectiveness of its management and leadership so pupils and parents might be motivated and informed to make comment on this. An annual report, with opportunity to give feedback, in some user-friendly format is one suggestion. The school might refer to National Care Standards and HMIE Quality Indicators in How Good is our School? for assistance in providing a framework for defining management and leadership.

(See recommendation 5) The service did not have a participation strategy reflecting how it engaged with pupils and parents. This should include reference to how their participation might influence the strategic direction of the service. Any such outcomes should be linked to the school's development plan, which was not made available on this occasion. The participation strategy specifically should indicate how the school proposes to involve pupils and parents in the Self-assessment process. The views of pupils and parents, verifying the Self-assessment or otherwise, form a key part of the Care Commission inspection.

(See recommendation 6) The Self assessment identified they needed a consultation meeting with placing authorities. The school met with them from time to time to negotiate funding and

also share information about the service and its direction. The service had identified that for the longer term future of a Camphill school, it needed to identify the next generation of joint coordinators so they could develop into their roles and provide continuity.

Enforcement

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

Other Information

The Care Commission Officer discussed with the joint coordinators the 'Regulating for Improvement' project - a development which will significantly change how the Care Commission will regulate services from April 2008. It will mean better information, more involvement with people who use care services and their carers, and the introduction of clear gradings which will help people make more informed choices about the care services they want to use. The joint coordinators advised the Care Commission Officer they had familiarised themselves with the information and briefings available at [www.carecommission.com/Care Services/Regulating for Improvement/Information for Service Providers](http://www.carecommission.com/Care%20Services/Regulating%20for%20Improvement/Information%20for%20Service%20Providers). This part of the report has been compiled by the lay assessor

As I approached the school the snow was falling and the grounds looked very picturesque. I was met at the front door and then taken to the office where I was asked to sign in and was then given a timetable for the day. I was then introduced to a co worker and his senior class – normally there would be eight pupils, but today we met with three of them. (one pupil who had been in the group setting was taken to a room of his own). I was offered tea and coffee and I was shown various examples of the work that the children had undertaken. The activities are all recorded by using a digital camera, and they talked about the walking expeditions and showed me the evidence again in photographic format.

I chatted to the children in the kitchen; here are some of their comments:

"I like cooking", "I like making pancakes", "I fly my kite",

"We learnt Salsa dancing", "I go horse riding", "My project is all about the Forth Bridges", "My project is on horses and ponies", "Family – very important to me", "I like to play in the playground", "It is snowing – can we have a snowball fight?"

I asked the children what they would do if they had an accident. They all said:

"Go to the co-worker, or get someone else to get them – If I can't manage"

We talked about food hygiene; they all said "Wash your hands before you start!" During the morning break the children went out to play. We were then taken to Class 10, where we met seven pupils and, after introductions, I watched them work on their projects. One was making a burglar alarm and another pupil was making a light bulb. They were printing, counting money, writing and painting while others were playing a word game and a building game. I then had an opportunity to talk to the children. I used Makaton and listened to their comments:

"I live near Perth", "I come from Glasgow everyday in a taxi – I pass through Blair Drummond", "I leave home at 8.30am and then go home at 3.30pm", "I have a dog and two cats", "I have a sister and two brothers", "I have been coming here for two years", "I have a brother", "I like making snowballs", "I enjoyed learning the Tango", "Strip the Willow is hard work - we were all sweating after that",

"My friend stays here", "I love it here", "I'm not worried if I don't get home because of the snow – I'll just stay here for the weekend"

We then discussed the afternoon timetable and everyone knew where they were all going. Then the bell rang and we all went for lunch. I arrived at a Sycamore and spoke to the residents and the co workers. We then went to the dining room and had lunch. I observed good interaction between co workers and pupils and noticed that help was given to cut up food, if required. The children were all encouraged to eat their food and they helped clear up at the end. In my opinion, the children appear to be happy and this lovely service treats the children with the respect they deserve and they are supported through various activities and schooling. They are taught Independent Living as they progress through the school to enable them to live an independent life once they reach the age of 18. The co-workers appear to be dedicated, supportive, helpful, and respectful and fully understand the needs of the children.

Requirements

There were no requirements identified at this inspection.

Recommendations

1. The school should ensure children and young people's health needs are assessed in line with legal requirements

National Care Standards - School care accommodation services: Standard 12: Keeping well - lifestyle. 2. Procedures relating to children and young people affected by parental substance misuse should also link to the service's child protection procedure.

National Care Standards - School care accommodation services: Standard 3.3: Care and protection. 3. The school should be aware and able to meet the needs of children and young people.

National Care Standards - Care homes for children and young people: Standard 11.2 Keeping well - lifestyle. 4. The training and development policy should be reviewed and updated.

National Care Standards - School care accommodation services: Standard 7.8 Management and staffing. 5. The school should produce an annual report in a format which meets the needs of pupils and parents so they can better engage in the Self-assessment process.

National Care Standards - School care accommodation services: Standard 7.9 Management and staffing. 6. The school should develop a participation strategy in line with comments in this report and guidance for community engagement accessible via the Care Commission website above.

National Care Standards - School care accommodation services: Standard 7.9 Management and staffing.

Rachel Gillespie
Care Commission Officer