

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Michelle Oxley / Ruth Coler
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Date of last inspection	18/01/2010
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

This home provides education and residential care for up to 28 pupils, from 8 to 19 years of age who have severe and complex learning difficulties, associated with autism. All have communication difficulties, a number have additional impairments and all exhibit challenging behaviour to varying degrees. The home operates as a charitable trust, and being a school as well, it is approved by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Some of the children are accommodated in the main house, which is organised into three residential units. There are also four additional units, including a two-bedroom lodge and a six-bedded unit designed for older pupils. The home has extensive grounds that are well used for horticulture and animal management, as well as leisure activities. It has its own indoor swimming pool.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is not judged.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

There have been some significant changes to the operation of the home over the preceding twelve months. This has involved the restructuring of the living and learning environment into six small units, each providing dedicated support during the day for up to four young people. Staffing arrangements have changed in response to this. Each unit is staffed by a teacher (living and learning manager) and a team of unit leaders, mentors and teaching assistants. A consultation process is currently underway regarding the possible restructure of night staff to fall in line with the new arrangement.

On admission young people receive a communication book containing photographs which is used as a means of communication. The book is expanded as the placement progresses. A statement of purpose is in place this has been updated to reflect the new structure of the home.

The service is operated by a team of committed managers who provide creative leadership to a large team of staff. Managers keep up to date with new information and legislation. Staff say that they receive good support from the managers and senior staff and that staff supervision is carried out on a regular basis and in line with the required time frame.

The home employs around 180 staff. There is some degree of staff turnover but a good proportion of the team are established members who have worked at the home for several years. Staffing levels are high with most young people receiving one to one care. New staff are recruited and inducted promptly when vacancies arise.

Training opportunities for staff are very good. The school employs a training manager who oversees the training provision and an assessor who is responsible for the provision of the ongoing programme of National Vocational Qualifications. Staff say that they are offered excellent training and that additional training can be requested outside of the usual programme. Additional training opportunities are supported when managers identify a benefit to children and young people.

New staff attend induction training one day a week for six weeks. In addition to this, each new member of staff is assigned a mentor who will support them in their role. There is a dedicated arrangement in place for the management of the night team. Night staff are involved in the induction training and receive a days training every week. Their training covers all mandatory areas.

There is good evidence of careful monitoring of the service by the managers. Time is set aside each week to examine incidents and accident logs, patterns of behaviour are also monitored and recorded in order to examine the approach to care. The regulation 33 and 34 processes' are well established. An overall quality assurance report which take account of views of parents and significant others is not yet established although there some early endeavours have been made toward formalising quality assurance systems by the currently embryonic creation of a development plan.

Equality and diversity at the home is good. The managers and team recognise the potential disadvantages that occur in relation to disability. They work with individuals to meet their specific needs and to develop skills in order to promote choice and access to the wider community. The staff team are a diverse group the home employs team members from many nationalities and backgrounds. Policy guidance around equality and diversity is implemented in practice

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- improve the quality of information passed between staff members at handover meetings to provided improved continuity of information at shift change (nms 29)
- implement a clearer approach to the development of skills and living arrangements in relation to preparing for adulthood(nms 6.1)
- carry out individual assessments in relation to risks regarding security, safety and observations of young people in the context of preparing for adult life (nms 7.9)
- review the safeguarding training to ensure the team have a holistic perspective of the wider protection processes (nms 17.8)
- continue to create a development plan for the service taking account of the views of, children, parents and significant others (nms 33.5).