

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Scott
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a private children's home; the owner is also the Registered Manager. The home provides care for up to six young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities.

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 **good**.

This children's home is making a positive difference to young people's lives. The commitment and quality of care provided by staff enable young people to make exceptionally good progress. Young people say they like living at the home and feel settled and well cared for. As a result, young people are achieving some very good outcomes in relation to their confidence, emotional resilience, relationships, education and preparation for independence.

Staff are extremely committed to young people and work in a way that maximises their potential. Care planning and care practice is highly individualised and tailored to meet young people's unique needs. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, families and professionals to ensure they get the right help, guidance and advice they need on a daily basis. Young people's views are integral to the running of the home and they are well supported to be fully involved in decisions affecting their lives.

Young people are kept safe and made to feel safe. Robust systems and excellent care practice ensure the welfare and safety of young people are promoted at all times. Staff show a good understanding of the risks young people face and always take positive action to ensure risks are minimised and safely managed. As a result, young people feel safe because staff have their best interests at heart.

Leadership and management of the home are good. The management team and staff are clearly focused on developing and improving the service around the needs of the young people living at the home. There is a clear aspiration to be outstanding

and managers have a good understanding of the areas that need to improve. These include the shortfalls identified at this inspection relating to: the environment, restraint and sanction records, the emergency escape plan and notifications of serious incidents.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

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

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
30 (2001)	ensure that if in relation to the children's home, any events listed in column 1 of the table schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table including Ofsted. (Regulation 30 (1))	04/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure all areas of the home are well maintained, specifically, ensure all bathroom door locks are in working order and replace the floor covering in the upstairs bathroom (NMS 10.3)
- improve the quality and consistency of restraint records by ensuring that they include full details of the child's behaviour leading to the restraint and a detailed description of the method of restraint used (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.91)
- ensure that where any sanctions are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure the emergency escape plan clearly details the procedures for unlocking external doors in the event of an emergency during the night (NMS 10.9)
- ensure all notifications of significant events submitted to Ofsted include specific details of the action taken, and the outcome of any action or investigation, following a notifiable event. (NMS 24.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people benefit from well-planned care which is highly personalised to meet their individual and unique needs. Staff are skilled at making and sustaining positive relationships that enhance young people's trust, self-worth and confidence. They effectively use these strong attachments to help young people develop an understanding of their lives through sensitive discussion and life story work. As a result, young people come to terms with their past and find stability in their lives. This has resulted in young people becoming more resilient and better able to plan positively for their future. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the excellent progress young people are making in achieving their personal goals.

Young people are healthy and enjoy healthy lifestyles. They eat well balanced diets and take regular exercise through activities and play. Staff provide young people with consistently good advice and guidance on a range of health and social issues including sexual health, relationships and the dangers of smoking. This helps young people develop an age appropriate understanding about healthy and safe lifestyle choices and refrain from inappropriate risk taking behaviour.

Young people are making very good progress with their education, and attendance at school and college is extremely good. They talk positively about their academic achievements and feel they are well supported by staff. Staff make every effort to overcome the barriers to participation, enabling young people to access suitable learning environments. For example, when young people move into the home staff work proactively and closely with social workers and education authorities to ensure a suitable placement is found quickly. This minimises the disruption to young people's learning routine and enhances their potential for academic success.

Well organised and safe arrangements are in place for young people to have contact with their families. Staff support young people both emotionally and practically to ensure contact is as positive an experience as possible. They work hard to help young people to develop and sustain relationships with important people in their lives. One young person said, 'Staff have helped me have more contact with my sister which will be good because I want to go and live near her when I leave.'

Young people are being well prepared to become more independent appropriate to their age, ability and level of understanding. They are encouraged to develop basic life skills through regular involvement in the running of the home, including keeping it clean, shopping, cooking and managing money. The home has further developed its independence training programme which has a clear focus on teaching young people the skills necessary to live independently. Young people who are 'eligible' have pathway plans in place. Staff work closely with young people and leaving care professionals to ensure transitions to independence are well planned. This support continues after young people have left the home. For example, staff will encourage young people to keep in regular contact, visit the home for meals and ask for help should they need it. This means young people are offered parental like support, better enabling them to deal with living independently.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from living in a stable and supportive environment. They are cared for by a staff team who are highly motivated, enthusiastic and clearly committed to meeting the needs of young people in their care. Young people confirm they have very positive relationships with staff and each other. These relationships underpin the culture and ethos of the home which is based on mutual respect and trust. Staff are positive role models for young people. They have high expectations and provide young people with structure, and routine through firm but fair boundaries. This helps young people find stability and develop a sense of right and wrong. One young person said, 'My behaviour is much better now. When I get annoyed I will often take myself to my bedroom, think about what I have done and apologise. I never used to do this.'

Young people feel valued and respected as individuals because their views and opinions are integral to life in the home. There are lots of opportunities, including daily discussions, keywork sessions and young people's meetings, for young people to make choices about the daily running of the home and their care. Young people are confident that staff listen, do their best to meet reasonable requests and take seriously any concerns they raise. While rare, complaints are taken seriously and are effectively managed and addressed in the best interest of young people.

Staff plan for young people's care and accommodation very well. A number of young people have left the home since the last inspection, successfully returning home, moving placement or making a successful transition to independence. Referrals are meticulously assessed, giving serious consideration to whether the needs of the individual can be met, without impacting negatively on the care of young people living at the home.

Care planning and care practice is highly individualised and young people's needs are well documented in their individual care plans. These plans are routinely monitored and reviewed to ensure they accurately reflect young people's current needs, development and progress. Young people are regularly consulted about their care, have a good understanding of their plans and feel they are making good progress in their lives. Staff recognise young people as individuals with different backgrounds, interests and needs. As a result, young people receive excellent support from staff, and an individualised service specifically designed to meet their personal needs and identity.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical and emotional well-being. Staff assess and monitor young people's health to ensure they are aware of, and able to respond to any issues or concerns promptly. Young people are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician and are well supported to attend routine appointments and check-ups. Staff will make appropriate referrals to specialist health services, and work closely with them to ensure that young people's historic, current or emerging health needs are addressed.

Staff ensure the basic daily routine supports young people's participation in education. There is a clear expectation that young people must attend school and staff consistently promote the importance of educational success. Staff work closely with teachers and tutors to promote consistent support for young people. For example, when young people are struggling, staff will liaise with education staff and identify the support the young person requires. This has proven effective in helping young people overcome the barriers to participation in education and enabling them to successfully maintain their education placement. Staff show a genuine interest in young people's education by attending parent evenings, events and meetings. Young people are appreciative of this commitment which further reinforces the importance of a good education. As a result, young people routinely attend school and are making good progress relative to their age, ability and time in placement.

Staff encourage young people to plan their recreational time positively. Young people are offered a wide-range of risk assessed, age appropriate activities to occupy their recreation time. Staff encourage and support young people to develop their confidence, talents and skills by pursuing personal interests. All young people talk enthusiastically about their hobbies which include playing rugby, attending the cubs and playing musical instruments. During the inspection one young person proudly showed off his musical talents by playing classical music on his guitar and keyboards.

Young people live in a large, comfortable house that blends in well with the neighbourhood. The house is maintained to a reasonably high standard. However, some minor repairs are outstanding. These relate to a shower room door lock that is not working and bathroom floor covering that was damaged following a leak. Young people say they like the home. They take ownership of the environment and treat it with respect and care. The home is suitably decorated and reflects young people's needs and tastes creating a homely feel to the environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and are not bullied in the home. They say staff encourage them to share their feelings and concerns and are confident that if they had any worries they could tell a member of staff.

Young people are well protected by robust safeguarding procedures and care practice that gives their safety and well-being the highest priority. Staff are trained in safeguarding and have a clear understanding about their roles and responsibilities to keep young people safe from harm. Detailed risk assessments are used to inform staff practice, ensuring they know how to manage young people's known risks and vulnerabilities. Staff strike a good balance between protection and enabling young people to take age appropriate risks. This proportionate approach ensures opportunities for personal growth and social development are not limited and young people enjoy the same social experiences as their peers.

There are robust procedures in place for when young people go missing from home.

Staff routinely follow protocols that have been agreed with the police and are based on an assessment of each young person's risks and vulnerabilities. Extremely strong links have been established with the police who report that the home is very good at managing the absence of young people. The police missing from home coordinator said, 'the home is brilliant to work with. They share relevant information, respond to advice and adjust their practice if necessary. We have a close working relationship and I have no concerns about the way the home manages missing from home incidents.'

Staff take a very positive approach to behaviour management. They encourage socially acceptable behaviour using reward, praise and encouragement. When sanctions are used young people say they are fair and proportionate and that staff discuss their behaviour and sanction with them. However, young people's comments are not recorded in the home's sanction records. Behaviour management plans provide staff with agreed and safe responses to managing young people's sometimes difficult and challenging behaviour. Staff are trained in behaviour management and restraint. They make good use of positive relationships and de-escalation techniques to manage conflict and confrontation. When restraint has been necessary, it has been done caringly and for the right reasons. Young people confirm this, showing a good level of insight into their own needs and behaviour. Records of each restraint are made. However, a number of these records do not provide sufficient detail about the reasons for restraint or the method of restraint used.

Procedures for recruiting and appointing staff are robust. Staff are carefully selected and vetted to ensure they are suitable to work with young people. Applicants are expected to meet the young people, under the direct supervision of staff, prior to appointment. Young people's views are used to contribute to the final decision being made. This ensures people working at the home have the right attributes and qualities to work with young people.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by a range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff and young people are regularly involved in fire drills to ensure they know how to evacuate the home in the event of an emergency. The home has an emergency evacuation plan that young people know very well. However, this plan does not include details of agreed and practiced procedures for unlocking doors during the night. This has the potential to compromise the safety of young people as they are unable to evacuate the building without staff assistance during night-time hours.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively managed. The manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering an exceedingly high standard of childcare that places the needs of young people at the centre of care practice. Staff have high aspirations for young people and are proud of how well they are doing. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in how settled and happy young people

are and the excellent progress they are making.

The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose. Child-friendly information is available in the children's guide. These documents ensure young people and stakeholders are clear about the purpose of the home and the services and support it provides.

There was one recommendation made at the last inspection. Improved opportunities for training, support and guidance have enhanced staffs' understanding of working with young people who self-harm. This ensures young people receive both emotional and practical support at times when they display this type of behaviour.

The Registered Manager is also the responsible individual and is in day-to-day control of the home. They are well supported by two deputy managers who are suitably qualified and experienced. Managers have a realistic understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. They provide good leadership and guidance for staff to ensure the service continues to develop and improve the care provided for young people. Development plans that are used as working documents are utilised for this purpose. This further promotes good planning as the home aspires to be outstanding in all areas. There is a shared responsibility for monitoring and managers use a number of systems to evaluate administration systems, quality of care and outcomes for young people. For example, each young person's care is evaluated each month to identify patterns and trends. This information is then used to by staff to inform practice. As a result, young people receive good support to meet their needs.

Young people are looked after by an adequate number of competent staff. Staff qualification levels are adequate with a number of staff being at various stages of acquiring a level three childcare qualification. All staff receive regular formal supervision and have their performance appraised annually. Staff training is closely monitored to ensure all staff are up to date with mandatory training including safeguarding, first aid and behaviour management. This is complimented by opportunities to complete needs-led training. For example, the police missing from home coordinator recently delivered training for staff around current reporting protocols and child sexual exploitation. This ensures staff are equipped to meet young people's current and emerging needs.

Young people's records and case files are of a very good standard. They are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they provide a comprehensive picture of young people's needs, development and progress. Systems are in place to ensure relevant people and organisations are notified of significant events. However, a number of these notifications have not been sent to Ofsted within designated timeframes. Also, submitted reports have been insufficiently detailed to evidence the robust action taken to manage the serious incident. This means the home is not meeting regulatory requirements and national minimum standards.

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.