

Balnacraig School

School Care Accommodation Service

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Type of inspection: Unannounced
Inspection completed on: 4 May 2017

Service provided by:
Balnacraig School

Service provider number:
SP2010011127

Care service number:
CS2010272007

About the service

Balnacraig School is a school care accommodation service for up to 14 children and young people at one time. It is an independent residential school for young people with additional support needs arising from social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The provider is a private company limited by guarantee, administered by a board of directors. The school also provides day places for some children (though this is not part of the registered care service). The same provider has a registered care home service in Perth and Kinross.

The registered service comprises the following:

- the main residential school, a two-storey Victorian building located in a residential area close to Perth city centre. This has adjoining purpose-built care accommodation for up to 14 young people, with en-suite bedrooms and communal spaces
- a detached house (Am Bruach) in the school grounds with en-suite accommodation for up to two young people
- a detached cottage, Eden House, near Blairgowrie, for up to two young people.

Balnacraig School has been registered since 2010.

What people told us

At the time of the inspection the number of young people at Balnacraig was between nine and 10.

We received feedback from five young people in care standards questionnaires and from face-to-face discussions with six young people, some in groups and one individually. Two did not want to speak with us. The overall satisfaction felt by young people when they completed the questionnaires was very positive overall: all agreed or strongly agreed that they were happy with the quality of care they got. Some were less happy with a small number of specific issues though these varied. However, the comments made by some young people when we spoke with them in a small group of four or five were more negative overall. These young people seemed to feel they did not have enough freedom and were not trusted enough by staff. There were also some positive comments: one in particular liked the food, there was a large choice of activities, 'lots has been changed because we didn't like it', 'staff are really kind when I'm upset', they were looked after properly, staff listened and tried to make a difference, staff managed behaviour well. One told us about a number of positive changes in his life and that he was treated fairly by them.

We acknowledged all young people's comments and have taken them into account in evaluating service quality.

Self assessment

We did not ask providers to submit a self-assessment this year.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	4 - Good
Quality of environment	not assessed
Quality of staffing	5 - Very Good
Quality of management and leadership	not assessed

What the service does well

The quality of care and support demonstrated important strengths. Personal plans had clearly improved and further planned changes will address the remaining areas for development we identified. The clearer focus on outcomes was already meeting with success.

Young people were physically well and staff managed medication safely. They planned and presented food in such a way that young people could enjoy their meals and have a balanced diet. There were plenty of opportunities to be active. One young person had really improved fitness levels. A new initiative with a community group had provided additional new experiences. Managers showed their commitment to smoking cessation by drafting a new policy following the very recent publication of guidance by the Care Inspectorate and ASH Scotland.

The implementation of a 'therapeutic' approach to care had continued. The use of incentives had worked well in encouraging some young people to engage and commit to improved behaviour and school attendance. There was a particularly good example of planning being led by a young person and achieving real results. The support of the psychologist was of great benefit both for individual young people and the staff team. More flexible and responsive staffing arrangements reflected improved analysis of incidents. Examples of nurturing care included celebration of special events and opportunities for one-to-one time, much valued by young people. Young people's comments and input had also contributed to positive changes in the service.

Staffing quality was very good, demonstrating major strengths with aspects of excellence. Improved senior management arrangements and a clear vision and direction played a key part in this. Robust recruitment and selection systems helped to ensure only suitable staff were appointed. The service was diligent in obtaining and clarifying references. Shadow shifts allowed staff to get to know young people.

A systematic learning and development programme was linked to the service's strategic aims. Training was relevant and based on best practice. It had had a positive impact on staff practice. Ancillary staff had also taken part in suitable training. Moving forward, this year's programme included modules based on the Scottish Social Services Council's 'Step into Leadership' initiative. This reflected the service's strong commitment to leadership development.

Staff motivation was highly impressive: they felt valued and well-supported, and had regular, good quality supervision (another improvement on previous performance). Expectations of staff performance and conduct had been raised to good effect. We found a number of examples of warm, stable relationships with young people, contributing to positive outcomes and experiences.

What the service could do better

We acknowledged the more critical feedback from some young people. We felt that some of the comments reflected in part how they felt in the aftermath of an incident. Close supervision by staff, whilst aimed at preventing a recurrence, also caused some resentment. Neither did young people always take into account the need for a differentiated approach to managing behaviour. However, there had been a number of other incidents of challenging and disruptive behaviour. The service was trying to find the right balance between keeping young people (and themselves) safe and promoting greater trust and responsibility. They should continue this process.

There were also some variations in a small number of young people's outcomes and experiences. The service should continue to keep these under review to ensure their approach best meets identified needs.

Unfortunately the majority of young people at Balnacraig smoked. Tensions often arose when staff attempted to intervene and actively discourage smoking, especially as a social activity.

Minor changes were needed to aspects of medication management. The possibility of young people managing all or some aspects of their medication should always be considered for example.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
27 May 2016	Unannounced	Care and support 4 - Good Environment Not assessed Staffing Not assessed Management and leadership 4 - Good
17 Nov 2015	Unannounced	Care and support 4 - Good Environment 4 - Good Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership 4 - Good
10 Jul 2015	Re-grade	Care and support 3 - Adequate Environment Not assessed Staffing Not assessed Management and leadership 4 - Good

Date	Type	Gradings	
25 Mar 2015	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good 5 - Very good 5 - Very good 5 - Very good
14 Oct 2014	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good 5 - Very good 5 - Very good 5 - Very good
31 Mar 2014	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good 5 - Very good 4 - Good 4 - Good
3 May 2013	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good 4 - Good 4 - Good 5 - Very good
22 Jan 2013	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed Not assessed 4 - Good
9 Feb 2012	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	2 - Weak 3 - Adequate 3 - Adequate 3 - Adequate
30 May 2011	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	2 - Weak 3 - Adequate 2 - Weak 2 - Weak

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