

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	9 February 2010
Inspector	Stella Henderson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	10 March 2009
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home, which is also a school, provides care and education for up to 10 young people aged between 11 and 16 years who have significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

A large detached property, the home is set in its own grounds that provide for a range of activities. Young people are able to access local leisure activities in the immediate neighbourhood. The home has transport to take the young people to those facilities that are a travelling distance away.

Three young people contributed to the inspection process.

Summary

The purpose of this visit was to follow up on requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection and to undertake a full unannounced inspection. Six outcomes were assessed: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, achieving economic well-being and organisation.

Key national minimum standards are met and young people enjoy a good standard of care. There are no weaknesses relating to health and safety issues. There is good safeguarding overall, and sound policies and procedures, which are implemented by staff in practice, ensure positive experiences and opportunities across the Every Child Matters outcomes.

The staff team have experience as well as relevant training in how to care for young people. There is good independent and internal oversight into how the home is running which enables the manager to improve the quality of care that young people receive.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered provider was required to maintain accurate and up-to-date records of restraints and sanctions. A recommendation was also made with regard to the effective monitoring of staff practice in relation to behaviour management. Evidence from this inspection demonstrates that these actions and recommendations are now met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with good quantities of freshly prepared food and drink. They are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and are able to contribute to the choice of meals, and each young person has one evening where they prepare a meal for the rest of the group. Young people commented that the food is good and the chef is 'fantastic'. Food intake is generally well monitored although there is some inconsistency in the daily recording of meals consumed.

Young people receive a service that supports them to be healthy. Staff ensure that the individual health needs of young people are known by gaining as much information as possible prior to their arrival at the home. Any medical condition needing attention is identified at an early stage

of admission, and routine appointments are made with primary health care services. Referrals are promptly made to other specialist services when required. Young people are also encouraged to keep healthy through a range of leisure activities such as football and swimming and to reduce harmful behaviours such as smoking.

Systems for the administration of medication are good and staff are trained in the use of first aid. Procedures for storing, handling and administering young people's medication are implemented safely. Young people have written medical consent available so that staff have the authority they need to attend to young people's health needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Procedures and practices at the home ensure that young people's right to privacy and confidentiality is upheld. For example, all confidential information is stored appropriately in a room to which young people have no access. Young people described how the bathroom arrangements work in a way that maintains their individual dignity and said that the home is large enough to provide them with space away from each other should they so wish it.

Safeguarding measures are in place to deal with complaints, missing from home and bullying. Young people choose not to go missing from the home however, and there has been only one complaint since the last inspection. This was appropriately responded to. There is a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and young people said this is not an issue at the home at the moment. Where this has been a problem in the past, they feel that staff dealt with it quickly.

Staff provide very effective guidance and support to those young people who need it. When behaviour does become unacceptable, staff are quick to respond and are effective in helping to resolve any difficulties. Each young person has an individual behaviour management plan and strategies are based on praise, reward and sanction. Restraint is rarely used and such episodes are generally recorded in accordance with these regulations although there are some minor recording errors.

Staff receive child protection training and are conversant with local safeguarding procedures. Young people are further protected by effective procedures for the recruitment and vetting of staff which means they are adequately protected from those who are unsuitable to work with children and young people.

Comprehensive risk assessments are in place to identify the known and likely behaviours of young people. These are regularly reviewed and risk levels adjusted as young people gain more trust and develop more positive behaviours.

Young people are protected within the home as all environmental checks are in place. Audits are routinely carried out on fire equipment and fire evacuation procedures are undertaken at intervals recommended by the national minimum standards.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from good placement planning which focuses on their individual needs. Placement plans are based on comprehensive assessments and information from a variety of

sources. This addresses in detail how personal support will be provided and is compiled in consultation with young people. As part of this process, care is also taken to ensure all known or likely behaviours are risk assessed which helps to promote the safety and well-being of young people.

Individual plans show that young people enjoy a good balance of structured and free time. They are given opportunities to participate in in-house and external activities of their choice. The home is also a school which young people attend on a daily basis. Individual education plans are in place and young people receive a good deal of encouragement and support with their school work. The school was recently judged as 'good with outstanding features' by Ofsted.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The needs of young people are very effectively met at the home. Placements are stable which indicates young people are appropriately placed. Comprehensive care plans are compiled which are clearly linked with outcomes and targets to be achieved, and are rigorously implemented which helps to avoid drift and delay in achieving outcomes.

The progress and development of young people are formally monitored by statutory review and also by key working sessions, general observation and effective communication with young people. The home's own 'placement plan tracker' provides good information about the progress and development of young people and sets new targets to be achieved.

Young people are offered a range of formal and informal opportunities to make their views known, such as through young people's meetings and contact with the Regulation 33 visitor. Young people also have frequent contact with education staff and family, and there is regular contact with management to whom they can make representations if they so wish.

Young people are encouraged by the home to have contact with family and friends in order to reinforce their sense of identity and retain ties with family and their local community. Such arrangements are discussed at an early stage of the placement and any safeguarding issues or restrictions on contact are made clear.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

There are no young people at the home who are eligible for leaving care services or pathway plans; however, the home provides opportunities for young people to develop their independence skills. For example, young people are encouraged, under supervision, to cook for themselves and other people. They also have responsibility for age-appropriate housekeeping tasks around the home such as maintaining a tidy bedroom.

The design, layout and use of the accommodation allow young people privacy. All young people have individual bedrooms where they keep their personal belongings. Both the interior and exterior of the home are being maintained in a reasonably good state of structural and decorative repair.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home is effectively managed and fulfils its Statement of Purpose in providing young people with the care and support they need. On admission to the home young people receive a copy of the children's guide which helps young people to understand what they can expect from the home and how they will be cared for.

Staffing arrangements are organised to support the effective management of the home and to meet the needs of young people. Staffing levels are sufficient to ensure that young people enjoy continuity of care from staff who are familiar to them.

Young people are looked after by staff who are supported through regular supervision, team meetings and training. The recommended number of staff are in possession of the appropriate National Vocational Qualification, although some staff have not yet completed the course despite being registered for nearly two years. The staff team is, nevertheless, equipped with the skills, competences and understanding they need for the task of caring for young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Evidence across the five outcomes supports a commitment to these principles. The quality and detail of placement plans demonstrate individually appropriate care packages based on the diverse needs of young people. Young people engage in activities in the diverse local community, and through formal education and 'theme nights' they learn about other cultures and traditions. The staff team is well balanced in terms of age and gender.

Regular independent monitoring of the home provides a statutory check on the home's functioning and identifies any shortfalls in practice or procedure. In addition, there are management systems in place to monitor the performance of the home and to identify where improvements to the quality of care can be made. This ensures that young people continue to benefit from appropriate care and good standards being maintained.

The home's records are, on the whole, compliant with legal requirements, including those relating to admissions and discharges. Case files relating to the care and welfare of young people are well-maintained and this ensures young people have an accurate record of their needs and progress.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that the location of restraints are recorded in the volume used for this purpose. (NMS 22.9)