

Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968

Annual Review and Inspection Report 2000

Registration and Inspection Unit
3-5 High Street
Perth
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Establishment	Ochil Tower School
Owner(s)	The Management of Ochil Tower School
Manager	Annika Cheney, Marcus Cheney, Margaret Snellgrove, Neil Snellgrove, Hilary Ruprecht and Ueli Ruprecht
Registered for	29
Category of Residents	Children and young people aged between 6 and 18 years of age with moderate or severe learning disabilities
Date of Inspection	13,14 and 15 November 2000
Inspection Officer	Rachel Gillespie

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FOREWORD

Perth and Kinross Council has a duty, under the Social Work Scotland Act 1968, to inspect residential child care establishments in order to safeguard the well-being and interests of the children and young people living in them. It must carry out such inspections in an even-handed, independent and open manner.

The Council's Standards and Guidance for the Registration and Inspection of Children's Residential Units and Residential Schools provides the framework against which this inspection, and all others, is conducted. This guidance sets out the detailed requirements which the Council, as both registering and inspecting authority, expects both independent and Local Authority child care establishments in their area to comply with. Copies of this guidance are available, on request, from the Registration and Inspection Unit.

The inspection which forms the basis of this report took place over three days and provides a comprehensive overview of the performance of Ochil Tower School.

The report follows the format of the Council's Standards and Guidance for the Registration and Inspection of Children's Residential Units and Residential Schools, and as such is structured under nine "Aspect of Care":

- A Statement of Functions and Objectives
- B Children and Young People's Rights
- C Children and Young People's Safety
- D Children and Young People's Basic Care
- E Children and Young People's Education and Health
- F Children and Young People's Care Planning and Development
- G Staffing
- H Premises
- I Administration and Health and Safety

Following each Aspect of Care a number of "Issues Requiring Action" or "Recommendations for Good Practice" may be detailed. Issues Requiring Action relate directly to the expected standards of the Council and must be addressed. Recommendations for Good Practice are proposals which the Council would strongly recommend the establishment undertakes in order to improve practice.

The Manager of the establishment is required to complete a written 'Implementation Timetable', with time-scales, detailing their response to the findings of this Report. If the timetable is not attached to this copy of the Report, it may be available from the Registration and Inspection Unit of the Council.

INTRODUCTION

Ochil Tower School is located unobtrusively off the main street of Auchterarder, a small town 14 miles to the west of Perth. Residential buildings and school facilities are clustered together in grounds which offer seclusion as well as space for outdoor activities. The school provides day placements as well as weekly and fortnightly boarding facilities, with the flexibility to offer respite on an agreed basis.

Ochil Tower is one of five Camphill Schools in Britain and Northern Ireland which provide curative education for children and young people. The school's policy statement describes this as:

“that particular combination of the three areas of house-life, classroom education and therapy inspired by the work of Rudolph Steiner (1861 – 1925) and Karl Konig (1902 – 1966).

The principles of these men are the basis of the Camphill movement's aims and objectives which, the school states, are realised:

- a “In a form of community life which recognises Christianity as an essential element in its formation and working. Expression is given to this in the celebration of the Christian Festivals, concern for the environment and mutual care.
- b In developing shared living situations which recognise the needs of individuals. The staff/client relationship is replaced by mutual relationships based on sharing daily life in all its manifold aspects, including the preparation and sharing of meals, caring for the household and surroundings, creating social events, and so on.
- c In operating financially so there is a separation between work and payment for work done. Wages and salaries are not paid and financial needs are met on an individual and co-operative basis.”

The Inspection of the school took place on 13, 14 and 15 November 2000 and the Inspection Officer interviewed 6 joint co-ordinators, 2 house parents, 3 co-workers and 5 young people, as well as talking informally with a number of adults and children. The school's accommodation was inspected, as was a range of documentation, including a pre-inspection questionnaire completed by Ueli Ruprecht, Joint Co-ordinator. The young people's parents/carers were asked to comment, via a confidential questionnaire, on the quality of care; contact was also made with a representative of the placing agency. To facilitate understanding of the organisational structure, it may be helpful for the reader to look at 'Aspect of Care Staffing' first.

ASPECT OF CARE: FUNCTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The school's Statement of Functions and Objectives was first produced in February 1997 as part of the process towards registration under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. A revised Statement was published just prior to this inspection, following a review which incorporated those amendments identified in the report of the Annual Inspection of January 2000. The Statement describes the school's functions relating to 5 aspects of development – physical, personal, social, intellectual and moral and provides a comprehensive framework for child care practice. Copies of the Statement are readily available to all interested parties and its contents are incorporated in an Information for Parents booklet. Similarly, the school's other publications for professionals and others are updated in line with any changes.

During the course of the inspection, it was very evident that the principles outlined in the Statement shape the relationships and activities of all members of the community throughout their day.

ASPECT OF CARE: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES RIGHTS

The prevailing ethos of the school is one of mutual respect, awareness of each person's individuality and sensitivity towards a young person's dignity, whatever the level of care required arising from physical, intellectual or social difficulties. New co-workers appear to quickly internalise attitudes of calm, openness and acceptance modelled by more established core-members and the children and young people in turn seem to be affected positively by this relaxed, yet structured, environment.

With reference to consultation and communication, while the majority of the children and young people currently resident are limited by age or communication difficulties in expressing their views, there are several who are able to articulate their opinions quite fluently. They showed no inhibition in volunteering their observations of life at Ochil Tower, both in the presence of adults and during interview with the Inspection Officer. Children are encouraged to participate in discussion throughout the day, whether on a one to one basis, in a formal classroom setting or during group activities such as meal times. Expression of views and feelings is also nurtured by those keyworkers who assist young people in completing a daily diary.

The Inspection Officer, in the last inspection report, suggested that consideration should be given to young people meeting as a group on a more formal basis from time to time, where issues relating to rights and responsibilities could be raised. Since then, new admissions have included two young people of at least average intelligence but with features of Asperger's Syndrome and other related problems which it is felt that the regime at Ochil Tower School can assist with. Not only do their intellectual abilities require some modification of the academic programme available, but also a forum in which to channel and develop their need to articulate and gain recognition for their strong opinions on issues, a not unusual characteristic of this age-group. Both are computer literate and minuting such meetings would enhance their role and commitment to participation in such a group setting.

The young people are routinely invited to make choices, for instance selecting from the choice of food available at each meal selecting the weekend video, or deciding how to spend their leisure time and with whom. The adults also take their views into account, exemplified when the young people express a preference for a particular room mate or request an opportunity to develop a specific interest, such as pets, fishing etc..

There is a particular recognition of need for co-workers and parents to act as advocates for those less able to communicate in order to safeguard their interests.

In providing information for children and young people, the school's Children's Handbook covers all those areas detailed in the Standards and Guidance. It is attractive in its design and lay-out although its usefulness is limited to the more able child. In response to action required in the previous inspection report, very recently the school has used computer graphics to produce an alternative book, based on an 'Inclusive Writer' format, which is still to be tried out on the less able children.

Those young people interviewed recognised the Handbook and were aware of its general content relating to the daily life of the school. Several young people made reference to

Childline and knew the telephone number, although further questioning elicited the fact that not all knew what the service provided.

The adults, both core group members and co-workers, presented as being aware of young people's rights, demonstrating their application daily throughout their interactions. The Inspection Officer was told that the issue of rights had gained a higher profile in the minds of the young people latterly, with tongue in cheek references in their application of their knowledge to their concern for other members of the community, namely 'pig abuse', when the local butcher became involved! One co-worker also stated that a young person may respond with "I'll phone Childline" if asked to do something against his will. On a more serious note, parents and professionals have commented on the co-workers' almost unique ability to recognise each individual's worth as a human being, whatever his/her modest abilities, and one house parent spoke of the contribution to society of such a person, because of their value in bringing to the fore special qualities of humanity in others in the community. Adults recognise this inherent worth by ensuring such a person is accorded all the rights given to other people.

All those interviewed, both adults and young people, indicated that there was due attention given to privacy and confidentiality, as evidenced by the following:

- Adults knock and wait for permission to enter a young person's bedroom.
- The availability of access to telephone facilities in a private space, as well as a public area, in all the five houses.
- Carers' sensitivity towards issues of gender and sexuality, especially in respect of the young people requiring assistance with more intimate aspects of personal care. The young person's own preference is taken into account in allocating workers.
- Storage of case files: current ones, which include the child's daily log, are kept in each house in a locked room.
- All young people were aware of their right to read their files, some assisting their keyworkers to complete their diaries, which act as a link between home and school, with the information being replicated in the daily log. Others choose not to exercise their right to access their files, giving a variety of legitimate reasons.

The complaints book, which has no new entries, is located in the main office, as all adults were aware. Some young people did not appear to know of its existence but viewed this of no consequence as they do not consider their concerns as formal complaints as such. Rather, they are comfortable in talking to various adults who listen and take appropriate action to the satisfaction of the young person. Likewise, the school endeavours to create a sense of openness, receptiveness, ongoing dialogue and partnership with parents so that issues can be raised and addressed without the need to invoke a formal complaint procedure. In line with action required in the last inspection report, the school's Policy Statement now details the information to be recorded in such an event, this addition being also found in the complaints log itself. However, the school are reminded that the purpose of a centrally recorded log is to assist management to monitor and evaluate incidence and outcomes; it would be beneficial to record those concerns which are not of an everyday occurrence but do not merit the status of a formal complaint, in a similar manner for the same purpose, as part of the development of the service.

ASPECT OF CARE: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES SAFETY

It is inherent in the regime of the Camphill movement that community life involves adults and young people sharing each other's space in school, at home and in all social activities. Most co-workers' sleeping accommodation is adjacent to that of the young people so they are at hand on a 24 hour a day basis. This availability, similar to that in a domestic setting, facilitates the development of close relationships, mature dependency and a high level of supervision, all contributing to a sense of stability, security and continuity for young people whose needs are particularly complex. The practice of co-workers, in their capacity as classroom assistants, being responsible for young people different from those whom they care for in a home setting allows the young people access to alternative adults with whom to share any anxieties, while the ongoing daily dialogue between all adults facilitates an early response to any identified issues. As stated before, adults' interactions with young people are based on sensitivity and respect such that the uniqueness of each individual is taken into account, with encouragement to develop their potential with a view to maximum independence and a strong sense of self, whilst not allowing the freedom of one young person to impinge upon that of another.

The school has a clear written statement on care and control measures which can be used, as well as those which are forbidden. These are also listed in the Children's Handbook. The young people voiced the views of the adults that the most common practice was to separate the child from the situation, often spending a brief period in his bedroom, with or without staff supervision. In most cases, the young person saw this response not only as justified but as a constructive response. However, staff recognise that all behaviour has meaning, so that ongoing experience of the particular young person and analysis of the specific situation leads to a considered rather than a spontaneous response. For instance, a change of activity or planned ignoring might elicit a change to more positive behaviour than a standard sanction which might reinforce the young person's negative expectations and habitual behaviour. Again, the practice of involving the young person in examining his behaviour and suggesting an appropriate consequence himself is seen as fostering maturity, self control and problem solving skills. This proactive approach to behaviour management is viewed as positive and supportive by the young person and contributes to a relaxed and non threatening environment.

However, one consequence of this continuous process of nurturing the child's development by utilising all opportunities for personal growth, is that there is lack of clarity in respect of recording of care and control measures, resulting in inconsistent recording in daily contact sheets and no discrete recording of any sanctions in a log held for that purpose. The Inspection Officer accepts the arguments of the core-group that to list every incidence of time-out in a bedroom would be stigmatising for those whose difficulties require such a response on a regular basis, where such action is part of a planned response to modify behaviour, rather than a sanction for someone knowingly and wilfully breaching a code of accepted behaviour. Nevertheless, when examples of the latter do occur, their recording in the child's daily log should follow the standard requirements for sanctions; an S in the margin would also highlight the incident for the Inspection Officer and any other party requiring to monitor incidence.

To some extent, there is a similar variability in the recording of violent incidents, some not being recorded in each house's Incident book designed for that purpose but noted in detail in the child's daily log, while more minor examples of adults being the victims of the child's

frustration and incapacity to verbalise feelings were recorded in the Incident book, yet there was no significant injury and the follow-up consisted of the routine response of being sent to the bedroom. This is not to dismiss the significance of the trauma to the adult, especially someone new and inexperienced, who needs, and is given, counselling and support afterwards. The school must give guidance to new co-workers on what it has agreed constitutes a violent incident, so that there is consistency in which incidents are recorded in the Incident book and which in the child's daily log. Similarly, recording of violent incidents should follow the format determined by the Registering Authority, it being advisable for a copy of these requirements to be attached to the front of the book, as observed in one house. Violence and physical restraint incidents are kept at a minimum due to the environment, which is conducive to tranquillity and more controlled expression of feelings, yet their prevention is high on the school's agenda. Accordingly, the school has acted upon the concerns raised in an earlier inspection report, by arranging for all workers to participate in TCI training provided by an external trainer, on an annual basis in October.

There has been one instance of absconding, in May this year, although this is a rare occurrence; the School's Statement of Functions and Objectives indicates a comprehensive policy involving both risk assessment and a missing children's file, including photos, personal details and ways to facilitate police and others tracing a child as soon as possible; this is to be commended.

The school's Statement of Functions and Objectives contains a clear policy and written procedures in relation to Child Protection, covering working practice (e.g. safe caring as a protection for young people and workers); awareness-raising and education of young people; screening, and awareness training, of co-workers; and recording. Training has benefited the short term co-workers, who appeared to have a working knowledge of the subject, were able to evidence the indicators of a whole range of abuse, and knew how to deal with and pass on any concerns. However, a scenario did come to light during the course of the inspection, where the core-group had responded with a child-centred approach, having carefully assessed the situation as a one-off incident of normal adolescent experimentation, when the respective ages of the young people, notwithstanding their individual mental and emotional capacities, indicated that this was a child protection issue, with potentially wider ramifications for other pupils. In this case, standard procedure of referral to the relevant social work authorities and informing the Inspection Unit, should have been followed. Nevertheless, the Inspection Officer noted that the school took into account the immediate need to safeguard the interests of the two young people concerned and others, as well as their longer-term needs for education and guidance in the area of sexuality, while working in a supportive capacity with parents. Recording of the incident was also satisfactory.

ASPECT OF CARE: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S BASIC CARE

The Camphill movement comprises communities of vulnerable children and adults living, learning and working with others whereby healthy social relationships are formed and the needs of individuals met; thus the routines of daily life are an integral part of this therapeutic experience. Although individual adults may have particular responsibilities (such as Joint Co-ordinators, house parents and teachers), for the most part tasks are shared by all community members, including the young people in so far as they are able. With only a handful of paid employees, the school relies very much on the full participation of its co-workers to cover a range of domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, laundry etc, as well as meeting the care needs of the young people and organising social activities outside school hours. Consequently, the adults are constantly 'on the go', yet they never appear harassed and their focus is always the welfare of the young people. Their composure is partly the result of good organisation and their commitment to community living, but also due to the day being punctuated by periods of calm at transitional points between activities - for instance, everyone gathers as a group for quiet reflection and recharging of batteries prior to moving to the dining room to share a meal. Also the rhythmical aspects of the daily, weekly and yearly events arising from Christian practices and festivals creates a framework.

The day starts at 7.30am when the young people get up for breakfast at 8am. The 3 period school day is broken up by a 35 minute mid-morning break, and lunch at 12.50pm, followed by a 'rest hour' (for sleeping or reading quietly). Activities take place between 3.30pm and supper at 5.45pm followed by quieter pursuits, individual or communal, as part of the winding down process leading to bed between 8pm and 10pm. It is noted that the individual houses are the base for most aspects of the day other than schooling or specific activities outside the premises.

Parents are responsible for providing clothing; the young people presented as clean, tidy and fashionably dressed. The school provides pocket money, the amount varying according to age, to those staying on at the weekend, with the young people being given advice on, and assistance in, how to spend it, as appropriate.

The co-workers indicated their sensitivity in helping the young people to manage their personal care independently, with appropriate support. This was evidenced by one case file, which referred to the encouragement of more independence in the management of personal hygiene during menstruation, in dealing with accidents, and in general bathing and teeth-cleaning, as well as the use of homeopathic remedies and other medicines in the control of P.M.T. All toiletries are provided by the school.

A range of leisure activities are also available. Walking, both locally and further afield, was mentioned as being a first choice by both young people and co-workers. Swimming is another favourite, the school visiting Perth Leisure Pool regularly as well as arranging for individual young people to have lessons at Crieff Hydro.

Other activities include excursions and holidays both here and abroad, some being in the form of field trips relating to the school curriculum, such as New Lanark (the Christmas play about Robert Owen using the same theme), and others being part of a programme of

planned activities for the respite week offered to young people to assist them and their families survive the long summer holiday. These activities, which are offered throughout the year, include bicycling, canoeing, rock-climbing, abseiling, archery and camping. While in the past the school has used a Camphill community facility at Killin, basing the residential accommodation at Ochil Tower itself has been more successful in providing some children with the security of continuity of place, people and routine they need. This initiative, identified as filling a gap in services, is expected to become a regular feature for some children, and is to be commended.

The school has plenty of opportunities within its own grounds for free play as well as a range of outdoor play equipment, play house, swings, 'high wire slide' etc. Football as a team game is discouraged, because of its tendency to be linked with aggression, although the school is not immune from the impact of the latest trends such as Pokemon. The young people are also encouraged to access local facilities such as shops, library, Scouts, Guides etc either independently or with supervision. There are several domestic pets within the houses and some young people are involved daily in rearing the school's pigs. The school regularly replaces its minibus, in addition to other transport it owns, none of which are marked; all appeared to be used frequently during the course of the inspection.

Within each house newspapers, books and games are available in public areas and bedrooms. Televisions are not in evidence as it is felt that the young people can benefit more from other activities. Sycamore House has a dedicated play therapy area which is available to all the younger children in the other houses; arts and crafts, home corners, puzzles games and books are plentiful, in good condition and attractively displayed. Along the landing, there is a pool table, which is particularly popular with the boys, who make up the majority of residents, while access to a computer in three of the houses is gradually being offered to young people as well as being utilised by house parents. Certainly, while there are opportunities for young people to spend time on their own or in reflection, the adults are very much on hand to give attention by reading stories, talking on a one to one basis, or meeting for communal activities. The latter comprise a nightly gathering within each house at some point during the evening for prayers and singing, which may include mime and actions, a form of entertainment which especially appeals to those less able.

Celebration of a range of European festivals, both Christian and pagan, adds to the cultural life of the school and provides pupils opportunities to become involved in a number of meaningful ways. This was demonstrated during the inspection when St Martin's Day was celebrated, with a re-enactment of his contribution to Christianity, with some pupils enjoying dressing up as the main characters and others participating in the lantern-lit procession, accompanied by song, around the various houses. All pupils had been involved in making a lantern as part of their school activities. Similarly, the children and young people have the opportunity to enjoy other cultural activities which form part of the Camphill way of life, as when they were entertained by three visiting artistes staging performances based on the Eurythmy principles, the children's one taking as its theme a legend from Greek mythology.

Some attended the evening show when they were joined by members of Camphill's other two local communities, it being not uncommon for them to get together from time to time.

All meals are served in the individual houses, albeit lunch continues to be prepared in Belvidere, for distribution to the other houses, by the part-time cook, despite her now being the house-parent at Elmtree. The menu is varied, reflecting both traditional Scottish and more international tastes, in keeping with that familiar to young people. However, processed and convenience food, together with those including certain additives and

stimulants, are avoided, with reliance on natural ingredients, including organically grown fruit and vegetables from the school's own gardens. Some purchases are bought in bulk but the young people also accompany the adults to local shops and assist in the preparation of supper. The latter has no fixed menu, so enabling catering for individual tastes, and allowance is also made for young people's individual dietary requirements. While 'snacking' at will is discouraged, the Inspection Officer observed the school giving a reasonable leeway in this respect, while still promoting good eating habits.

Meals, at which a simple blessing is given at the start and finish, are orderly but relaxed occasions in line with the general mood of the school; some young people focus quietly on the task in hand, while the more gregarious chatter to the adults.

ASPECT OF CARE: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S EDUCATION AND HEALTH

As a Rudolph Steiner school, Ochil Tower bases its education on the Steiner curriculum, which adopts a holistic approach to education of the whole person and therefore the classroom environment is not separate from other aspects of the young person's life. Maths is applied in a baking class in Belvidere kitchen, in setting a table or in mapping out a plan of the High Street in advance of a shopping expedition. The extensive grounds offer opportunities for horticulture and nature studies, etc. while weekly trips to Perth are used for a series of gradual exposures of young people to independent travel, incorporating knowledge of bus-timetables, telephone-use and road safety. All subjects contained within the national 5-14 curriculum are covered, with the 3 periods of the day having a different focus: the main lesson has a topic (one term this comprised of farming, Old Testament stories, house-building and Norse mythology) presented over several weeks to the class which is grouped according to chronological age: the second focuses on literacy, numeracy, communication, music and art for groups of 1 to 3, according to ability; and finally, the afternoon lesson, where groups vary in size and composition and the work tends to be more practical and artistic e.g. gardening, baking, weaving, woodwork, painting and gym. In all classes, the teacher is supported by class assistants from the pool of co-workers, one of whom currently is a qualified primary school teacher. The school also uses the services of vetted volunteers, who have expressed an interest in some aspect of the school-life, and may move on to offering paid employment in some instances. Currently, two of the class-room assistants have specific teaching input, as does the art therapist.

Parents are informed and consulted about the education as well as the care of their children, both informally and through the twice yearly formal reviews when the Education and Care Plan is updated, as well as receiving a comprehensive Annual School Report. Parents are asked to complete a feedback report on the latter, which addresses both school and house matters; the quality of the comments reflects the parents high level of satisfaction with the progress made by the child and the school, as evidenced by their observations of improvements in the home setting.

Record of Needs and Future Needs meetings are held for most young people and the school views liaison with parents and a number of outside agencies (e.g. Perth College, Careers Officers, adult resources), as part of their remit in assisting pupils to prepare for the next stage of their lives. As a community residential school there is no separation between teaching and care staff and therefore care practices are consistent and goals and objectives are shared.

Although the school curriculum and ethos meets the developmental needs of the children for the most part, some recent admissions have caused the core-group to renew its links with Aucherarder High School, with a view to the latter providing some or all of the educational input for certain individuals, who nevertheless require the therapeutic aspects of communal living. The local school, which co-workers' own children also attend, is equally interested in learning from Ochil Tower how they work with children with special needs, so the benefits are seen as being mutual.

The Inspection Officer was advised that the school proposes to apply to the Registrar for Independent Schools for an increase in capacity from 36 to 40 pupils, including the 29 residential places for which it is currently registered with Perth and Kinross Council. This will enable the school to have another class, so reducing the size of each class and offering more flexibility in the curriculum, to meet the needs of individual children.

Health is defined in its broadest sense, to include physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual dimensions. Consequently, although the children are almost all registered with the local GP, there is an agreement with the latter and parents that each pupil admission is assessed by Camphill's homeopathic medical consultant who visits the school monthly and reviews each young person on a regular basis. These assessments may recommend a homeopathic medicine but also referral for various therapies provided either by the school's own workers or by various visiting therapists, usually on an individual basis (e.g. Occupational Therapy, art therapy, curative eurhythm, speech therapy, massage etc). Dental screening and treatment is available through a Perth health centre. The school has its own monitoring system so that it has an overall view of all appointments at clinics or the dentist.

Documentation showed a detailed health history in the form of a medical questionnaire on admission, with consent forms for emergency and other medical treatments in place, as well as attention being given to the recommendations of the Crown Report each time the GP issues a prescription. The administration of medication is recorded through separate proformas for prescribed medication, regular and occasional, and household remedies, both traditional and homeopathic, by each house parent, although a joint co-ordinator is responsible for co-ordinating and supervising medical and health practices. The school has replaced the old medication cabinets with purpose designed versions in appropriate locations. Although health information is recorded in the child's daily log and elsewhere, there would be benefits to the school in following the requirement of the Standards and Guidance in keeping a sequential record of medical and health information, subsequent to admission, along the lines described.

Health education is carried out on an informal one to one basis as well as being covered in the generality of the school curriculum, involving discussion on relationships, bullying, health, self protection etc. As part of a holistic approach to health care, the school takes into account the individual needs of the children in respect of the basics such as sleep, diet and exercise, but they also have general policies, such as adherence to a smoke-free environment.

The paper on personal and social development, referred to a previous inspection report, reiterates this approach in respect of sex education, indicating that individual sex education should be provided after consultation between co-workers, parents and authorities, this being the approach adopted in a recent situation. However, it is recognised that by Class II specific attention should be given to this subject using a variety of methods to facilitate pupil participation and awareness (e.g. role play, discussion, pictorial communication).

ASPECT OF CARE: CARE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Most placements are funded by Education Authorities with a few jointly funded with Social Services and/or Health Boards. In some cases it is the initiative of the parents which triggers a referral. Ochil Tower School has a clear policy and agreed and comprehensive procedures relating to the process of admission, which is recognised as an anxious time. Equally, leaving school and finding a way through the minefield of options available is also seen as a difficult and traumatic period, requiring support to be given to both pupils and parents. To assist these processes the school has a number of parents of young people currently or previously resident at Ochil Tower who are willing to be contacted by other parents for advice and support. This initiative is to be commended and has been accessed, although the Inspector has no direct feedback from parents who have used this service. The young people interviewed recalled events surrounding their admission as a positive experience and a number of professionals spoke favourably of their own experiences and the impressions of parents and carers, referring to the admission process as thorough, well-prepared, relaxed, homely and inclusive. The Joint-Coordinator in charge of admissions and reviews stated that there has been an increase in the number of referrals of children who have been excluded from other schools. This was highlighted by social workers who commended the benefits of the structured, consistent, calm and caring environment at the school which enabled such children to control their temper and outbursts to the extent that they were able to make progress in other areas of their lives.

The school is still in the process of refining its care planning process, this aspect of care being developed as a consequence of registration. An initial Education and Care Plan is drawn up prior to admission and refined at the review of the first 3 months 'trial and assessment' period, with a view to its being evaluated and modified at the subsequent 6 monthly reviews. A sample of several files showed up to date Education and Care Plans in an established format. The areas of work, other than the strictly educational, were included under three general headings, namely, Personal and Social Development, Family Contact and Personal Care and Self-help Skills. While these would normally suffice, writers should use discretion to include other headings, such as health, where appropriate. As previous inspection reports have noted, the needs identified are often global needs, which are inherently difficult to translate into work programmes of specific tasks, without the added factor that many of the young people at Ochil Tower School can only progress in small, and sometimes scarcely discernible, steps over a long period of time, thus making it difficult for adults to see care planning as a dynamic process. However, some files indicated that the authors were able to translate the global needs into short term targets, specifically and directly related to the actual practices adopted by the community as part of their ethos. For instance, someone with Asperger's who needed to be integrated socially and was reluctant to be at the school, was to be frequently offered opportunities to passively attend group gatherings in a non-demanding way, as the first step in exposure to group activity. The daily log evidenced the slow, measured and patient steps to facilitate the young person to leave the cocoon of his room and join the classroom and meal-table.

As observed in other establishments, teachers appear to be more adept at identifying short-term educational targets in concrete achievements, comprehensible to pupils and adults alike; the school recognises this skill requires to be transferred to the care side as well. Nevertheless, it is important that Keyworkers and colleagues use the Care Plan to

guide their daily interactions with young people as conscious, planned and justifiable interventions by being able to relate them to the needs identified in the Care Plan. Hopefully, in this way, both the young person and the carers will be able to pinpoint more closely areas of success and those where a change of method, direction or focus would be beneficial. This monitoring and evaluation, appropriately recorded, should be ongoing and carried out on a more regular basis than the formal reviews, which are both a check that this process is ongoing and also an opportunity to consider wider and more long term issues in the child's life.

Reviews take place every 6 months with a broad spectrum of people attending, including representatives of Ochil Tower School, the young person, parents and a wide range of other professionals. Record of Needs, Future Needs and Looked After Reviews are combined with those of the school, where possible. One social worker commented that the concerns she had last year about the organisation and administration of these meetings no longer applied and that both links with other professionals and the program of care were clear. The young people interviewed reported that they were advised about the content in advance, attended reviews and were asked to contribute, although they were more vague about their purpose. The short term co-workers indicated that they were fully involved on a daily basis in discussion with people about specific aspects of their care plan, as well as similar exchanges with colleagues within each house on a formal and informal basis. It was less clear how much they contributed to the more formal aspects of care planning, but several were adept at articulating specific targets of progress made by particular children in the class or at home.

Throughcare is a concept underlying all the work of the school, which aims to develop the young person's full potential and enable him or her to participate in the wider community as independently as possible. For this reason, the school views its links with other professionals and parents as part of a partnership in identifying a suitable resource for the young person to move on to, and helping the latter to move with confidence, as demonstrated by two people interviewed. Such is the general satisfaction among young people and parents with the regime offered by Ochil Tower School that 9 of the 18 school leavers over the last two years have moved on to another Camphill community.

The young person's home circumstances, the extent of challenging behaviour, and the educational and social needs of the individual are all factors which are taken into account when checking the provision for the young person, whether day, weekly, fortnightly or respite. Many of the workers expressed empathy with the parents about their situation and saw it as the school's role to accommodate the family's needs and wishes as far as possible by tailoring care and contact accordingly. Communication is facilitated not only through formal reviews and parents meetings each term, but also via letters and telephone calls. Additionally, in many cases, contact books have proved useful, whether for a day pupil where the need for regular liaison is more important, where the child has poor speech and cannot communicate effectively, or where transport is via taxi and there is no direct opportunity to exchange information. Even for those parents who do assist in escorting their children to and fro, the contact book is a more reliable method of ensuring information about general progress is conveyed, in addition to the automatic notification of particular incidents.

Feedback from 11 parents through the questionnaire indicated that the staff are considered to be very approachable and totally dedicated to the care of the children who for the most part are said to have thrived after moving to Ochil Tower. Parents identify many areas of achievement in their responses to the annual School Report, but also feel empowered to highlight those where they feel they or the school should be concentrating

in the future; this indicates the spirit of partnership in the care of the child fostered by the school.

Seven local authority Social Workers contacted the Inspector to report very positively on the care of the children, in terms of the child-centred approach, the calm but stimulating environment and the structure of the regime, especially as it contributes to trust and stability, critical for the children's progress and the parents' confidence. The school always welcomes professionals, offering hospitality, and is flexible in accommodating itself to the needs of parents and others. The school has also shown its flexibility, spirit of co-operation and child-centred approach, in responding to a break-down of a child's home base, by offering full-time care for a period and identifying alternative carers from its Camphill links, so maintaining continuity and stability at a time of trauma.

ASPECT OF CARE: STAFFING

Ochil Tower is a Centre of Anthroposophical Curative Education and a Camphill Community whose primary task is the care and education of pupils with special educational needs. The property itself, along with 2 other local facilities for adults with special needs, is owned and managed by Camphill Central Scotland Trust. Legally, it operates as a company limited by guarantee and is a Scottish Charity with its own Management Council, which holds formal minuted meetings every 2 months. The Council comprises 2 Joint Co-ordinators as Residents Council Members, as well as non-resident members invited to join because of their professional expertise and knowledge of the work of Camphill. The Management Council is legally responsible for the management of Ochil Tower, being accountable to pupils and their representatives for the operation of the school and final arbiter in disciplinary and grievance matters, and is therefore required to offer adequate support and supervision of the community. During this last year, discussions have been initiated by the Management Council with a view to 3 of its non-resident members providing a basic individual support/supervision structure for Joint Co-ordinators, by means of Annual Assessment Sessions, namely an appraisal of present performance and future professional development. As yet, only two people have undergone this process.

There is no single manager responsible for the day to day running of the school. Rather, group management in the form of 'collective decision making' is undertaken by 6 "Joint Co-ordinators", appointed not on the basis of age or length of stay but on a willingness and ability to take on both specific and joint management responsibility, and drawn from the pool of more senior long term co-workers (who form the school's 'Core Group' and are responsible for the spiritual, cultural, social and economic well-being of the school). 6 joint co-ordinators have relevant childcare experience and are social-work qualified or possess either a Certificate in Curative Education or a Rudolph Steiner Teaching Certificate.

The Joint Co-ordinators have specific responsibilities for key care practice areas: medical; therapy; teachers and education; training and professional development; admissions, reviews, child protection, health and safety ; house parents, co-worker recruitment and employed staff; and finally, administration and finance. Six Joint Co-ordinators are also house parents in 3 houses (other co-workers bring allocated as house parents in the Priors and Elmtree) and some have teaching responsibilities. Similarly, in other care practice areas, the Joint Co-ordinator is assisted by core group workers.

There are 3 main 'working groups': house parents, teachers (meeting fortnightly) and training (monthly) which are responsible for the work of their practice area, providing supervision and support to individuals through minuted meetings and being accountable to the Joint Co-ordinators via each group's chairperson (a Joint Co-ordinator). Additionally, the Core Group meets twice a month with an agenda, covering management and cultural and social issues, and minutes, and each house has a weekly meeting, with the whole community also convening as required. All these meetings, as well as most training sessions, take place from 9pm after a long and exacting day's work, but are viewed as an essential aspect of the community's life and so attended with the same commitment to task as for other activities.

Apart from formal meetings and informal discussion and monitoring, the house parents' and teachers' practice is also assessed twice a year through self-assessment/appraisal sessions, which are guided by a questionnaire where answers are recorded by the Chairperson.

The Therapy group meets fortnightly for study and discussion to share experiences as well as to reflect on the pupils' individual therapy sessions. A Joint Co-ordinator chairs these meetings, which are attended by the OT and Art Therapist as well as co-workers requiring training. These therapists also have regular links with and support from Camphill colleagues in Aberdeen.

Apart from a few 'employed' staff – secretaries, classroom assistants and maintenance men - the other main group of workers are the short term co-workers, young people aged between 18 years and 25 years, from a variety of countries, mainly European, who have specifically sought out a work opportunity (usually for a year but it could be longer or shorter) in a Camphill community and are appointed as a 'group parent' attached to a particular house, with responsibility for between one and three young people, as well as acting as classroom assistants. The school ensures that a satisfactory police check is received before any co-worker is in contact with young people and that friends are not used to provide references.

Prior to the young people's return in August, these co-workers undertake a week's induction programme supplemented by an Information Pack, covering the school's philosophy and policies and procedures in relation to issues such as fire precautions, health and safety, practical living arrangements and childcare issues. Each is assigned an individual tutor to draw together an overall awareness of the co-worker and provide ongoing support and supervision, meeting once a term or as required. At the end of the first term, in October, the tutor chairs a Probationary Assessment Tutorial which the co-worker, class teacher and house parent also attend whereby strengths and weaknesses are comprehensively assessed, as well as the co-worker's suitability for the work or otherwise, in which case the person will be asked to leave. This assessment is minuted, as are subsequent termly appraisal tutorials, although it is then the co-worker who presents a self-evaluation of his/her work and life in the community and writes up a summary of the general conclusions of the appraisal group.

This formal monitoring of care practice is supplemented by ongoing supervision and support through minuted weekly House meetings and individual supervision sessions. In one house, the latter were kept in the same file as other general documentation, when as part of a staff file it should be kept in a secure place to maintain an individual's confidentiality. The school is also reminded that any minute of a meeting should give sufficient detail to be comprehensible to a reader who was not present, or a participant who needs to recall the gist of the discussion and any action required subsequently, rather than simply be a list of agenda items. All co-workers interviewed spoke of the constant availability of house parents and more experienced co-workers with whom they could share any anxieties or gaps in knowledge and skills, knowing that guidance and assistance would be given willingly and as of right.

The positives of the community living and learning together as a shared experience for both adults and young people seemed to compensate for the long days and fact that the co-workers are only entitled to three days off every two weeks; there was no suggestion that they were being exploited or that they were unhappy with their living and working

conditions. Likewise, community social and cultural evening activities, such as performing seasonal and Christmas plays, also contribute to the cohesiveness of the co-worker group.

Training is an ongoing commitment for the school. All short term co-workers take part in a one year 'Foundation Course in Curative Education and Social Therapy' run by the Core group and other Camphill speakers, with 4 sessions every 2 weeks throughout each term. A term's programme can be varied: Painting, Maladjustment, Autism, Eurythmy, Child Development, Play and games, Anthroposophical medicine. Individual training includes weekly attendance of 2nd and 3rd Year co-workers at Aberdeen for the Camphill course in Curative Education, leading to a nationally recognised award, either a Certificate or a Diploma, depending on the length, as well as short courses in specialist areas for more experienced co-workers. All co-workers take part in in-house training such as a 2 day course on the Children (Scotland) Act and a 3 day TCI course presented by external trainers, now seen as a valuable 'annual event'. The school believes that timetabling this at the end of the first term (October) is more valuable than if held during the induction week, as the new workers then have some experience with which to relate the input.

Several core-group members have been looking to build on their professional qualifications, prompted by legislative and registration requirements that care managers should possess a Diploma in Social Work or equivalent, a personal need for professional development and a recognition that they may wish to move out of the Camphill movement at a later date, when such qualifications may be necessary for continued employment in this field of work. One Joint Co-ordinator has started a Diploma in Nursing (Learning Disability) at Stirling University, and three other house parents have enrolled for the Open University course leading to the Diploma in Social Work. Meanwhile two others have embarked on respectively, a Mental Health Seminar (3 x 5 days block courses per year over 2½ years) reflecting the incidence of a mental health aspect in many children's difficulties, and a Management Development Programme under the auspices of the Association of Residential Care (weekly attendance over 6 months, with course work and assignments).

Overall staffing levels are more than adequate to meet the needs of the young people in terms of numbers, competency and experience and there is an appropriate balance between males and females. Young people generally are well supervised and supported, while the more able have the opportunity to exercise discretion in the choice and quality of their relationships.

ASPECT OF CARE: PREMISES

Ochil Tower School, being located halfway along Auchterarder High Street, via a short, tree lined driveway, offers a degree of privacy and seclusion, yet easy access to contact with the local community and facilities, when required. The school monitors closely the exposure of its young people to public gaze, easily identifiable in a small town, so as to offer them ordinary opportunities, yet within their capacity to deal with any discrimination.

Of the 5 houses, Belvidere currently accommodates 6 young people, having a capacity for 8 (until this session, it functioned to a full capacity of 10, so now the coworkers are appreciating the reduced work-load and the improved facility to manage the complex dynamics of the group). As an old Victorian mansion it has both attractions and disadvantages in terms of room sizes, day to day functioning and maintenance. Most bedrooms are large, with high ceilings, which are more difficult to personalise and make cosy, while some reflect the taste of their occupants, who are currently male and into 'minimalism'. Although the school has longer-term plans to change the bedroom layout to reflect the growing need for single rooms, it has recently replaced all the floor-coverings with laminated flooring, hard-wearing and hygienic. The public rooms downstairs convey a welcoming combination of practical homeliness and reassuring solidity.

The converted Coach House, the Priory and Elmtree (a modern building) can presently accommodate 5, 5 and 4 young people respectively, while the new Sycamore House is registered for 7. Overall there are presently 26 residential pupils and 8 day pupils (attached to various houses). The school is conscious that many of its residents require a single room, for a variety of reasons, such as personal hygiene, being a victim of sexual abuse in the past, challenging behaviour or an inability to tolerate others at such close quarters, in addition to those who, by age or preference, request a single room, and has tried to accommodate their needs in allocating bedrooms. Many of these difficulties were overcome this summer with the completion of Sycamore House, when the requirements of the Registering Authority, in respect of a maximum of 2 children in a bedroom, were met. However, it was noted that there was a third bed in one room in Sycamore House; although the explanation for this short-term breach of the conditions of registration was accepted, the school is reminded that it should approach the Inspection Unit at the earliest opportunity if it is at risk of breaching any condition, so that issues can be discussed and an agreement reached.

These other houses are furnished along Scandinavian lines and appear to function very much as ordinary homes. They are comfortable, clean and warm, being maintained by the house parents and co-workers, with some assistance from the children and young people, in line with their age, ability and developmental needs for increased responsibility and independent-living skills. Although the school has an ongoing programme of redecoration, repairs (having recently employed a retired tradesman on a part-time basis to improve efficiency in this area) and replacement of furniture, the standard of furniture and fittings the school aspires to for both children and adults is reflected in Sycamore House, which is purpose-built and designed by a Camphill architect to provide facilities in keeping with the school's Functions and Objectives.

Not only has attention been given to safety and privacy but also to using space to maximise the potential for a wide range of therapeutic and leisure activities, while limiting

the time spent by adults on cleaning and maintenance, so that most energy is expended on the direct care of the children .

Throughout the houses, the Inspection Officer observed a diversity in the extent to which children and young people personalised their bedroom space, some being content to bring a favourite soft toy and book from home, while others appeared to have made a 'home from home', with music systems, camcorders, laptops, shelves of books, rugs etc. Again, Sycamore House exemplifies the school's encouragement of a 'nesting instinct' with the provision for each person of a bookcase, shelf, pinboard, chair and (shared) table, bedside table and lamp in addition to the basic bed and wardrobe. Tidiness is promoted but is not compulsory. While some young people are still learning to respect those few public areas which are carpeted, care for a new building does not prohibit young people from sticking up their posters on freshly painted walls.

ASPECT OF CARE: ADMINISTRATION AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

Reference should be made to specific issues in relation to recording processes elsewhere in this report. In general terms, the school has used information technology to improve the efficiency and presentation of its administration, without any diminution of quality of care; although only one of the joint co-ordinators is proficient in this area, one or two others are keen to learn, as evidenced by the acquisition of computers in some houses. Notwithstanding the completion of the required audit of recording procedures, there are still some areas where the use of proformas would not only standardise recording throughout the houses but also assist scribes to cover all required areas. The use of a proforma in Elmtree and the Priory for house meetings should be extended elsewhere and this might also be adopted for individual supervision sessions of co-workers. Similarly, either a proforma or guidelines for completion attached to the accident books would ensure consistency and proper accountability. Overall the standard of entries in the children's daily logs was satisfactory, but some uniformity in the A4 sheets – currently a mixture of proforma, lined and unlined within the same file - while cosmetic, would create a more professional presentation in files which are generally well-laid out and comprehensive. However, co-workers at all levels need to be reminded to use the child's full name in those records outside his/her own file and not to use only their own first name as a signature, to avoid confusion. This is an area which should be kept uppermost in mind on a daily basis and in supervision and training so that standards can be improved and maintained.

Tayside Fire Brigade's Fire Safety inspection report, based on a visit made on 11 October 2000 detailed a number of requirements which were passed to the school for action. These measures have been, or were in the process of being, rectified. A new set of fire safety recording procedures were initiated in 1998; the use of a designated person to take responsibility for all fire checks throughout the various school buildings assists consistent application in this aspect. Apart from outside contracts to check on fire prevention and fire fighting equipment, regular fire drills are held, as required, and a random inspection of one house's records evidenced that new co-workers were properly inducted into procedures through training and drills. The health and safety assessment of each house in relation to storage of cleaning materials has now been carried out and written up, as required following a previous inspection.

Environmental and Consumer services report that the premises are satisfactory in terms of the Food Safety Act 1990.

New co-workers are provided with basic First Aid training under the auspices of Scottish Power as part of the induction week, but other workers have a more comprehensive training, including refresher courses. Each house possess a First Aid kit.

STRENGTHS

Overall, the physical aspects of the school, its location, the grounds, layout of the school and living accommodation as well as the ambience of the houses themselves, are conducive to community family style living and in no way institutionalised. Consequently, this facilitates the pupils' transition from home to residential school.

The core principles of the Camphill movement, outlined in the Introduction, indicate a strong personal commitment to providing good quality care, interlinking all aspects of the day and enhancing the potential and opportunities of the young people yet not undermining the role of parents and families and being mindful of their role to prepare the young people for adult life elsewhere.

The central role of child development in curative education, together with the cultural rituals and a day of purposeful activity, extending the curriculum beyond the physical walls of the school into the houses, Auchterarder and the wider countryside and structured round periods of tranquillity, combine to create a calm environment, which provides a sense of safety and security for young people such that tensions and outbursts of aggression are minimised and the emphasis is on achievement and progress, rather than on sanctions and restraint.

The school is receptive to ideas to improve childcare practice and has responded positively to requirements placed upon them in areas such as accommodation and training; this is evidenced by the initiatives to advance professional training. Similarly general administration is organised, efficient and attentive to detail. Information technology has been harnessed to assist the daily functioning of the school, for instance by use of the internet to facilitate distribution of information to parents and others, indicating that the school is far from being isolated from the 'real world' outside. Again the school has shown its flexibility and responsiveness to individual need through its provision of respite packages to suit particular circumstances, and through its negotiations with Auchterarder High School.

Although the management structure is complex, it appears to be effective in enabling the community to fulfil its functions and objectives; it also exemplifies egalitarian principles and shows respect for the individual, including the co-workers and young people, while recognising their respective additional needs, as demonstrated by the comprehensive training, support and monitoring of co-workers.

For the most part, children and young people look, act and declare that they are happy with their life at Ochil Tower School. Similarly, almost without exception, parents are very positive about their child's experiences at the school, feedback generally summarising this as 'excellent'; it is significant that several young people move on to other Steiner establishments in order to continue to benefit from the special regime they have to offer.

ISSUES REQUIRING ACTION

Sanctions and Violent Incidents must be recorded in line with the specifications laid down in the Standards and Guidance, following agreement on what incidents merit such definitions.

Any concerns which may have child protection implications should be reported to the relevant social work authorities at the first opportunity, and also to the Registration and Inspection Unit.

A sequential medical history must be completed in respect of each child.

The school requires to continue to develop its care plans, focussing on the identification of short-term targets, in co-operation with parents and children where possible.

Supervision minutes, as part of the staff file, must be kept in a secure place.

Minutes of all school meetings should follow established procedure and be a comprehensible and accurate record of the content.

The requirements made in respect of recording, as outlined in this report, should be adhered to.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOOD PRACTICE

Consideration should be given to establishing a forum for children and young people to meet to discuss issues on a more formal basis, from time to time. A formal minute should be taken by an adult or, preferably, a young person, with assistance where required.

Suggestions with respect to recording, made throughout this report, should be given consideration.

CONCLUSION

The report highlights a number of Required Actions and Recommendations for Good Practice. There is a requirement that a Plan of Action be produced, detailing what will be done in relation to these findings.

Both the Plan of Action and this report are publicly available and further copies may be supplied on request. Young people and parents/guardians will be made particularly welcome when approaching the Registration and Inspection Unit to either obtain a copy or to have any aspect of the report discussed with them.

The Officer would like to thank the young people of Ochil Tower School for their welcome, openness and contributions during this inspection. The full co-operation of staff and management is also acknowledged.

Anyone who would like a copy of this report should apply to the Registration and Inspection Unit, Social Work Services, 3-5 High Street, Perth. Telephone 01738 476727.

The dynamics of residential childcare establishments are complex and continually evolving and this report must be viewed in this context. The failure to mention any specific aspect of the establishment's functioning should not therefore be taken to imply it was assessed and approved. Owners and Managers are reminded, however, of their obligation to comply with all the standards as detailed in the Standards and Guidance for the Registration and Inspection of Children's Residential Units and Residential Schools