

Old School House Care Home Service

Avoch

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
1 November 2022

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2014332720

About the service

Old School House is a residential children's house owned and run by Highland Council. It is a four bedroom cottage situation in the rural area of Killen, Avoch in the Black Isle. The accommodation is provided for two young boys on a long-term basis. Both young boys were there at the time of inspection.

The house has undergone renovation to meet the needs of the young people living there. It has a large garden to the rear of the house. The young people have access to education and community based activities close-by.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection that took place on 26 October 2022. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with one young person using the service;
- spoke with six staff including management;
- spoke with two external professionals and one stakeholder;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents; and
- attended an education meeting for one young person.

Key messages

- Young people felt safe and protected from harm.
- Staff were knowledgeable and understood the young people's needs.
- Staff worked well with external agencies to keep young people safe and support their needs.
- Young people benefitted from very good relationships where they felt loved and part of a family.
- The house was warm and nurturing and supported their wellbeing.
- Relationships with family and friends were well supported.
- Staff were proactive in ensuring that the young people had opportunities to participate in a variety of activities.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

We made an evaluation of very good for this key question. We identified major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for young people and we identified some aspects of practice which we considered to be excellent. Advice was given in a few areas to further develop practice. There was confidence that this advice would be actioned.

Young people were kept safe and protected from harm. All staff had a very good understanding of the young people's needs and listened to them. Young people participated in risk assessments. Staff encouraged and supported them to try new adventures outwith their comfort zone. Young people were safeguarded due to staff's understanding and recent training in child protection.

Young people were looked after in a therapeutic and stable environment. Careful consideration had been given to the matching process and placing the young people together. During a period of refurbishment one young person became distressed while living outwith the house temporarily. All staff demonstrated good insight into his feelings and supported him well. Staff had a very good understanding of both young people and how best to support good outcomes. They evidenced a trauma informed approach and were undertaking training to further develop this area of practice.

Young people enjoyed warm, nurturing, and trusting relationships with staff who were knowledgeable about the boy's needs. They received love, affection, and consistent care. Staff and young people spoke about the 'Killen family' and there was a real sense of family life. One staff member told us 'I believe it is a fundamental right of everyone to feel loved by someone, no matter their background or setting and this is part of my role.'

The young people's care plans contained a lot of information and were supported by good relationships with external agencies. A practitioner from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service attended monthly team meetings. This was viewed positively and supported development in practice and the mental health of young people. Whilst staff showed a trauma informed approach, this was in the early stages in their recording processes. Written care plans would benefit from further development, in terms of the language used and outcomes being more specific, however this did not impact on the positive outcomes for the young people.

The home environment was warm and nurturing, supporting the young people's wellbeing. Young people's wishes were considered. One young person made use of additional space, this provided him with some privacy. He had adapted this space into a classroom where he enjoyed imaginative play. There was a large outdoor space to the rear of the building which helped to keep young people active, promoting good physical and mental health. There were parts of the building that were not utilised, these could be used to create additional safe or therapeutic spaces for the young people.

Although the young people were reluctant, there were good attempts by staff to engage them meaningfully in decisions about their care. One young person organised a monthly 'team meeting' with his key worker. His views were gained at this meeting and then shared with the wider staff team and at care plan meetings. One young person told us he was happy for staff to make decisions for him.

Young people's education and future plans were actively pursued by staff who championed their legal and human rights. Both young people attended education daily. We observed staff strongly advocating on behalf of a young person at a meeting with their school, during which they demonstrated their knowledge of and commitment to him.

Young people were being supported to understand safe, healthy relationships with family and friends and their views were respected. Staff were supporting one young person and his sister build their relationship. One young person had been supported with his relationship with a girlfriend. Family and friends were welcome to visit the young people in their home.

The young people were provided with a varied and healthy diet. Meals times were a social occasion and young people were encouraged to develop their life skills in preparing meals and clearing up afterwards.

We heard of the significant progress both young people had made since coming to the service. There was a dedicated staff team around the young people. They had a variety of skills and interests and were proactive in looking for new opportunities to support the young people's life skills and independence. The young people had opportunities to take part in several activities and community-based groups and were fully integrated in the local community.

One young person said to us, 'I don't think you have to ask anything else, it is perfect here.'

Complaints

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

Detailed evaluations

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
7.1 Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life	5 - Very Good

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