

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC008271
Inspection date	31/08/2011
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	24/03/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

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.

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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care for up to two young people who have experienced emotional and behavioural difficulties. A private company owns and operates the setting.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides care which is planned and executed to an excellent standard. Outstanding outcomes are being achieved by each child. The home's excellent contribution to these outcomes arises from consistently high standards of care practice by staff and managers. The application of best practice in the matching process is also a key contributor to the current success of the home.

Young people enjoy living here and like the staff. Young people are central to the home and they feel included in all aspects of what goes on here. Young people feel safe and behave very safely. There is an exceedingly strong sense of belonging and trust here. This is because staff provide each young person with exactly the right balance of nurture, routine, trust, increasing independence and responsibility. However, young people do not presently enjoy independence with respect to keeping and administering their own medication.

Leaders and managers are ambitious and energetic for continuous improvement and development. They bring to bear extensive experience and empathy so that staff are clearly led and inspired by them. Managers are ensuring that staff gain both the expertise and insight to identify the reasons for success and how to build upon it.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people who are able and wish to keep and take their own medication are enabled to do so safely. (NMS 6.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

Young people are making exceptional progress to develop a positive self view. They have a balanced, clear knowledge and understanding of their background and are benefitting from increasing positive contact with their families. This is extremely well facilitated by staff who ensure that both relatives and young people feel well supported before, during and after contact visits and phone calls. As a result, young people are excited and motivated about the plans for their future living arrangements and are confident that these will be successful.

Young people are participating in a diverse range of activities and opportunities which are helping them to enjoy and achieve to their maximum potential. For example, they are learning to play musical instruments and are pursuing sporting and outdoor activities including golf, tennis, fishing, camping and hill walking. Young people are also now in a good routine and settled lifestyle, including daily school, homework, activities and participation in the life of the home. They take part in menu planning, cooking and cleaning, including making main meals, cleaning their rooms and undertaking some laundry. Success and enjoyment in all these activities benefits their physical and emotional health.

Young people's responsible behaviour and the fact that they are placed close to their family homes, peers and schools, means that they enjoy increasing amounts of free time to spend out with friends, particularly in the school holidays. Staff work very effectively with young people and community police to ensure that young people receive good advice and support about how to use their free time responsibly. As a result, young people have been able to avoid involvement in any criminal activity. Instead, they have gained a positive experience of living in their locality and community. They have also developed independence and enjoyed success in sustaining positive peer relationships.

Young people have made significant progress with their education. Their attendance is now regular, which represents enormous progress from their starting points. Similarly, their commitment to education has grown significantly and they are prepared to undertake study during school holidays in order to catch up with their peers. They have undertaken short courses, with support from staff, in food hygiene and equality and diversity. They are now in a position where they can realise their ability to make a positive contribution by attaining qualifications and subsequently, employment.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy trusting and warm relationships with staff and with each other. Staff spend significant amounts of quality time with them and provide consistently good role models for them. Staff lead by example on high standards of personal and domestic hygiene and on healthy, active lifestyles. They provide consistent advice, care and guidance as would a good parent. Staff listen to young people's views and seek their wishes and feelings about daily matters and large decisions alike. For

example, staff involve young people in preparing for contact meetings and for review meetings, but also listen to their wishes and feelings in relation to what and when the evening meal is or whether a friend can come back to spend time in the home. As a result, young people enjoy very good emotional and physical health and behave exceptionally well.

The contribution of the home to young people's placement plans is of extremely high quality. There is very regular and consistent work with social workers, family members, school staff and health professionals to ensure that liaison is effective and that consistent care is provided, including specialist input where needed, to meet each young person's needs. Information about diversity issues is provided and discussed at appropriate times. Care is taken to ensure that young people are given both time and opportunity to consider any emerging cultural or religious interests. Light hearted culture evenings are shared at several of the local homes in the organisation when young people dress up, decorate the house and eat some of the food of a country of their choosing.

The quality of individual case records is high. For example, there is monthly progress tracking against all the outcome areas. Individual photo album memories of the time in the home are also made. Young people know how to make a complaint but have nothing that they want to complain about. They are confident that their needs are being met and that all staff are helping them to achieve their individual future goals. Young people feel central to the planning and review of their care and know that staff make all decisions in their best interests. However, young people have not been provided with prompt enough opportunity to take responsibility for keeping and administering their own medication. This represents a very small shortfall in the identification and delegation of manageable risks to young people who are working towards independence.

Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting each young person to achieve their potential and fulfil their future plans. Staff have consistently high aspirations for each young person and celebrate their successes with them. Staff ensure that all arrangements, clothing and equipment are made ready in good time before the new school term starts. They ensure that young people have suitable access to study furniture, computers and materials and are well rested after their successful holidays. They organise for the young people's choice of bedroom redecoration to be completed while they are away on holiday, so that it is lovely for them to come home to. Staff also keep the home extremely clean and well maintained, and promote a strong sense of belonging with photos, coats, shoes and personal souvenirs all around the house. The home is ideally located for the young people that are placed because it is accessible to their friends, schools and families. As a result of these factors, young people feel settled and highly valued here.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

safe.

Young people have a strong sense of safety and well-being in the home. They are very safe here because the home is well organised and staff run it consistently as would a good parent. Staff are suitably vetted and they take care to monitor and check all visitors to the house. This protects young people from abuse and exploitation. Staff respect young people's privacy, but put in place clear expectations that young people will keep in touch when they are out on free time. Young people are behaving extremely responsibly and are earning increasing trust because of this. They do not go missing and they reliably come back to the home or meet staff at the agreed times and places.

Restraints are not used in the home, and all staff are committed to the use of personal skills and de-escalation techniques to minimise the necessity for restraint. Young people in placement have not been restrained on any occasion. Clear risk assessments for each young person's behaviours are kept under regular review as risks diminish over time. Young people are increasingly able to take appropriate risks as part of their growth and development. For example, they are enjoying increasing amounts of free time out with friends and are able to independently manage small amounts of money and use individual bank accounts. They are also allowed access to the internet and phones with age-appropriate levels of supervision. They trust one another with their possessions and are confidently able to share their things and leave them around the house.

Young people behave extremely well. They appreciate the benefits of this in terms of a pleasant atmosphere to live in and the positive responses of staff. Staff give young people positive praise and attention at every opportunity and are interested in their opinions and thoughts. Staff provide guidance and advice about safe and healthy living and also encourage young people to further advice through various community initiatives. Young people meet their behaviour targets almost without exception. They therefore earn extra money and activities which enhance their lifestyle and enjoyment still more. Staff are attuned to the potential for raising young people's lifestyles beyond that which would be available to them in the future. This is discussed openly with young people and they are beginning to learn about saving and budgeting some of their reward monies. This better balances their rewards for current outstanding progress with their expectations for future lifestyles.

Leadership and management

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

The home is very effectively and efficiently managed. The manager consistently communicates high expectations to staff about sustaining improvement. Improvements are quickly identified and actioned across all the homes for which the manager is responsible. In this way, lessons are learned and young people benefit from extremely high standards. For example, continuous improvements to the house are promptly organised and undertaken so that young people benefit from a high quality living environment. Similarly, improvements to risk assessment formats and

the organisation of training aim to ensure that these things are less tokenistic and mean more to the staff and young people using them.

Managers work together well within the home and provide excellent role models of good practice to stimulate the enthusiasm of all staff. They routinely make good use of a range of rigorous monitoring activities so that they know in detail how the home is running and how staff and young people are doing. As a result, staff are committed and well supported in their work and young people are making excellent progress. There were no recommendations or requirements made at the last inspection, but the manager continues to use regulation 34 and 33 reports and makes a six monthly review of the home, analysing insights and trends from the data and events available. Actions and considerations for the home are shared formally and informally with staff, so that the team works very effectively together and has vision for the future.

There is a strong and stable staff team at the home, all of whom are confident in their work with young people. They all understand and maintain the records in a clear and timely way so that they contribute to a good understanding of each young person's life. There are a sufficient number of qualified staff and careful planning is underway for changing future management needs. This means that continuity of care and high standards is assured. Staff receive good support, supervision and some ongoing training from the organisation. The manager maintains a 'hands-on' approach to the home; so that prompt advice and support can be given should there be any notifiable incidents, child protection concerns, complaints or significant events. This availability is particularly important because significant issues are so rare at this home that some staff have not had direct experience of using the required procedures.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.