



The Regulation and
Quality Improvement
Authority

Children's Home Inspection Report

IN045979

30 April 2025

Information on legislation and standards underpinning inspections can be found on our website <https://www.rqia.org.uk/>

1.0 Service information

Service Type:

Boarding Department

Provider Type:

Independent Provider

Located within: – Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Brief description of how the service operates:

This service is a school which provides boarding accommodation for children and young people.

Children and young people will be referred to collectively as young people throughout the remainder of this report.

2.0 Inspection summary

An announced inspection took place on 30 April between 10.00 a.m. and 4.15 p.m. Two care inspectors conducted the inspection.

The inspection aimed to assess whether the service was delivering safe, effective, and compassionate care and was well led. There were no areas for improvement identified during the previous care inspection, therefore this inspection focused on overall service quality and ongoing compliance with standards.

Inspectors concluded that the boarding department was providing, safe, effective, compassionate, and well led care. Young people reported a positive experience, underpinned by effective staff relationships, access to appropriate support, a well-maintained environment, and a range of activities and opportunities. No areas for improvement were identified.

3.0 How we inspect

RQIA's inspections form part of our ongoing assessment of the quality of services. Our reports reflect how they were performing at the time of our inspection, highlighting both good practice and any areas for improvement. It is the responsibility of the service provider to ensure compliance with legislation, standards and best practice, and to address any deficits identified during our inspections.

In preparation for this inspection, a range of information about the service was reviewed to help plan the inspection.

A range of documents were examined to determine that effective systems were in place to manage the service and deliver safe care.

RQIA inspectors seek to speak with young people, their relatives/carers, visitors and staff for their opinion on the quality of care and their experience of living, visiting or working in this service.

Information was provided to young people, relatives/carers, staff and other stakeholders on how they could provide feedback on the quality of care and support in this service. This included questionnaires and an electronic survey.

The findings of the inspection were discussed with the boarding department's leadership team at the conclusion of the inspection.

4.0 What people told us about the service

The inspectors spoke with young people and staff on the day of inspection. Feedback was also received from young people, relatives/carers and staff through questionnaires.

Feedback from young people during the inspection confirmed that they had access to a range of activities, both onsite and in the wider community, with staff actively encouraging their input and ideas for recreational activities. Young people reported positive relationships with boarding staff, and felt confident approaching staff for support when needed. They confirmed that any concerns raised were taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

Young people also reported that they considered the consequences for inappropriate behaviour to be fair and proportionate, and they understood the rationale for them. Young people spoken with expressed satisfaction with the boarding environment, including both their access to facilities and the quality of their internal and external surroundings. They also described a supportive peer culture, highlighting how they helped one another settle in, formed meaningful friendships, and benefitted from staff support in resolving everyday peer challenges.

In addition to the feedback received from the young people on the day of inspection, a small number of questionnaire responses were received. Whilst the majority of young people's feedback was positive about their boarding experience, some feedback indicated areas for improvement, and this was shared with the boarding department's leadership team for consideration and appropriate action.

Feedback received from relatives/carers via questionnaires was predominantly positive, indicating that staff provided a nurturing and caring environment for the young people. Responses indicated that staff were proactive in supporting the young people's wellbeing, including engaging them in discussions about healthy lifestyles and online safety. Staff were described as going above and beyond in their support, and were typically approachable and responsive. The boarding department leadership team confirmed that they were aware of suggested areas for improvement noted within the feedback and they were actively addressing them. Overall, responses reflected confidence in the management of the boarding department.

Discussions with staff confirmed that the team worked collaboratively and supportively, guided by shared values, which promoted a cohesive working environment. They described effective communication arrangements that promoted continuity of care for the young people. Staff also expressed satisfaction with the training they had received, which they felt equipped them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. The Heading of Boarding was widely recognised by staff for their leadership qualities, including their experience, approachability, and visibility to both staff and young people, which contributed to a culture of supportive and accessible leadership.

The staff group was diverse, bringing a range of strengths that enhanced the overall care provided to the young people.

Questionnaire responses received from staff indicated that there were very satisfied that the care provided was safe, effective, compassionate, and that the boarding department was well led.

5.0 The inspection

5.1 What has this service done to meet any areas for improvement identified at or since last inspection?

There were no areas for improvement identified at the last inspection on 13 November 2019.

5.2 Inspection findings

5.2.1 How does the boarding department promote and make proper provision for the welfare, care and protection of the young people?

Discussions with the young people, the boarding department's leadership team and staff evidenced an approach to the care and protection of young people, which was underpinned in well-established principles of ethical practice, including respect for individual rights, professional integrity, and a commitment to promoting young people's well-being. Their pastoral approach reflected an understanding of the importance of emotional safety, continuity of support, and age-appropriate independence.

There was consistent evidence of inclusive, respectful engagement between staff and young people. Young people were encouraged to develop independence in line with their age, developmental stage, and individual capabilities. Staff demonstrated a well-developed understanding of the young people's individual needs, and areas requiring support.

There were both formal and informal mechanism in place for seeking young people's views, ensuring they had regular opportunities to express their opinions and influence aspects of their daily lives. These included structured forums such as house meetings, as well as more informal day-to-day interactions with staff. Feedback from young people was actively considered and used to inform decisions, reflecting a commitment to meaningful participation.

The approach to behaviour management within the boarding department was underpinned by a commitment to safeguarding and promoting positive, respectful behaviours among young people. House rules were clearly communicated, and understood by young people. They were considered fair, age-appropriate, and proportionate. This approach helped maintain a safe, settled and respectful living environment, which supported young people's development.

Effective systems were in place to record and share relevant information about individual young people, supporting continuity of care and support. This enabled staff to monitor the young people's wellbeing and provide timely, proactive support.

There was evidence of regular communication and collaboration with young people's parents, demonstrating that incidents and concerns were shared and discussed, advice was provided to ensure that a record of all such communications were maintained in the young person's individual records.

Established safeguarding arrangements were in place, and staff showed a thorough understanding of their responsibilities, including recognising concerns, reporting, and following protocols. All staff received safeguarding training prior to commencing their role, ensuring a consistent and knowledgeable approach to protecting young people. The boarding department promoted a culture where young people felt safe to speak with any trusted adult. Key roles, including designated safeguarding teacher and matron, were communicated through multilingual materials, helping to ensure accessibility for all.

The boarding department had arrangements in place for young people using the accommodation who were not enrolled at the associated school. RQIA were engaging with the provider to discuss and review these arrangements further.

5.2.2 How does the boarding department ensure that safe staffing arrangements are in place?

The boarding department had arrangements in place to ensure safe staffing levels, with no concerns identified regarding the deployment of staff in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of the young people. The senior leadership team confirmed that all boarding staff, including ancillary staff and volunteers were subject to the required regional vetting procedures. Where individuals external to the boarding department provided services or had contact with the young people, the boarding department took steps to ensure appropriate safeguarding checks were in place.

A culture of openness and transparency was evident, supported by effective communication between staff and the boarding department leadership team, enabling staff to raise any concerns or issues as needed.

Ongoing staff training is integral to maintaining safe staffing practices and ensuring that staff are well prepared to respond to the diverse needs of the young people in their care. It was positive to note that the boarding department continued to actively review and develop its training programme. Several staff highlighted the value of attending Mental Health First Aid training, as well as training specifically tailored to boarding related issues. The boarding department also confirmed plans to further enhance training provision by increasing the level of first aid training available to all staff.

Whilst all staff had received fire safety training, additional role specific training was also being implemented to ensure designated staff are equipped to carry out fire warden duties, ensuring an appropriately trained individual is on duty at all times. During the inspection, advice was provided on strengthening the mechanisms used to record and monitor training compliance to support effective governance and oversight. Confirmation was received post inspection that this advice had been actioned.

Staff also had access to a range of policies and procedures to guide them in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities safely and effectively.

5.2.3 How does the boarding department ensure young people experience a safe and high quality environment?

A tour of the boarding department environment confirmed that the premises were well maintained, clean, and of a high standard. Young people had access to communal areas and kitchen facilities outside of formal mealtimes, supporting a sense of independence and normality in daily routines. Sleeping accommodation was of a good standard, and young people had been supported to personalise their own space, promoting comfort, ownership, and individual identity. Arrangements for the ongoing review and maintenance of the environment were well established and effectively organised, with dedicated full-time staff in place to oversee and respond to environmental and facilities related requirements.

The young people benefitted from access to a range of on-site recreational spaces, and staff promoted participation in a wide variety of activities. The boarding department's proximity to local amenities further enhanced opportunities for young people to explore interests and develop hobbies, contributing to their overall well-being and personal development.

The boarding department also demonstrated awareness of the need to balance safeguarding with respect for young people's privacy within the boarding accommodation. Monitoring practices discussed during the inspection were subsequently reviewed, and assurance was provided to RQIA post inspection that appropriate steps had been taken to ensure these measures were proportionate and sensitive to the needs and rights of young people.

5.2.4 How does the boarding department promote and protect the health of the young people?

The boarding department matron maintained comprehensive healthcare profiles for all young people, detailing medical conditions, allergies, and prescribed medications. Relevant medical consents and correspondence, including medical letters, were appropriately stored within individual young people's files. The management, storage, and administration of medication was well-organised, with no concerns identified. Staff received allergy and epipen training as required.

There were well-established links with a local Medical Practice, a General Practitioner (GP) provided regular surgeries and ensured timely access to medical care and referrals to specialist's services when necessary. The GP also met routinely with young people who had specific health needs to ensure continuity of care and effective management of their conditions. There were ongoing communications with the local health and social care trust for routine health

screening and vaccinations. In addition, counselling services were available to support emotional wellbeing.

The matron and aligned GP had also worked collaboratively to develop best practice guidance tailored to the needs of the young people, such as a concussion protocol with clear instructions for staff.

The inspectors were satisfied medical issues were identified, responded to and managed safely.

6.0 Quality Improvement Plan/Areas for Improvement

There were no areas for improvement identified during this inspection, and a quality improvement plan (QIP) is not required, or included in this inspection report.



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