

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC008488
Inspection date	29/06/2011
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	11/08/2010
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 and accommodation for up to eight young people between the ages of 10 and 17 years.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children and young people receive individualised care that meets their diverse needs well. Their health, welfare and education are very well promoted. They make excellent progress in relation to their starting point in all aspects of their development. They receive a good level of support to maintain contact with family and friends and to promote their identity. Children and young people's views are listened to and taken into account in the running of the home and in their individual care and placement plans. Children and young people feel very well cared for by the staff team.

The home is well managed and monitored and staff receive high quality training and good support. There is a good development plan for the home that is known to the staff and they are involved in delivering improvements to the standards within the home and the quality of care. There are very good systems in place to promote the safety of children and young people and these are known and followed by staff. Multi-agency working is well developed and effectively promotes the welfare of children and young people.

There are shortfalls in some of the records, including the Statement of Purpose and admission and discharge book. There is an unpleasant odour in some of the currently unused bedrooms. The privacy and safety of children and young people is compromised because there is no division between the garden and grounds of the home, and the car park and grounds of the school.

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
22	demonstrate through records that each child's placing authority	31/07/2011

(2001)	consents to the use of electronic monitoring on bedroom doors, where this is used (Regulation 22 (a))	
29 (2001)	ensure the Admissions and Discharge book and the visitors book are well maintained and up to date and keep them for at least 15 years from the point of the last entry. (Regulation 29)	31/07/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home provides a comfortable, domestic style environment and that avoidable hazards are removed; in particular, ensure that the shower is repaired and the unpleasant odour in currently unused bedrooms is investigated and eliminated before children and young people are admitted to those rooms (10.3)
- ensure that up to date photographs are obtained and telephone enquiries are made to verify written references on prospective employees (NMS 16.1, 16.3)
- ensure that records are clear, up to date and contribute to an understanding of the child's life and the operation of the home; in particular, improve the quality of risk assessments, entries in the restraints log and the information in the Statement of Purpose (NMS 22)
- ensure that children's privacy and safety are promoted through separating the path and garden from the car park, school, company offices and playground. (NMS 10.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people make good progress in all areas of their development. Their self-esteem improves and they develop emotional resilience. The local police officer who is a frequent visitor to the home said, 'I saw the young person 18 months ago when they first arrived with a lot of problems; they have grown into a nice young person'. Young people's individual health needs are identified and met. They receive prescribed medicines and any treatment they need. They receive psychological support as necessary. They eat a healthy and varied diet of well prepared, fresh food, including foods from other cultures.

Children and young people make very good progress in their education. Even those who have had poor attendance in previous placements, have excellent attendance at the registered school attached to the home. They make good progress and achieve well. For example, a young person who had missed extensive amounts of schooling in the past has achieved a number of GCSEs at grade C-G as well as ASDAN and other awards. This is after being in the home for less than two years. One young person commented on how well they had done at school and said, 'I've achieved things I never thought I would.'

Young people contribute to the home and their local environment and community. For example, they assist with growing fruit and vegetables and decorating the home. They attend local events and some have done voluntary work at a local animal sanctuary. Others enjoy the local countryside and enjoy feeding animals at a nearby farm.

Children and young people enjoy plenty of opportunities to develop their skills and to participate in fun activities and exercise. For example, they enjoy playing on the trampoline and rope swing in the garden. They also enjoy playing board games and doing arts and crafts with the staff. They attend local leisure facilities where they improve their swimming and enjoy roller-skating, bowling and a range of other pursuits, according to their interests.

Young people learn to look after themselves in preparation for future independent living. For example, they learn to manage money, cook, launder, make appointments and use public transport. Each child and young person is treated as an individual and they learn skills in accordance with their identified needs.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people are extremely positive about the way they are looked after at the home. The relationships between children and young people and the staff team are exceptionally good. A police officer who regularly attends the home said, 'They have a cracking relationship with the kids.' A young person said: 'They are like my parents, we are one big unrelated family; they are the closest thing to a family I've ever had. The staff provide a therapeutic environment that children and young people respond to well. They implement positive strategies of behaviour management that provide children and young people with secure, clear and consistent boundaries. This means that children and young people know what is expected of them. They develop confidence and significantly reduce their challenging and anti-social behaviours. One young person said, 'They've never let me down; they've never turned their back on me like other homes, no matter what I've done.'

Individual placement plans guide staff in how to care for children and young people. These are regularly reviewed and updated and the Pillars of Parenting therapeutic model is used to assess and review their development in eight essential areas. Staff meet each month to discuss each child and young person's progress and to review how well they are responding to the management strategies in place. A psychologist attends these meetings and assists staff in developing effective behaviour management strategies that promote each child and young person's holistic development.

Staff listen to children and young people and provide opportunities for them to comment on the way they are looked after and their individual care plans. Key worker sessions focus on particular areas of development or concern identified with each child or young person. For example, road safety may be a focus for one whilst sexual health may be a focus for another. Children and young people know how to make a complaint and these are addressed promptly. Independent advocacy services are secured as necessary to assist children and young people. Children and young people play an active and valued part in the selection of new staff by interviewing prospective candidates.

There is a focus on meeting the individual needs of children and young people including their ethnic, cultural and religious needs. The staff team are pro-active in establishing relationships with local community groups and with churches, mosques and temples. This enables children and young people who express an interest in a particular faith to learn about it and to participate in religious celebrations and festivals. Information about other cultures and ethnic groups is attractively displayed throughout the home and the staff team promote an awareness and respect of difference. Children and young people are well supported to maintain contact with their families and friends in accordance with their care plans. This promotes their identity.

The home is a large house with extensive grounds that it shares with the school. There is nothing to separate the garden from the school playground and the car park. The company offices are also on the site and this means that visitors to the office drive and walk through the grounds of the children's home. Some children and young people find this disconcerting.

Young people preparing for independence are accommodated in a suite of rooms including a bedroom, lounge and bathroom. They are encouraged to decorate it to their own taste. Other children and young people have single bedrooms and enjoy a shared lounge, dining room, kitchen and quiet room where they can do homework. A number of bedrooms are currently empty and have an unpleasant odour. They are furnished and equipped with new bedding, towels and a welcome pack of toiletries and information in readiness for newly admitted children and young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people feel safe and cared for in the home. They believe staff care about them and want the best for them. Risk assessments are in place to identify particular hazards to individual children and young people and to the premises. The quality of risk assessments is variable.

Behaviour management strategies are effective in reducing the number of restraints, sanctions and missing from care incidents. Children and young people develop self control and learn to express their feelings in more appropriate ways. The manager and staff work effectively with the police, social workers and other professionals to promote the safety and welfare of children and young people who are missing from home, at risk of sexual exploitation and at risk of committing offences. The local police are made welcome at the home and develop effective, supportive relationships with children and young people. A police officer said that because of this, young people ask to speak to him in confidence and he is very much involved in promoting their safety when they are missing from home. A young person said, 'Even when I've run away they wait for me at the door with arms wide open.'

The police attend training in the Pillars of Parenting therapeutic model of intervention and develop a greater understanding of the needs of children in care and how best to deal with them when they express anger through violence and aggression. A police officer commented, 'We work together superbly, as a partnership. I have a really good understanding of their needs. This training should be rolled out to all police officers who work with children and young people in care.'

The manager and staff promote the safety of children and young people through an equally effective partnership with the youth offending service (YOS). A YOS worker said, 'I have worked with a number of challenging young people who live there. Staff manage volatile and aggressive behaviour very well.' Staff are pro-active in dealing with bullying and children learn that bullying is not tolerated in the home.

Good recruitment and selection procedures and routine monitoring of visitors serve to protect children and young people, as far as possible, from coming into contact with potential abusers. However, up-to-date photographs of staff are not held on every staff member's personnel file and there is no evidence that references are verified.

Leadership and management

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

A competent manager leads and supervises the staff team so that they provide good quality care to children and young people. A high proportion of the staff team have worked at the home for a number of years. They are well trained and qualified in caring for children and young people. Newer staff are well supported and enrolled on suitable training and qualification courses.

There are sufficient staff. Two members of staff are on duty at all times and the manager is in day-to-day management of the team. This enables her to monitor the operation of the home well and ensure children and young people's individual needs are well met. The home's development plan indicates that the manager and staff are constantly reviewing their practice and striving to improve. Individual members of staff have particular responsibilities within the home so that their professional development is considered and addressed. Together with the effective support and training, this encourages staff to develop and display dedication to the children and young people and to take pride in their work. Staff say they are well supported and the training they receive is extremely valuable. A member of staff said, 'I have worked in other children's homes. This is the most dedicated team I have ever worked with.'

Social workers and youth offending service workers say they have 'excellent communication' with the home. However, one social worker felt that the home was not promoting a young person's care plan adequately, when the plan was to move back to the local authority. The young person expressed confusion about their wishes even though they had agreed to the care plan, so the home organised an independent advocate.

The children's guide to the home is well written, child friendly, colourful and suitable for the needs of the children and young people who live at the home. It is appropriately used to assist children and young people to settle in the home and is also used to help children and young people who are moving to the home to get an idea of where they are moving to. The Statement of Purpose explains how the staff team work to the Pillars of Parenting theory and gives important information about the home. However, not all of the information required by Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations is included in sufficient depth.

The quality of recording is mostly good. However, there are shortfalls in some areas, including the admissions and discharge book and the restraints log. The home has not obtained written permission for electronic monitoring devices on bedroom doors. Pages have come loose in the visitors book and are at risk of being lost. Confidential records are stored securely to protect children and young people's information as well as staff information.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.