

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 18TH AUGUST 2010

REPORT ON: ANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL - The Elms Secure Unit by the HM Inspectorate of Education and the Care Commission.

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK & DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 255- 2010

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the findings and the evaluation of the inspection of the Elms Secure Unit by the HM Inspectorate and the Care Commission finalised on 27th March 2010.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- i note the contents of this report
- ii requests that the Director of Social Work and Director of Education monitor the continued progress towards improving this service.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 The Secure Unit was inspected by HM Inspectorate of Education and the Care Commission. The report outlining the findings of this visit was published on 16 March 2010. The Secure Unit provides secure care and education for a maximum of four young people.

4.2 The focus of the inspection was on:

- How well do children and young people learn and achieve
- How well do staff work with others to support the learning of children and young people
- Are staff, children, and young people actively involved in improving their school community?
- Does the school have high expectations of all children and young people?
- Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

4.3 HM Inspectorate and the Care Commission identified the particular strengths of the school as:

- Caring and nurturing environment provided by staff who are very responsive to individual needs
- Solution focused and supportive attitudes of staff
- The motivating leadership of the recently appointed principal teacher and her drive to integrate care and education practices.

- Successful partnerships with a range of external providers both in care and education settings.

4.4 How well do children and young people learn and achieve.

- It was noted that young people respond well to the caring and nurturing environment in which they live and learn
- Young people are treated with dignity and respect and feel very safe in the unit
- Almost all young people show improved behaviour
- All young people have a sense of pride through weekly celebrations of achievements and recording of successes in their personal learning plan

4.5 Curriculum, and meeting learning needs

- The curriculum is highly personalised and based on young people's prior learning and potential future placement.
- Care staff are working with young people in innovative ways.
- The unit is developing a 'happy to help' homework club to consolidate class work in the evening.

4.6 How well do staff work with others to support the learning of children and young people.

- The unit has formed very effective partnerships with external providers to enhance learners experiences
- Parents are encouraged to attend planning meetings.
- Teaching staff link effectively with young people's previous educational placements.
- Care staff are making good use of the wider community to develop life skills beyond the school day.

4.7 Are staff children and young people actively involved in improving their school community

- The newly appointed teacher is very visible in both care and education settings.
- Young people are asked about their views through a range of effective evaluation sheets.

4.8 Does the school have high expectations of all children and young people

- The unit has successfully developed a nurturing and highly supportive ethos.
- All staff share high expectations of behaviour with young people who are given clear guidelines on these expectations.
- There is a strong drive to raise young peoples' desire to learn and achieve and make more informed choices for the future
- The accommodation is exceptionally well cleaned and maintained.

4.9 Does the school have a clear sense of direction

- The recently appointed principal teacher has a clear sense of direction for the school and is motivating both care and education staff by building on a culture of improvement across the unit.

4:10 Areas for improvement identified

- Improve approaches to self-evaluation and planning for improvement across education and care.
- Further develop and broaden the curriculum in line with curriculum for Excellence principles.
- Improve accommodation to ensure it is fit for the purpose of education and caring of young people in the 21st century.
- Assess and co-ordinate planning more effectively to meet the complex emotional and learning needs of young people.
- Address staffing issues in care in order to ensure that the needs of young people are being consistently met.

4.11 Requirements and Recommendations

There is one requirement;

- The service must carry out and record a risk assessment on any occasion when the agreed staffing schedule is not met for any reason.

4.12 Evaluations

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement.
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

The Evaluations for the Elms School following inspection:

Quality Theme	Overall Grade
Improvements in performance	satisfactory
Learners' experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	good

The following aspects of the work of the school were also evaluated

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report has been screened for any implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environment Assessment, Anti-Poverty and Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

The inclusion of a recorded risk assessment, in the event of the agreed staffing schedule not being met, complies with the Council's corporate policy statement on Risk Management in that it involves the identification and evaluation of risks to create practical and cost effective means of loss control and avoidance.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Head of Finance have been consulted in preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 The following Background Papers were relied upon in preparation of this Report:

HM Inspectorate of Education and the Care Commission Inspection Report - The Elms, completed 27th March 2010

Alan Baird
Director of Social Work

29 April 2010



**The Elms
Dundee City Council
16 March 2010**

This report tells you about the quality of care and education at the school. We describe the approaches taken to ensure learning, care and protection for children and young people. It tells you about the quality of education at the school¹. We describe how children and young people benefit from learning there. We explain how well they are doing and how good the school is at helping them to learn. Then we look at the ways in which the school does this. We describe how well the school works with other groups in the community, including parents² and services which support children and young people. We also comment on how well staff, children and young people work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well children and young people are cared for and treated and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally, we comment on the school’s aims. In particular, we focus on how well the aims help staff to deliver high quality learning, and the impact of leadership on the school’s success in achieving these aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns and details about young people’s examination performance. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

¹ The term ‘school’ is used to include the work of the nursery class and residences, where relevant.

² Throughout this report, the term ‘parents’ should be taken to include foster carers, and carers who are relatives or friends.

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6. Does the school have high expectations of all children and young people?
7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
8. What happens next?

1. The school

The Elms Secure Unit is situated in Dundee and provides secure care and education for a maximum of four secondary aged young people. The service is managed by Dundee City Council. At the initial time of inspection there were no young people in the unit. The inspection was extended to ensure the team were able to observe and interact with young people. When the inspection team returned the roll was two. Inspectors were also able to speak with former pupils. No young people had a co-ordinated support plan.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Caring and nurturing environment provided by staff who are very responsive to individual needs.
- Solution focused and supportive attitudes of staff.
- The motivating leadership of the recently appointed principal teacher and her drive to integrate care and education practices.
- Successful partnerships with a range of external providers both in care and education settings.

3. How well do children and young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Through positive encouragement from staff young people are re-engaging with learning. They respond well to the caring and nurturing environment in which they live and learn. Young people are treated with dignity and respect and feel very safe in the unit. They are relaxed and comfortable in their relationships with staff. Most young people develop trust in key workers over short spells of time. Young people are motivated by most of the activities offered. They start to focus on task completion. Young people are encouraged to work with each other through games, art work, meal-times and accessing leisure activities.

All young people are encouraged to have a sense of pride through weekly celebrations of achievement and recording successes in their personal learning plans. They are proud of their sporting, art, swimming, cookery and musical achievements. Young people have also enjoyed physical activities through Dundee City Council's 'Kick it, Kick off' programme. Young people are becoming more confident through these sessions. They also work hard to retain the privilege of supervised access to the community and most achieve this.

Almost all young people have achieved some success in their learning during the very short time they reside in the unit. A few young people in 2008/09 achieved Access 3 passes in Maths. Young people are writing extensively for personal interest topics and are expressing their views enthusiastically through short plays. Numeracy skills are practised in home economics and through budgeting for outings and leisure activities. Literacy skills are extended through the use of health education games where young people are encouraged to listen to others and form opinions. Most young people who recently left the unit have progressed to other supported learning environments. Almost all young people show improved behaviour. In the last six months all young people attended all education classes.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The curriculum is highly personalised and based on young people's prior learning and potential future placements. There is a focus on numeracy, literacy and health and well-being. Care staff are working with young people in innovative ways. They have recently become involved in community projects including a history topic based on visits to 'The Discovery.' Staff try hard to provide continuity in learning but face challenges associated with staff skills, small numbers of young people and short spells of attendance. The school day is shorter than recommended for secondary aged pupils. Young people could achieve more by being able to attend classes for longer. Staff have started to develop thematic approaches to delivering the curriculum. This allows for a broader range of subjects to be taught. For example, young people have enjoyed topics related to sporting icons which involved working on mathematics, English language, art, history and information communication technology (ICT). The curriculum on offer is restricted to a few subjects and could be broadened through further development work on *Curriculum for Excellence* across education and care. Staff have started to develop programmes of work for specific subject areas and should continue these developments across both education and care environments. All subjects require carefully planned programmes to support progression in learning.

Young people would benefit from further development of the ways in which they gain qualifications.

Young people follow personal learning programmes related to their specific needs. They are very well involved in setting both long and short term targets for themselves. There is a need for more challenge for a few young people. Staff across care and education have a very good understanding of the needs of young people and are able to effectively use de-escalation techniques and positive relationships to resolve difficult situations. Classroom assistants are experienced and able to provide effective support to young people. Care staff complete useful behaviour plans for individuals and they should share these with education staff. This would assist in developing consistent approaches across both environments. Young people would benefit further from more detailed assessment and co-ordinated planning to meet their often very specific and complex emotional health needs. Risk assessments completed on admission need to be more clearly recorded. The unit is developing a 'Happy to Help' homework club to consolidate classwork in the evening.

4. How well do staff work with others to support the learning of children and young people?

Parents are encouraged to attend planning meetings but there is limited involvement of parents in the educational work of the secure unit. Teaching staff link effectively with young people's previous educational placements. The unit works very well with a range of external agencies including the looked after and accommodated nursing team who provide highly valued individualised support related to substance abuse and general emotional support. Staff and young people would benefit from more direct involvement from mental health teams and psychological services. The unit has formed very effective partnerships with external providers to enhance learners' experiences. For example, young people enjoy therapeutic art sessions with a visiting artist and another provider gives well-received advice on sexual health issues. Care staff are making good use of the wider

community to develop life skills beyond the school day. They are responsive to the interests of young people and have taught them a range of useful life and leisure skills. This includes swimming, drumming, attending football matches and cooking.

5. Are staff, children and young people actively involved in improving their school community?

Staff reflect informally on their work as individuals and together through staff meetings. They now need to develop more systematic approaches to evaluating the work of the unit. Young people are asked about their views through a range of effective evaluation sheets. The comments from young people on leaving the unit are very helpful for staff and have led to improvements in approaches to setting targets with young people. Partner providers evaluate their projects very well with young people. For example, they use pupil friendly feedback sheets to indicate levels of challenge and enjoyment within topics being covered. The newly appointed principal teacher is very visible in both care and education settings. She has correctly identified the need to monitor teaching more formally and to encourage staff to share good practice across the unit more effectively. Teaching staff need to reflect more regularly on their teaching approaches.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all children and young people?

The unit has successfully developed a nurturing and highly supportive ethos. Young people feel very safe when they reside within the unit. All staff share high expectations of behaviour with young people who are given clear guidelines on these expectations. There is a strong drive to raise young people's desire to learn, achieve and make more informed choices for the future. Staff encourage young people to respect others through a health and well-being programme covering issues related to racism and other aspects of diversity. The accommodation is exceptionally well cleaned and maintained. Staff

make the best use they can of the available accommodation but the current environment for learning impacts negatively on learners' experiences due to a lack of appropriate space and rooms which are not fit for purpose. For example, teaching areas are very small and there is no suitable space for home economics, physical education or outdoor activities. Plans to improve the accommodation have been drawn up, but have not yet received confirmation of funding. Some aspects of security in the building should be further improved.

7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The recently appointed principal teacher has a clear sense of direction for the school. She is experienced and knowledgeable about the emotional needs of young people in this type of provision. She is motivating both care and education staff by building on previous practice and developing a culture of improvement across the unit. The capacity for care and education managers and staff to work together should be further developed. Managers should work with all staff to create a joint vision for the future of the unit.

8. What happens next?

We are confident that with support from the local authority the unit will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The unit and the education authority will inform parents about the unit's progress in improving the quality of education. The District Inspector will maintain contact with the local authority to monitor improvements

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the unit and local authority.

- Improve approaches to self-evaluation and planning for improvement across education and care.
- Further develop and broaden the curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence principles.
- Improve accommodation to ensure it is fit for the purpose of educating and caring for young people in the 21st century.
- Assess and co-ordinate planning more effectively to meet the complex emotional and learning needs of young people.
- Address staffing issues in care in order to ensure that the needs of young people are being consistently met.

Outstanding issues from previous regulatory activity undertaken by the Care Commission are carried forward in this report (see requirement 1).

Requirement 1: The service must carry out and record a risk assessment on any occasion when the agreed staffing schedule is not met for any reason. This is in order to comply with SSI/2002/Regulation 114 (4) (1) (a) - a requirement to make proper provision for the health and welfare of service users. Timescale for implementation: by 31 January 2010

Recommendation : The service provider should take prompt action to address the current staffing issues to ensure that at all times there are sufficient staff, including senior staff, to meet young people's care and support needs - National Care Standards for School Care Accommodation Services – Standard 7 – Management and staffing

Recommendation: The service should continue to improve the quality of the environment by reviewing security arrangements and addressing the limitations of the educational accommodation in line with recommendations made during this inspection – Standard 5 – Comfort, safety and security.

Quality indicators help schools, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publication *How good is our school?*. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish schools are doing.

Here are the evaluations for The Elms School

Improvements in performance	satisfactory
Learners' experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

Angela Edwards
HM Inspector

Linda Paterson
Care Commission Officer

16th February 2010

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