

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC001531
Inspection date	01/05/2013
Inspector	Michael McCleave
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	28/08/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2013

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a charitable organisation and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five boys. The home provides care for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **adequate**.

The young people are cared for by staff who work well together as a team. There is a culture that young people irrespective of their abilities can achieve their potential. This home provides the young people with a safe caring environment in which to live. Staff are competent and they work proactively to ensure that the young people are happy at the home. A positive feature is the effective joint working relationships between the schools and the children's home. Staff from both settings work together, sharing information for the benefit of the young people.

The young people are well cared for by staff who work proactively to provide young people with a safe and nurturing environment where they can develop and achieve positive social skills. The staff and young people have a very warm and positive relationship and there is a high degree of trust established between them. This helps to maintain a calm and welcoming atmosphere. This is a very supportive environment for vulnerable young people.

Staff have a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and the young people feel safe living at this children's home.

The views of the children are important to daily living. They are able to make a contribution to life at the home. This encourages the children to develop their self-confidence and to have a stake in the life of the home.

The manager provides staff with sound leadership and there is a commitment to providing a quality service. However, some areas of the operations at the home

require improvement. For example, some key worker records do not give a clear indication of the outcomes being achieved by the young people. These tend to be descriptive with no evaluation of outcomes against the care plans. The children's guide similarly does not contain all required information. Some policies require review as they are out of date.

Equality and diversity are positive features at this service. The children live in an environment that supports and encourages them to learn how to enhance their social skills.

This is an adequate service that puts the care needs of the young people as a primary focus. The management demonstrate a positive willingness and capacity to improve the service.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure where there has been physical restraint children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- ensure that the Children's Guide indicates how a child can contact their IRO, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that the policy on recruitment specifies that all people working in or for the children's home have references checked to assess their suitability and that telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references (NMS 16.1)
- ensure staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting; specifically, ensure that staff are trained in behaviour management (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends (NMS 21.2)
- ensure information about a child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people have developed self-confidence and self-esteem through the good support and encouragement provided by staff. Young people are happy living at this children's home. The young people who have come from challenging backgrounds

have developed confidence in their relationships with the staff at the home. Respect for cultural differences in the community is a key part of the ethos at the home. Staff have worked successfully with the young people to reduce racist and offensive language. For example, some young people have used inappropriate signs and symbols that would be offensive to members of the certain faith groups. Staff challenged this and through discussion and dialogue with the young people, this is no longer an issue. This was a good outcome and gave the young people a greater insight into how their actions could be interpreted by members of the public in the wider community.

Young people's health needs and emotional wellbeing and very well promoted and young people make good progress. The home ensures that young people are able to access appropriate services to help them with personal and emotional issues. Health care needs are appropriately met and the looked after nurse is available to offer advice and guidance on any health-related matters.

Most young people are attending school and all indicators point to young people progressing appropriately within their capabilities. Strong links have been established between the schools and staff. This enables staff and teachers to share appropriate information and to deal with any emerging issues quickly in an atmosphere of trust.

The young people are actively encouraged to take an interest in the life of their home. They meet regularly with staff to discuss a range of issues such as menus, activities, visits to places of interest, holidays and other social events. This promotes their self-confidence and enables them to take an active part in making decisions. Young people who had never been out of the United Kingdom previously have learned about other cultures and broadened their outlook on life beyond the children's home.

Professionals from the local authority speak highly of the way young people benefit from their experience living at this children's home. For example one professional commented, 'I can't speak highly enough of the high quality work carried out by the staff of this children's home,' and another said, 'I am delighted with the excellent progress made by the young people and staff always go the extra mile for the young people.'

Contact is positively supported as part of the young people's care plans. Staff take an active part in in any contact if required. The views of young people are a major determinant in any contact arrangements. This indicates that they have an ownership in decisions about their lives.

Those young people who are preparing for independent living are kept fully involved in their plan. Staff work professionally with the young person concerned to support and to advise and guide them during this sensitive work towards independent living. There is an acute awareness among staff of the importance of ensuring that young people are kept informed about their leaving care arrangements.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **good**.

Young people are provided with a caring and supportive service from a team of staff who are positively motivated in their work. They ensure that young people are treated as individuals who each have their own unique care needs. The care plans for each young person give a clear indication of the work required to support them as they progress towards becoming young adults. Individual care and behaviour strategies are used to help the young people to develop their self-confidence and to learn how to cope with the demands of school and living in the community. Staff have a good understanding of the care and emotional needs of the young people. They strive to maintain a calm relaxed atmosphere. This approach promotes a more friendly and caring environment.

Young people report that they have a say on key issues that affect the life of the home. They decide with staff on visits to places of interest, where to go on the annual holiday, meals, and activities. This promotes their self-confidence and is a good demonstration of equality and diversity.

A significant feature of the service is the strong links that have been established between staff and the schools attended by the young people. Information is shared in confidence with the schools. This ensures that the young people's educational interests are at the forefront of both settings and promotes their educational aspirations. Staff work collaboratively with the health services to ensure that the children receive appropriate guidance on health matters and services. The close professional links that have been established with these services mean that high quality resources are readily available for the welfare and care needs of the young people.

Young people are actively encouraged to be involved in all aspects of their care. They participate in compiling reports for their statutory reviews and are encouraged to attend these meetings. Where appropriate, some young people chair their reviews. This is an excellent demonstration of equality and diversity and indicates clearly how young people are consistently and centrally involved in the planning and decisions made about their care.

Children enjoy a range of purposeful activities. These include trips out to places of interest, walks in the countryside, shopping, play, going to the cinema, and meals out. These are intended to enable the children to experience life out in the community and to socialise as a group. Within the home a range of fun activities are readily available. Young people said, 'I really love the trips and holidays. I never had any holidays in my last children's home.' Another commented, 'staff are kind and they really care about us.'

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **adequate** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Young people feel safe living at this children's home. They know how to make a complaint. The young people make use of informal approaches to staff as the common method of resolving any concerns. Young people are confident that most issues can be dealt with in this way. Where appropriate, the home uses a low level approach involving discussion to resolve most issues affecting young people. This is regarded by staff and young people as an effective method of problem solving and is a good example of equality and diversity where young people are fully involved in solving issues at the home.

There are procedures in place to manage situations when young people are missing from the children's home. Risk assessments guide staff on the actions to follow. There is an emphasis on a positive and welcoming response to the young person on their return and to ascertain the reasons for their absence. Young people rarely go missing from the home.. This indicates that young people feel safe.

Although staff are trained in physical restraint, they base their approach to behaviour management on de-escalation of tense situations through calm dialogue with the young people. Staff are very clear that restraint is a last resort in order to prevent harm to the young person concerned. However, not all staff have been trained in behaviour management. This could compromise the safety of the young people in situations of confrontation if staff are unable to respond effectively with other colleagues to manage difficult tensions. The home keeps full and appropriate records of all physical restraint. However, in some instances young people are not provided with the opportunity to see a nurse or health professional after an incident.

All staff recruited to work at the home are required to undergo appropriate background checks and to be successful at interview. However, the policy on recruitment does not include the requirement that references must be subject to a telephone check. The processing of recruitment applications is managed by the organisation's head office. However, there is a risk of misunderstanding of the process due to the absence of specific reference to telephone checks in the policy. This could compromise the safety of the young people.

The building is a physically safe environment with all appropriate checks on domestic and electrical appliances having been carried out in line with requirements. Fire records confirm that evacuations and testing of fire fighting equipment are carried out at regular intervals to ensure the safety of young people and staff.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **adequate**.

This home was judged as inadequate at the last full inspection. The manager and deputy are, however, committed to improving services for the young people. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses requiring development. Strengths include having a team of enthusiastic staff who are committed to providing good quality care for the young people. Areas for improvement identified by the manager include engaging staff more fully in taking responsibility for the evidencing of their work and

to ensure that the day-to-day operations of the home are more efficient.

The recommendation made at the last inspection has been addressed by the manager. This related to ensuring all staff understand, share and implement the home's approach to caring for children. Staff fully understand the home's approach and at all times promote the care and wellbeing of young people.

There is a positive team working ethos at the home and young people benefit from the clear boundaries set by staff in respect of acceptable behaviour. The manager and deputy ensure that staff are appropriately supervised to ensure competencies and skills are monitored and updated as required. This means that young people are cared for by staff who are appropriately managed and able to meet the challenging demands of the nature of residential work in a busy children's home.

A weakness in the management of the home lies in the lack of effective monitoring of the some records that provide key information. For example, the care plans do not always reflect the information in periodic summaries, and signatures of staff are missing from some reports. This means that there is no verification of the accuracy of these records. Some policies require also require review.

The children's guide is a child-friendly document making good use of colours and pictures. It does not however, have key information to enable young people to make contact with their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director or Ofsted. This omission limits the ability of young people to contact officials outside of the home should they have any concerns.

The home is adequately resourced and the numbers of staff available ensure that a safe environment is provided for the young people. The building is appropriately maintained and each young person has their own bedroom space. Their rooms are comfortably furnished and young people enjoy having their own personal place where they can have private time. There are suitable social areas such as the games room and lounge in the home for the young people to meet and relax.

Staff are appropriately trained to provide them with the skills and competencies to care for young people. The majority are trained to the National Vocation Qualification at level 3. Those without this qualification are currently completing the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma. This will provide the young people with staff who are appropriately trained in the care of children.

Good relationships have been established between the manager and the appropriate agencies to ensure the welfare and care of the young people. The placing authorities report positively on the quality and calibre of the staff at this setting.

The manager recognises the areas requiring improvement and is positively committed to bring about significant changes to make this a more efficient and effective home for the young people.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.