

Starley Hall School

School Care Accommodation Service

Aberdour Road
Burntisland
KY3 0AG

Telephone: 01383 860 314

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 September 2025

Service provided by:
Starley Hall School Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2004006683

Service no:
CS2003007103

About the service

Starley Hall School is a school care accommodation service. It is an independent school providing 24-hour residential care for up to 13 children and young people. Starley House accommodates up to eight young people and the Lodge accommodates up to five. Both houses share the site with the service's school, which is also attended by some day pupils (though we do not inspect provision for these pupils). Starley House is a four-storey house with accommodation for young people mainly on two floors. It has an entrance hall, living room, kitchen-dining room, a second communal room and a music room. Young people share bath and shower facilities. The Lodge is a single-storey property with two living areas, a kitchen and dining room. Young people have en-suite rooms and an additional bathroom. Both houses have garden areas. Young people also have use of an outdoor sports pitch and the wider grounds and outdoor play equipment.

The service is situated on the outskirts of Burntisland, a small coastal town in Fife overlooking the Firth of Forth, about seven miles from Kirkcaldy, both of which provide a range of community facilities and services, including public transport.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 19, 22, 26 and 27 August 2025. We visited the service between 12:35 and 19:00, 09:45 and 17:00, 10:00 and 17:00 and 09:45 and 17:05 respectively. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the 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:

- reviewed survey responses from two young people, ten staff and five external professionals
- spoke with three young people using the service
- spoke with 13 staff and managers
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Effective management of risk, safe care practices and collaborative relationships with other agencies contributed to reducing the potential for harm to young people.
- Children and young people benefitted from positive, nurturing and affectionate relationships with staff who demonstrated skill and sensitivity.
- Whilst the provider had taken steps to reduce staff turnover and address retention issues, this was a continuing challenge for the service.
- Young people had opportunities to have a say and influence how they experienced care at Starley Hall. Access to different methods of communication meant all young people could express their views.
- A range of in-house therapeutic services supplemented and broadened the scope of service provision for young people and staff..
- Self-evaluation and quality assurance activity informed service development. The service's capacity for ongoing improvement was evident in a range of developments since the last inspection and in work still underway.

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?	4 - Good
--	----------

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?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as **good**. The service had a number of important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Effective risk management processes, appropriate training and staff familiarity with individual young people contributed to minimising the potential for harm. Responses to distressed behaviour were sensitive and nurturing. Some young people had experienced recurring periods of distress leading to an increased risk of harm to themselves and others. Use of physical restraint had correspondingly increased at these times, though the overall frequency had decreased and should reduce the potential for compromising their dignity and wellbeing. Improved processes for monitoring of incidents were contributing to more effective evaluation and individualised intervention. Work was also underway on promoting more effective engagement of young people in the post-incident stage, to ensure their voices were heard and support reflection and learning.

Interactions with young people demonstrated affection, humour, and sensitivity. These created positive relationships as a foundation for them to feel valued and make progress. A core group of longer-serving staff provided some continuity of relationships and recent recruitment had eased the pressures on existing staff. However, staff turnover was high and retention of staff continued to be a challenge, as it is in the wider sector, despite a number of positive initiatives by the provider. This places additional demands on young people and affects stability of care.

Staff recognised the impact of adverse experiences on young people and there was a commitment to supporting a trauma-informed approach to day-to-day care. There were some gaps in training provision however, which was partly explained by the demands of a changing staff team.

There had been noticeable improvements to one house in particular. The changes created an environment where young people could feel valued. New outdoor equipment really enhanced their experiences and encouraged them to spend time outside.

Staff encouraged young people to claim their private spaces to reflect their preferences and promote a sense of belonging. They had access to independent advocacy and had opportunities to express their views so their experiences of care reflected their preferences. Augmented communication methods supported young people with a range of needs to have their say.

With staff support, which recognised the importance of these relationships in promoting a sense of belonging, young people stayed connected to family members.

A variety of supports for young people to maximise their health and wellbeing were available. The active involvement of the specialist in-house therapeutic team enhanced the quality of provision and included individual work, development of staff skills and advice on interventions.

Whilst there was some variety in staff feedback, this indicated that most felt well supported and appeared to reflect the outcome of the recent internal survey. This provided a good opportunity for a renewed focus on staff welfare provision, which we look forward to hearing about in due course.

Regular energetic activity provided stimulation and positive release of energy for some young people in particular, and many experienced beneficial daily routines. Some were more able to engage in opportunities elsewhere in the community and to enjoy individual time with favourite staff.

The service promoted young people's learning, with flexible support and good working relationships between care and education staff. There was evidence of positive outcomes for some, whilst regular attendance and engagement was a challenge for others for a variety of reasons.

Assessment and planning processes contributed to positive outcomes and experiences for young people and had measurably improved. We suggested adding timescales to plans to increase momentum. The introduction of more child-friendly planning tools was a successful step towards promoting greater engagement of young people in their care.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

In order that children and young people benefit from a consistently nurturing and respectful environment, the provider should develop and implement a plan for continued improvements.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'My environment is relaxed, welcoming, peaceful and free from avoidable and intrusive noise and smells' (HSCS 5.18) and 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.22).

This area for improvement was made on 1 September 2023.

Action taken since then

There had been noticeable improvements to the environment in Starley House, and in particular to the main living room, with replacement windows and new furniture. Further improvements were planned.

Previous area for improvement 2

In order that young people's needs are met and they have the service that is right for them, the provider should ensure that:

- (i) admission decisions are informed by a robust, clearly evidenced assessment and matching process
- (ii) there is an effective system for assessing and recording staffing levels, skills and deployment throughout the day.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'I am in the right place to experience the care and support I need and want' (HSCS 1.20) and 'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15).

This area for improvement was made on 1 September 2023.

Action taken since then

(i) Managers had developed and implemented an improved system for responding to requests for the provision of a service for young people. The records we reviewed demonstrated a more systematic approach to assessing the capacity of the service to meet needs. Robust processes can help reduce the likelihood of poor outcomes and disruptions. We made suggestions for next steps to build on the progress made in this key area.

(ii) We also found a more clearly documented and better evidenced assessment of staffing needs across the service to support appropriate arrangements for young people. The extent to which analysis of and learning from significant events during the relevant period has informed the assessment could be strengthened.

Previous area for improvement 3

In order to identify and implement learning and respond to young people's needs, the provider should further develop the process for regular analysis of incidents.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 1 September 2023.

Action taken since then

A more rigorous system for collating relevant data on incidents (including those involving physical restraint) was in place. These systems had contributed to better understanding of young people's needs so that managers and senior staff could target efforts to maximise service delivery and quality to improve outcomes and experiences. We offered advice about building on these improvements. For example, recording of analysis of the data could be strengthened, though there was evidence that this had informed discussion at periodic 'focus groups' held for individual young people.

Previous area for improvement 4

In order to ensure young people have the best possible outcomes and experiences, the provider should implement high-quality, effective planning processes, including regular, evaluative reviews of progress.

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

This area for improvement was made on 1 September 2023.

Action taken since then

The service had made sound progress in strengthening planning and review processes so these could better support and promote positive outcomes. There was a more systematic approach, with oversight by managers and contributions from key staff. Better use of timescales where appropriate would help add momentum and contribute to SMARTer plans (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound).

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?	4 - Good
7.1 Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life	4 - Good

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iartras.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.