

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC008485
Inspection date	20 August 2009
Inspector	Alicea Churchward
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	20 January 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 is fit for purpose. This home is in a residential area and is close to community facilities and leisure pursuits. It is indistinguishable from surrounding properties and looks like a family home. At the time of this inspection, seven children are accommodated. There is a large garden area to the rear of the property and plenty of space to play. The home has excellent facilities for the children living there and its gardens are well maintained. The home has a two-bedded satellite home as part of the registration, it is within 10 minutes travelling time of the main home and currently accommodates two young people.

Summary

This was an unannounced full inspection. The purpose of the visit is to assess how the home is meeting the National Minimum Standards (NMS) and Children's Home Regulations. All of the key standards were assessed. The manager and registered person were present during the course of the inspection and given verbal feedback at the end of the process.

The home has made excellent progress since the time of the last inspection. No requirements were issued. Three recommendations have been raised in respect of ensuring that first aid equipment remains in the home, that the time of fire drills is recorded to demonstrate evacuations meet with the standard, and that children's religious backgrounds are clearly recorded in their placement plans.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection, two requirements were issued in relation to Ofsted contact details being included in the children's guide and addressing any gaps in employment histories; these matters have been addressed.

Two recommendations issued in respect of obtaining complaints information from placing authorities and ensuring that at least 80% of staff complete their NVQ, have also been addressed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy very healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. They have the opportunity to shop for and prepare meals. Children are involved in the preparation and setting up of mealtimes; they are set up to be well-managed, orderly, social occasions. The records of menus demonstrate a very balanced healthy diet. Children report that they like the meals and are encouraged to try different types of food that they thought they did not like. Children like to prepare snacks and light lunches with the supervision of staff. Children also enjoy baking.

Children's health needs are met very well. Individual health assessments have been identified and any needs arising from these have been addressed. All information in relation to health and immunisations are located in children's files. The physical, emotional and health needs of each child are identified and appropriate action is taken to secure the medical, dental and other health services needed to meet them. Children are provided with guidance, advice and support

on health and personal care issues appropriate to the needs and wishes of each child. Children are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle and be active.

A written record is kept by the home of all medication, treatment and first aid given to children, which is signed by a responsible member of staff. The records are regularly monitored by an appropriate designated senior member of staff and the manager. Arrangements for the storage of medication are good as they are kept in a safe. All staff have received training in first aid; however, the first aid box could not be located on the day of the inspection. Any children self-administering medication only do so once a risk assessment has been completed. All children have consent to treatment in their files.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Privacy is respected and children report that this is the case. Information is observed to be dealt with and stored in confidential manner.

There is a clear policy in relation to complaints. Children report knowing how to make a complaint and records clearly demonstrate that this is the case. Information is included in the children's guide in respect of Ofsted and independent free phone numbers. Children also report that they could complain to someone independent of the home. Records of complaints demonstrate that they are taken seriously and responded to in a timely way. Children receive a letter advising them of the outcome of any complaints.

The welfare of children is promoted as they are protected from abuse and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. The home has clear links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. There are systems in place to promote the safety and welfare of children and to ensure that children are protected from abuse, which are known and understood by all staff. Matters brought to the attention of the staff in the home have been dealt with in a sensitive manner. Children report feeling very safe in this home.

The home has a clear ethos that bullying will not be tolerated and work is undertaken with those children who demonstrate such behaviours. Behaviour has changed as a result and empathy has improved. The children are clear that bullying is not acceptable and that the staff will deal with any matters arising.

There is clear procedural guidance for staff to follow in the event of a child being absent without authority. There is no evidence that when absence occurs, that it is a result of a child being unhappy with the quality of care offered at the home. Absence that has been problematic for particular children has been reduced as a result of careful thought in relation to what the potential triggers for this may be. Current absence is in respect of older children wishing to stay out with their friends and not complying with the home's rules, in relation to being in on time.

A primary focus in this home is on maintaining positive relationships with the children. There is emphasis placed upon having good manners and respecting each other. Children gain rewards for this and this basic requirement has improved relationships with staff and children's behaviour towards each other to good effect. The home maintains records of sanctions and restraints, which comply with regulation and the registered person regularly monitors these. Staff have

received training in positive behaviour management of the children and the need to physically intervene if necessary.

The home maintains records of risk assessments in relation to the home's premises and grounds and children's activities. All maintenance checks have been undertaken to ensure a safe environment. The home has an up-to-date fire risk assessment and there are records of evacuations and maintenance of fire equipment. The home maintains records of evacuations and they demonstrate that regular drills take place. However, they do not include the time of the drill and therefore it is not possible to ascertain whether they fully meet the standard. No hazards were observed to the young people's safety during a tour of the accommodation. The young people are safe in this environment.

All staff have been appropriately recruited and undergone suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people. The recruitment of the right individual for the job is always seen as much more important than filling a vacancy. Suitable vetting of visitors to the home is undertaken, with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive very good individualised support appropriate to their needs. The records contain details of individual support services involved in the health, care and education of children. The staff appreciate that the individual children may have a range of possible needs arising from diversity.

Children's education is enhanced, promoted and supported by staff implementing a well-developed education policy. Each child's placement plan gives clear detail about how their educational needs and aspirations are supported. Education is a very high priority and it is vigorously promoted. Staff make a lot of effort to encourage good attendance. There is space, resources and facilities at the home to enable the completion of homework or structured home study programmes. The home now has a registered school off site and children accessing these facilities are very positive about the provision.

Children are actively encouraged to take part in leisure activities both inside the home and in the local community. A specific area of development has been creativity in planning and attending children's activities and individual interests, which are actively encouraged and supported. Each child is a member of a separate club that reflects their individual interests and allows them to make friends with other children who are not part of the care system. Children are eager to participate in the activities on offer. The comments and conversation of the children clearly show that they enjoy and appreciate these activities. They also confirm that they are fully involved in planning activities, outings and holidays. There has been an annual holiday and a short break camping is planned.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children have good comprehensive up-to-date, informative placement plans. The plans outline all matters required by the standard with one exception, the religion of children is not always noted. This section of the placement plan often makes reference to 'non-practicing'

and this does not clearly identify what religious background children have. Children in the home know the content of their overall care plans and placement plan. The placement plans are consistent with local authority care plans.

All children are encouraged to and do attend their statutory reviews. The children are positive about meetings associated with their care plans and are supported to put their views forward. Reviews are held within statutory timescales and records demonstrate that children's views are taken into account. The home's staff contribute effectively to all reviews on the progress and any difficulties being experienced.

Children know their arrangements for contact and staff encourage them to maintain friendships with their peers. This prevents young people from feeling isolated. Detailed information in relation to contact arrangements is within young people's placement plans.

Admissions to the home are very well planned and managed to help young people to feel happy and settled about their move. Parents and children are able to visit the home at an early stage and all visits are arranged at a level that is suitable for the young person. Visits include staying for tea and overnights where possible. The group of children currently placed are very stable in their placements; this helps new admissions to become familiar with expectations.

Children are listened to and staff consult them in a variety of ways, for example, young people's meetings and daily conversations. This is in relation to their needs and the running of the home. Parents and placing social workers are mainly consulted informally in relation to meeting the needs of young people. Feedback from parents is very positive about being made to feel welcome during visits and communication with the home about their child.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

None of the children placed are of an age whereby pathway planning has commenced. However, the home has developed an independent living file for each young person so that they can begin to sample tasks appropriate to their age and understanding. Children are encouraged to help with cooking, shopping, keeping their rooms tidy and making their bed, laundry and the care of their clothing including ironing, where appropriate. At the time of this visit, children are being encouraged to travel using public transport to further improve their independence skills.

The house is an impressive detached property in its own grounds. The home provides good quality domestic style facilities for children living here. The home is decorated and furnished to a standard, which creates a pleasant domestic environment. The interior and exterior of the home are maintained in an excellent state of structural and decorative repair. Since the time of the last inspection, the lounge has been re-decorated and completely refurbished. The hall stairs and landing have been decorated. One of the children's bedrooms has also been refurbished and built in style wardrobes removed to create more room. The home has had a new boiler fitted and the bathroom has been refurbished and wet walls installed. There is plenty of room for the children, to eat, play, engage in activities and meet privately with visitors. Children's bedrooms are highly personalised and this is their private space. The home is in the process of replacing lampshades.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The statement of purpose is a detailed document that is regularly reviewed. It gives excellent information about how young people are cared for in the home. The young person's guide is attractive and well presented, in a form that is easily understood by children and young people and their families.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Individual children can cite examples of how their views have changed as a result of staff undertaking work with them to improve their understanding of diversity, and all of the children say that the staff in the home treat them fairly. All of the children have good access to all opportunities provided by the home.

Staff are appropriately qualified and training opportunities are very good, which provides staff with the knowledge and skills to understand and to meet the specific needs of the vulnerable children. Areas in which staff have undertaken training include Safeguarding Children, Care and Control, First Aid for the appointed person, Self Harming Behaviour, Adolescence Mental Health, Level 2 award Food Safety in Catering, Health and Safety in the Work place, Medication Administration and Managing Challenging Behaviour.

In the last 12 months a further four staff members have completed National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People, this brings the percentage of staff holding the award to 90% which exceeds the standard. Assistant managers in the homes hold NVQ level 4 in Care and Management, and one is currently undertaking their Leadership in Management Course.

Young people are cared for by an established team of staff who are well trained and qualified to meet their needs and who are properly supported by a team of managers and senior staff. Staff demonstrate their commitment to working with the Every Child Matters agenda very well. Staff use training opportunities as well as supervision and team meetings to reflect on practice and to consider ways of improving their service.

There are always sufficient staff on duty to care for the particular needs of the group of children. For example, if risk assessments indicate that a young person needs one to one support, then rotas are arranged to accommodate this. Gaps on the rota are covered by staff working additional hours. This means that young people are cared for by adults who are known to them and who understand their needs.

Robust management systems ensure that excellent standards are maintained in the home. The registered person, with the support of the assistant manager, checks all records regularly and observes the work of care staff. Senior staff, who lead a shift, plan the work of the staff accordingly. This ensures that staff are appropriately deployed and young people are cared for safely. The registered person to the home completes monthly reports on the work of the staff and the care of young people. These reports are detailed and identify issues for improvement, which are responded to promptly by the assistant manager and staff.

Each young person has an individual file which contains detailed information about his or her needs. Files are in good order and are stored securely. Children report that they are aware of their rights to access information held in their files.

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 Childrens 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 first aid and first aid boxes are provided within the home (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that the times of fire drills are recorded to demonstrate that one fire drill is held at night (26.8)
- ensure that all placement plans include any religious needs and how they will be met (NMS 2.1)