

**Plockton High School Residence
The Highland Council
25 October 2005**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. What are the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff?	1
4. How good is the environment for care?	2
5. How well are pupils supported?	3
6. Improving the residential provision?	4
Appendix 1 Summary information	6
Appendix 2 Indicators of quality	7
Appendix 3 Summary of questionnaire responses	8
How can you contact us?	9

1. Background

The inspection of Plockton High School Residence took place in May and June 2005 as part of a programme of integrated inspections of mainstream school care accommodation services by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). It follows from the commencement of integrated inspection under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act, 2001 on 1 April 2005. This report has been prepared and published jointly by the Care Commission and HMIE.

The inspection covered key aspects of the residence's residential provision, including the environment for care, support for pupils, processes for self-evaluation, and capacity for improvement. Members of the inspection team interviewed care staff and groups of pupils. They analysed responses to questionnaires issued to pupils, their parents or carers, and care staff.

Plockton High School Residence is an education authority establishment located in the campus of Plockton High School in the village of Plockton, Kyle of Lochalsh. It provides residential accommodation for pupils aged 11 to 18 years who attend Plockton High School and Plockton National Music School. At the time of the inspection, 31 pupils from Highland and elsewhere in Scotland were accommodated at the residence. Of these, 10 pupils went home at weekends. The remaining 21 pupils all attended Plockton national music school and were full-time boarders. The agreed optimum roll was 35 pupils.

2. Key strengths

The inspection team identified the following key strengths.

- Friendly and well-mannered pupils.
- The open and welcoming atmosphere.
- Caring and hard-working staff.

3. What are the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff?

Around a third of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire from HMIE. They were content overall with the residence's provision. A few wanted changes such as more weekend activities for their children. Staff expressed very positive views about all aspects of provision. They all said they would recommend the residence to others. Almost all pupils said the residence was comfortable but the majority felt that the showers were too small and heating was too erratic. Most interviewed during the inspection were generally very satisfied with the residence. Senior pupils from the music school were less content with the provision. They wanted more weekend activities provided at no cost to themselves. They said that the food was healthy and well cooked, if not always to their individual tastes. Further information about responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 3.

4. How good is the environment for care?

Climate and Relationships

The residence had an open and welcoming atmosphere. Pupils were generally friendly and well-mannered. Staff made themselves readily available to pupils. They changed menus regularly in response to pupils' comments about their personal likes and dislikes and asked pupils to suggest what they wanted to do at weekends. However, there were some tensions amongst staff and pupils. Staff recognised that they were not always consistent in responding to incidents of inappropriate behaviour. They were exploring ways of involving all pupils in airing their views and establishing realistic expectations of the activities which could be provided. A start had been made to establishing a pupil council and taking account of its views, for example by providing Sky television.

Staff kept in contact with parents by telephone and through occasional newsletters. The residence provided parents with short, positive annual reports about their children. There was scope for making these more informative.

Comfort, safety and security

Overall, the standard of accommodation was good. Residence pupils used the school's grounds and sports facilities for leisure activities and had access to television and games inside the residence. Study bedrooms were comfortable and pupils were encouraged to personalise them. Cleaning was of a high standard. The authority had recently installed booths which enabled pupils to make telephone calls in private. In addition to the dining area, the residence had also recently provided senior pupils with snack-making facilities for their senior common rooms. There were toilets and showers for any pupils with physical disabilities. However, there were a few weaknesses which reduced pupils' privacy and comfort. For example, bathing facilities were too small for a number of pupils. Pupils did not have keys to their own bedrooms. They often lost access to those social areas used by the music school and the main school. These shared areas were in poor order which detracted from the homeliness of the residence. The authority had refurbished parts of the building but had still to complete work on plumbing problems and water penetration.

Staff were supportive of pupils' well-being, safety and security. Pupils were expected to seek permission before leaving the residence in the evening and at weekends. There were appropriate security arrangements and fire safety procedures at the residence. Accidents were recorded and dealt with in the first instance by staff with first aid training. Bedroom windows had safety catches. Entry for the many visitors from the main and music schools and for pupil residents was carefully controlled. However, because pupils did not have keys, they often experienced delays in gaining access to the residence. Staff had undertaken several risk assessments, mainly relating to the premises. They had recognised the need to implement the education authority's policy and procedures more systematically for activities and outings. A recent report from the authority's health and safety officer had identified risks requiring early attention. At the time of the inspection, remedial action was not yet complete.

5. How well are pupils supported?

Pastoral Care

Staff knew resident pupils well and were generally responsive to their individual needs. Arrangements for welcoming and settling new pupils were well-judged. They included providing both an introductory week for new pupils and another resident to show them around. There were always at least two staff members on duty, including two on call during the night. Pupils knew who they could go to for help but a few felt they needed more access to emotional support. The staff in the residence as well as the music and high schools were exploring ways of providing pupils with access to a counsellor.

The residence provided well-organised access to medical and dental care for pupils. A local health professional was about to provide a drop in-service. Staff were prepared to dispense medication where necessary but arrangements for training, storage and recording were not yet in line with best practice. The residence encouraged pupils to adopt a healthy life-style. Regular bookings of local sports facilities gave pupils easy access to fitness activities. Residence meals were attractive and provided pupils with a range of healthy options and generous portions. They also took full account of pupils' food allergies and intolerances. Pupils could also help themselves to fresh fruit and drinking water.

There were well-understood arrangements for child protection, including appropriate training for staff. Pupils were aware of help-line telephone numbers such as ChildLine. However, insufficient consideration was given to assessing risks to pupils' safety when responding to pupils' requests for overnight stays away from the residence.

The residence handbook gave resident pupils and their parents clear information on the residence complaints procedure, code of conduct and rules. Whilst regular routines were clearly described, there was little to inform parents and pupils about the implementation of rules. There was insufficient clarity about respective roles and responsibilities, for example, about funding additional activities away from the residence at weekends. Pupils were not clear enough about their respective roles and responsibilities or how best to communicate their concerns. Arrangements for recording and resolving concerns and complaints were not yet in line with best practice. The residence had provided a suggestion box for pupils to raise concerns and complaints but they did not use it. Overall, the evident strengths in pastoral care outweighed some weak aspects.

Supporting pupils' education

Set times for homework and music practice supervised by duty teachers and music staff provided residents with good support with their studies throughout the week. Staff had begun to involve residents in annual interviews to review their progress and to identify their next steps. New books for personal reading had recently been purchased. The small reference section in the study area was being extended. There was as yet no internet access for residents or care staff in the residence. The study had several word processors. However, residents had little access to them because the room was frequently used for music practice and high school examinations.

Personal and social development

Planned personal and social development was mainly undertaken by the high school and music school. Pupils said that they learned what they needed from the school programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE). A well-planned schedule of performances, music and social events encouraged music students to acquire poise and self-confidence. The residence organised occasional PSHE talks, for example from the police on drug awareness, and supported several charitable activities. All pupil residents took turns clearing away after supper. Staff often tried to offer them weekend leisure activities but there had been little uptake. A small minority of pupils did not readily listen to others' views, for example on residence menus. The pupil council was making a useful contribution to developing citizenship skills, although initially its impact was limited to those directly involved.

6. Improving the residential provision

At the time of the inspection, the education authority was reviewing the management structure of all its residences. An acting manager had been in post at Plockton High School Residence for eighteen months. She was well-regarded within the residence community for her caring and constructive approach and efforts to enhance pupils' welfare. The authority maintained regular contact with the acting manager and involved her in termly, authority-wide meetings of residence managers to exchange policies and share good practice. It had provided appropriate guidance on welfare matters such as risk assessment and on making improvements, for example through development planning. The acting manager was making a start to putting these into practice. However, residence policy-making on welfare matters was not yet sufficiently informed by legal advice, for example on the respective responsibilities of parents and the education authority. At the time of the inspection, circumstances out with the control of the acting manager reduced her ability to improve the residence's provision. These included her temporary status, her heavy workload due to an unfilled staff post, limited management experience and uncertainty about the future management structure.

The residence, the high school and the music school were all separately managed. As yet, there was no joint steering group for policy-making on common interests, such as ensuring coherent provision for pupils' well-being and helping resolve conflicting demands on shared areas.

Overall, residence staff had a good range of experience but very little training or qualifications in children's welfare and development. All had been cleared by the authority for working with young people and had taken part in basic training on matters such as child protection. There were occasional staff meetings and ongoing informal monitoring and discussion of practice. Staff had not yet identified any training needs arising from the residence's improvement plan. The authority's system of professional review for staff was about to be introduced, with a view to providing staff with access to regular, considered feedback on their work and professional development.

The education authority and acting manager had taken a number of steps to strengthen the residence's approach to quality assurance and planning for improvement. Both were knowledgeable about the residence's strengths and needs. The area education officer had used quality indicators and care standards to report on priorities for improvement. Occasional visits from representatives of outside agencies such as the police, health and safety officer and

environmental health had also helped the acting manager make improvements. She also took account of information from her work alongside staff and residents and ongoing informal soundings of the views of parents and young people. Recently, she had successfully enabled the pupil council to identify and tackle some issues of concern to residents. Overall, a promising start had been made to involving staff, residents and parents in identifying priorities and taking action for improvement.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should act on the following recommendations.

- Improve the leadership of the residence and approaches to self-evaluation.
- Ensure that pupils are systematically consulted and that their views are taken into account in improving the residence.
- Ensure that staff, pupils and parents are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities, for example on the residence code of conduct and the provision of weekend activities.

What happens next?

The residence and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report, parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the residence.

Following this inspection, Care Commission Officers will commence statutory twice yearly inspections of the residence.

Frances Corcoran
HM Inspector

Philip Yeaman
Care Commission Officer

25 October 2005

Appendix 1 Summary information

In conducting this inspection the team took account of the following HMIE quality indicators in *How good is our school?* and *National Care Standards*.

How good is the environment for care?	
QI 5.1	Climate and relationships
Standard 5	Comfort, safety and security
How well are pupils supported?	
QI 4.1	Pastoral care
Standard 3	Care and protection
Standard 17	Concerns, comments and complaints
Standard 14	Supporting your education
QI 4.2	Personal and social development
Improving the residential provision	
QI 7.4	Leadership
Standard 7	Management and staffing
QI 7.2	Self-evaluation

Evaluations made using HMIE quality indicators use the following scale to describe the team's judgements:

Very good	:	major strengths
Good	:	strengths outweigh weaknesses
Fair	:	some important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory	:	major weaknesses

Reports contain recommendations which are intended to support improvements in the quality of service.

Any requirements refer to actions which must be taken by service providers to ensure that regulations are met and there is compliance with relevant legislation. In these cases, the regulation(s) to which requirements refer will be notified clearly and timescales given.

Appendix 2 Quality indicator summary table

How good is our school? Quality Indicator	Evaluation
Climate and relationships	Good
Pastoral care	Good
Personal and social development	Good
Leadership	Fair
Self evaluation	Fair

Appendix 3 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

What pleased parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<p>Almost all felt that staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • were approachable and helpful; • really knew their children as individuals; • consulted them on key welfare decisions; • were welcoming and kept them informed about how their child settled in at the start of their time in the residence; and • dealt with issues well when there was a difficulty. 	<p>Around half wanted improvements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reports on their children’s welfare and development. <p>Several were not content with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the food provided for their children; • arrangements for parents to make suggestions or complaints; • facilities for making private telephone calls; and • the provision for their children’s personal, social and health development.
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<p>Almost all thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sleeping accommodation was comfortable; and • they had enough space for study. <p>Most agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they got on well with other pupils and people were friendly; • they knew what to do if they had a complaint; and • staff were good at dealing with bullies. 	<p>The majority were unhappy with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the fairness and clarity of house rules; • the arrangements for keeping their personal belongings safe; and • facilities for bathing and showering. <p>Around half wanted changes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the programme of weekend activities; • residence meals; and • facilities for telephoning family in private.
What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<p>All staff said that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they could recommend the quality of care at the residence; • there was good attention to health and safety and medicines were stored and locked away safely; • there were enough staff on duty; • daily routines were well organised; • menus were well-balanced; and • there was an appropriate range of leisure activities. 	<p>Several staff wanted improvements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils’ behaviour; • their remit to define it more clearly; and • access to continuing professional development.

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the acting residence manager and residence staff, the Director of Education, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament.

Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, T1 Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 8371. Copies are also available on the HMIE web site: www.hmie.gov.uk

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report you should write either to the Care Commission or to HM Inspectorate of Education at the address below. If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk

Complaints Coordinator
Headquarters
Care Commission
Compass House
Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

Hazel Dewart
HM Inspectorate of Education
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston
EH54 6GA

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