

# Balnacraig School

## School Care Accommodation Service

Fairmount Terrace  
Perth  
PH2 7AR

Telephone: 01738 636456

**Type of inspection:**

Unannounced

**Completed on:**

10 May 2018

**Service provided by:**

Balnacraig School

**Service provider number:**

SP2010011127

**Service no:**

CS2010272007

## About the service

Balnacraig School has been registered with the Care Inspectorate since April 2011 to provide a school care accommodation service. Currently, the service can care for up to 16 children and young people. 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 nine pupils, 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.
- a detached cottage, South Inchmichael Cottage, in Errol, for up to three young people.

The stated purpose of Balnacraig School is to make positive, meaningful changes in the lives of young people. Balnacraig aims to achieve this through the nurture of individuals and by seeking to develop a caring and confident community. Balnacraig seeks to provide a range of quality learning and care experiences to keep people safe and protected, improve health and wellbeing, raise standards of attainment and achievement and empowering young people to be active and responsible citizens.

## What people told us

We received four completed care standard questionnaires from young people prior to the inspection. Two strongly agreed, one agreed and one disagreed that they were happy with the quality of care received at Balnacraig.

During the inspection, a small number of young people spoke with the inspectors individually and we spent time with other young people during meals and across the range of residential living areas.

We were also accompanied by a young inspection volunteer who met with young people living within the main school building and gathered views and feedback about experiences of care at Balnacraig.

Comments gathered during the course of inspection included:

"Certain staff make Balnacraig fun as they take part in activities and have good patter".

"I like all the staff at Balnacraig, they're nice and care about us all".

"I like my room, staff listened to my ideas and I got to help design the communal area".

"I get frustrated at the differences between the houses and the school environment".

"There's lots of activities, I like living here".

"I feel safe and well looked after, I know why I live here and I get to put things in my care plan".

"I understand the rules, like why my lighter gets removed".

"I feel I can connect with staff, I can see myself in others".

"I do enjoy being at Balnacraig. What annoys me is lack of food after 10 o'clock. This should be changed as it gets on every young person's nerves and has been the cause of some kick offs".

We asked staff about the 10 o'clock rule and established that cold snacks and drinks were available to young people after this time. We were also told that consideration is given where a young person is ill or has specific dietary needs and could see this was the case. We suggested that the service continue to consider the nurturing comfort that hot food can provide, whilst appreciating that limitation of availability may be necessary for a variety of reasons.

We heard from young people about their dislike of the dining table and chairs being removed after meals to prevent them from 'hanging out' in this area and shared this with managers to consider whether there can be any flexibility regarding this. Young people stated that food choices were good and they were able to influence menu planning.

Some young people spoke about the links that Balnacraig have established with the local police and there were mixed views on this. Some young people felt that the police visited too often and that the environment should be treated more homely with less intrusion. We were able to see the positive benefits of greater collaborative links between the service and the local police but have asked the service to be mindful of the views we gathered from young people regarding this.

## Self assessment

We did not ask the manager to submit a self-assessment this year. Instead we looked at the service development plan for evidence of self-evaluation and improvement planning.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

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

## What the service does well

The service's performance across both quality themes inspected, was very good and demonstrated major strengths.

There was evidence of positive outcomes for young people we talked to, and whose care plans we looked at. Very good care planning for and with young people was evident. Young people's views were reflected throughout. Outcomes included: increased educational attainment, reduced misuse of substances, reduction of absconding and reduced risk of exposure to sexual exploitation.

Young people received different levels of support in line with age and stage of development. We could see very structured support in place for some young people with clear boundaries and positive reinforcement systems to encourage and motivate. Other young people benefited from more independence and flexibility in self regulating their behaviour and learning to make positive choices. Staff knew the young people well and we could see that, in the main, young people had developed positive relationships with those supporting them. We received very positive feedback from placing social workers about care and support and the relationships young people had with key workers.

Staff spoken with, were confident in their child protection responsibilities and knew clearly the service's procedures relating to recording and reporting any concerns.

The service has worked hard to build positive links with local police. We could see how this had improved relationships and promoted greater collaborative working, particularly when supporting young people at times of crisis.

We saw very good evidence of regular team and management meetings taking place. Changes to the meeting structure had improved communication at all levels and we heard from a variety of staff and managers that access to information and opportunities for discussion and reflection had improved. Reflective practice sessions, led by the in-house psychologist, were highly valued and promoted a shared understanding and culture of therapeutic care practice.

A strong self evaluation calendar was in place ensuring quality assurance activities were undertaken regularly and meaningfully. Regular analysis of the use of physical intervention was evident with the aim of reducing frequency and need for safe holding. Management of medication was also kept under constant review. We could see that audit systems were identifying quickly any staff development needs or issues that needed to be addressed and appropriate, timely measures were being taken.

A very good improvement plan which was clear, informative and realistic was in place. Staff were aware of the vision of the organisation but were not always sure how, individually, they contributed to the improvement plan. It was pleasing to see that the service focused on evaluation and review to 'test for change' when introducing new ideas and encouraged feedback and participation from young people and staff to help inform this. Staff told us that managers were very approachable and took time to listen and encourage the wider team.

A supportive employee review and appraisal system was in place and we could see how this influenced the organisations training and development plan. Staff were being encouraged and supported to undertake a range of learning opportunities, including training and qualifications, to enhance their role. From records we sampled and staff we spoke to, supervision was regular and reflective.

## What the service could do better

The service has experienced some staff turnover since last inspection. Additional staffing changes have occurred in response to managing staff absence cover, supporting the changing needs of young people and at the request of individual staff members. Specific areas of the service have been more affected by staffing changes than others. We were satisfied that rota's over recent months detailed sufficient numbers of staff on shift but recognised that movement of staff and turnover had impacted on staff morale at times and had potentially affected young people too. We have encouraged managers to minimise any further changes and explore ways to promote team dynamics and cohesiveness across the areas of service in order to provide greater continuity of care for young people. We will consider progress made in stabilising the individual staff teams at next inspection.

The service has recently reviewed its senior staffing structure and was recruiting for additional care managers at the time of inspection. We felt that this was a positive plan for development as it would enable each area of the service to have its own designated manager, with the aim of promoting greater support and consistency for young people and staff.

We heard from some staff that debriefs following incidents did not always occur. We looked at incident reports, some of which contained very detailed debrief records and spoke to other staff who gave positive accounts of post incident support they had received from managers. We have encouraged managers to consider the different perceptions regarding debrief arrangements and strive to ensure all staff feel supported.

Although communication and information sharing across the organisation has continued to improve, there were some areas where further development could take place including communication flow to night awake staff and opportunities for senior residential care workers to reflect, discuss and promote consistent practice.

We felt that staff could benefit from increased access to training regarding self harm to further enhance their knowledge and confidence in supporting young people.

## 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](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
4 May 2017	Unannounced	Care and support 4 - Good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership Not assessed
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
25 Mar 2015	Unannounced	Care and support 4 - Good Environment 5 - Very good Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 5 - Very good
14 Oct 2014	Unannounced	Care and support 4 - Good Environment 5 - Very good Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 5 - Very good
31 Mar 2014	Unannounced	Care and support 4 - Good Environment 5 - Very good Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership 4 - Good

Date	Type	Gradings	
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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