

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Graham Robinson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	29 December 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 provides medium to long-term care to four young people who are of primary school age on admission. It caters for children and young people who have an attachment disorder or attachment difficulty. All admissions are planned.

The home is domestic in appearance. It provides a child-friendly environment with space for young people to follow their individual interests.

Young people are integrated into schools located within the area and participate in a variety of community-based leisure activities and pursuits.

As well as providing residential provision, the organisation can provide individual therapeutic programmes. All such activities take place away from the home environment. It is the responsibility of placing authorities who purchase therapeutic packages for a young person, to ensure they are appropriate to meet individual needs.

Summary

At this unannounced, full inspection all the key standards were inspected. The recommendation made at the previous inspection was also followed up.

The home is well organised and managed, providing young people in long-term placements with stability, security and a high standard of care. Staff work collectively to provide consistency. The home is settled with all young people established at school and enjoying a series of activities that are arranged to meet their individual needs and interests.

Young people are settled in their placement and feel safe living at the home. None raised any issues or concerns about their experiences within the home, feeling that staff look after them well. The promotion of equality and diversity is good throughout the standards inspected.

No actions have been made as a result of this inspection. The report contains one recommendation linked to ensuring that staffing levels are maintained at sufficient numbers at all times.

The home has made significant progress since the previous full inspection. Whilst the overall quality rating of the home remains as good, the area of economic wellbeing has been raised from satisfactory to good and the areas of being healthy, staying safe and enjoying and achieving are raised from good to outstanding.

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 previous inspection, one recommendation was made linked to improving the bathing areas used by young people, to create a more welcoming, child-friendly environment. This matter has been successfully addressed with significant improvements made to these areas, which have been upgraded.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The arrangements to promote the health of young people are outstanding. Their health needs are identified, with comprehensive, individual health plans in place to address them. The format and quality of the health plans has improved significantly since the previous inspection. For example, extra sections have been added that cover more areas. Plans are reviewed and if necessary, updated regularly.

All young people are registered with local general health practitioners, with more specialised treatment arranged if necessary. All visits are recorded appropriately. The home has developed and maintains excellent links with local specialist services such as the nurse with the responsibility for looked after children.

Annual health assessments are arranged and undertaken within the required timescale. Staff are trained in first aid, administering medication and basic food hygiene. Young people are happy with the arrangements and feel their health is being promoted positively.

Appropriate arrangements to store and administer medication are in place. This is underpinned with comprehensive systems to record the administering of medication, which are kept up to date and include stock control. Written consents for medical treatment are retained by the home.

Young people have no concerns regarding the choice, quality or quantity of food served. They assist with the planning of menus, shopping and where appropriate, the preparation of food. Menus are varied, nutritional and provide choice. There is a good mix of traditional and cultural dishes and young people have access to fresh fruit daily. Meals are taken in the dining area and organised as social occasions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Privacy is not an issue of concern to young people. Each have their own bedroom to which they have free access and the home is spacious enough for young people to find some privacy if they wish. Any sensitive and personal information is held securely in the office.

Information about accessing the complaints procedure is available to young people, notably in the young person's guide. The guide also contains the contact details of a variety of external independent agencies. Young people understand how to access the procedures if required and these have been successfully tested recently. Records of any complaint received and the outcome, is recorded appropriately.

The safety and rights of young people are protected. All staff have received training in safeguarding matters and are aware of the homes own safeguarding policy and procedures. They understand their own responsibilities and required responses when any potential safeguarding issue arises. This is by immediate referral to the external agencies charged with specific safeguarding duties, with whom the home has developed and maintained excellent links.

The home has excellent procedures in place to monitor and combat bullying, recognising a young person's potential to bully or be bullied. A variety of information about bullying is made available to young people, who say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them. They confirm that bullying is not tolerated by staff who are quick to intervene, should a situation arise.

The home is currently stable and this is reflected in the low number of sanctions and physical interventions and no incidents of young people missing from the home since the previous inspection. Young people can be demanding and challenging, but staff are skilled at working positively with them. This is reflected in the sanction records, known as consequences, where the number of positive consequences recorded is double the number of negative ones. The ethos and working practices of the home are aimed at keeping young people safe and staff work collectively and consistently to achieve this.

The young people themselves feel the home is a safe place to live. They raised no issues or concerns about any aspects linked to behaviour management, feeling that staff are generally fair.

General health and safety issues are addressed with a range of risk assessments covering general hazards around the home. In addition, individual risk assessments are completed for each young person. Appropriate service contracts are in place for fire, gas and electrical equipment.

All staff receive appropriate checks and clearances before they commence their duties. A system to recheck longer serving staff every three years is in place. Recruitment procedures meet with current requirements and recognised good practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The individual support given to young people is outstanding. They are encouraged and supported to live full lives, with their educational and social experiences being predominately community based. Significant improvements have taken place regarding the focus, consistency and recording of key worker sessions. They provide opportunities for direct work to take place with young people covering issues and topics designed to meet individual needs. Young people recognise they are well supported and speak warmly about staff.

All young people are in full-time education, attending schools that are based in the community. Excellent links between the home and schools have been created, which is reflected in the documentation held on young people's files. Appropriate planning documentation along with others such as school reports, give insight into the educational progress being made by young people in their respective schools. Young people speak positively about school and are happy with the arrangements for their education.

Young people's individual needs, abilities, choices and interests drive the range of leisure activities undertaken. All young people participate in activities individual to themselves such as snowboarding, cubs, swimming lessons and trampoline club. Young people speak enthusiastically about the range of activities they are involved with and are currently looking forward to their summer holiday.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home has a range of planning documentation that when read collectively, provides a good insight into a young person's individual needs, along with plans and strategies to meet them. They are updated to take account of the development and changing needs of a young person. Plans are detailed, giving insight into young people's preferences as well as their cultural and religious needs.

Statutory reviews are taking place regularly, within the required timescale. Young people have an age-appropriate understanding of the reviewing process and their own plans for the future. They are well supported by staff throughout the whole reviewing process.

The contact arrangements for young people are complex and limiting. Specific details about approved contact, along with the arrangements and records of contact are included in the planning documentation. Staff recognise the limitations of some young people's arrangements and have been pro-active in arranging an independent visitor for one young person. Regular, monthly visits to the home by an independent advocate, ensures all young people have regular access to someone other than staff or their social worker.

The admission and discharges procedures are understood by staff, with all admissions to the home being planned. The most recent admission generated compliments from the placing authority regarding how the home handled the admission process. Young people say they were well supported during the admission procedures and were encouraged to bring personal possessions with them.

There are good levels of consultation taking place between staff and young people. For example, young people's meetings take place regularly, with minutes from each meeting produced. Good levels of communication allow for consultation to be an ongoing process, which is helped with the excellent relationships that exist between young people and staff.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The ages of the young people accommodated means that preparing them to leave care is not applicable. However the home has developed good skills and working practices to support young people towards their eventual move from the home.

The general state of repair, fixtures, fittings, furnishings and equipment is good. The home is domestic in appearance and provides a warm, child-friendly environment. Along with the significant improvements made to the upstairs bathroom, the one on the ground floor was being improved and upgraded as the inspection progressed.

Bedrooms are decorated and personalised to reflect the taste of the occupant. Three bedrooms have benefitted from new furniture being recently purchased. There is a good selection of toys and games around. Young people like the home and are comfortable within the environment.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose meets with regulatory requirements and provides an accurate insight into the functioning of the home. The young person's guide is bright, colourful and age appropriate. It has been updated recently, with plans to add a further section imminent.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home has recently nominated a staff member to be the homes equality and diversity champion. A file is maintained that retains evidence of trips and activities that have taken place which have an equality and diversity theme. Equality and diversity values are incorporated into the ethos and working practices of the home which recognises and looks to meet individual needs. Some staff have yet to receive specific equality and diversity training.

Staff are well supported, with staff meetings, formal supervision and appraisals taking place consistently, within the recommended timescale. Each staff member also has a continuous professional development plan. The staff group is well experienced and committed towards improving outcomes for young people.

Staff numbers are only adequate following some movement of staff out of the home, with minimum staffing numbers being maintained at all times. Current staff are committed to work flexibly so that increased cover is being provided for significant periods. Arrangements have been made to cover the impending absence of the manager, with management cover being provided on a temporary basis from within the current staff team.

Staff feel they have good access to training and their needs are recognised and being met. One staff member is currently undertaking appropriate National Vocational Qualification training, with all other staff having attained the qualification.

The home is well organised and managed. The manager has implemented her own style and organisation and is well supported by a staff group who buy into the ethos and working practices of the home. Significant progress regarding the management, organisation and working practices of the home has been achieved within the last year and this is reflected in the progress charted within this report.

Both the internal and external monitoring of the home takes place consistently, within the required timescale. Reports produced monthly are comprehensive and contain strong elements of quality assurance with areas identified for improvement. External monitoring reports contain a section aimed specifically at young people, informing them of the outcome of the monitoring visit. This is viewed as good practice.

Young people's files are structured, neat, up to date and properly kept, reflecting the five Every Child Matters outcomes.

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 staffing levels are consistently sufficient in number and experience at all times. (NMS 29.1)