

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	1 June 2010
Inspector	Gaynor Moorey
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	12 January 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 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 can accommodate up to seven young people aged from five to 14 years. The home is located in a large detached house. Each young person has their own bedroom on the first floor of the premises; five of these rooms have en-suite facilities. Communal rooms include a large lounge with adjoining conservatory, dining room, play room, extra playroom and a domestic style kitchen. The home also has a large, well maintained garden.

Summary

This unannounced key inspection took place on a weekday. The purpose of the inspection was to undertake a full review encompassing all the key national minimum standards.

The manager and the experienced staff team continue to provide an outstanding standard of care. The home endeavours to ensure the safety of the children through comprehensive and clear guidance, policies and procedures. The home provides the children with excellent emotional support and encourages the children with their education and interests. The home ensures that specific and comprehensive information is in place to enable statutory reviews to take place. Children enjoy contact with family and friends and are given opportunities to express their opinions and make choices about their lives. The home is maintained to a good level, providing a homely environment for the children to live in. The staff are supported by an experienced manager and excellent comprehensive systems that include supervision and training.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home did not receive any recommendations or actions at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Staff encourage children to eat a healthy diet that includes a wide choice of cultural meals. The menus include meals that the children chose and fresh fruit and vegetables are available each day. Children contribute to the choice of meals and can participate in the preparation of food. The children identified that the staff always try to encourage healthy eating and that they are satisfied with the meals provided. Mealtimes are friendly social occasions. As a part of the combined placement and treatment plans dietary needs are identified and any special diets are comprehensively monitored. Staff are given training to run a safe and clean kitchen in order to produce meals for the children.

The physical, emotional and health need of the children are identified along with who will be responsible to take appropriate action to support these needs. Children identified they felt very well looked after when they felt ill. The combined placement and treatment plans contain excellent and clear comprehensive health information. Staff work very hard to consider the children's health and welfare needs and adopt an holistic approach when creating care plans. Appropriate information is given to children around such areas as sexual health, substance misuse, alcohol and smoking to ensure they have knowledge of these issues as they grow into young people. The children's mental and emotional health is seen as a priority and as such

the creation of a therapeutic and nurturing culture is central to the outstanding operation of the home. The staff ensure children are seen by the 'Looked after children' nurse for annual health reviews.

The home has clear and comprehensive procedures and guidance in place for the administration of medication and all staff are trained to perform first aid. Excellent records are maintained for the administration of medication, ensuring accurate and up to date records are maintained. The administration records and recordings are audited on a regular basis. Medical consent for the administration of first aid and non prescribed medication is available for all of the children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff ensure that children's confidentiality and privacy is respected and safeguarded, by knocking on bedroom doors before entering and that the children can make telephone calls in private. Records held at the home are appropriately and securely stored. Information is handled in a sensitive manner and all staff members and visiting professionals are aware of issues surrounding confidentiality and are respectful of children's rights. Children confirm that they trust the staff and can talk to them about any private matter.

Policies and procedures are in place to safeguard and promote the children's welfare. Due to effective communication, attentive staff and close supervision, complaints are dealt with effectively and appropriately. The complaints system in the home ensures children are listened to and given a response in a timely manner. The complaint log showed clear examples of how complaints are managed. Children are confident staff in the home take complaints seriously and feel they can discuss issues with staff or bring them to the daily meeting.

Staff understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and manage disclosures or allegations in a professional manner; this ensures that the children are protected from abuse both in the home and the wider community. Staff work hard to develop relationships with the children which is particular strength of the home; this enables the children to disclose from their past and talk about their future. Children confirm they can speak to the staff about anything and know staff will help them.

The home operates a policy of zero tolerance toward bullying and the children are made aware of the guidance on admission. All staff are vigilant with regard to relationships within the home. High supervision levels mean there limited opportunities for bullying or inappropriate relationships to develop. The children have behaviour management plans which look at any potential issues related to bullying behaviour. Children are confident staff will take action to keep them safe from bullies, they do not raise any concerns regarding bullying in the home.

There is a clear and comprehensive policy and procedure for reporting children who are absent without authority. Records of absconding show no increase in the number of incidents. There have been no incidents of absconding since the last inspection. Staff are provided with clear guidance to address such situations, with robust risk assessments in place to highlight any risks the children may pose to themselves or others.

The manager confirmed that serious incidents are investigated and they also involve other agencies. There has been one significant incident since the last inspection, of which all appropriate agencies were notified.

Sanctions are not excessive and the children feel they are fair. All sanctions are recorded in a dedicated book and also in the main file. The sanctions given are permissible and generally relate to reparation, loss of some pocket money for damages and early bedtimes.

All staff receive training in the use of physical restraint. The home has a policy which offers guidance to staff in regard to behaviour management and restraint. The children have risk assessments in place to look at any risky behaviour, these are contained within their behaviour management plans. Staff use a behaviour management system to encourage and reinforce appropriate behaviour. Staff encourage acceptable behaviour and restraint records show that staff respond appropriately in managing these situations. Staff support children with their behaviour through one to one sessions and daily group meetings.

The home takes steps to keep the children, staff and visitors safe from the risk of fire. Systems are in place for the promotion of safe fire practices including checking and the servicing of fire safety equipment and undertaking fire evacuations. The home's fire procedures are discussed with staff and children regularly. The home has excellent risk assessments and monitoring procedures to check the safety of the house.

A comprehensive recruitment process is in place. Records show all required checks take place, including those for agency staff. The monitoring of any visitors is thorough. This ensures children are protected from potentially unsuitable people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive considerable individual support, guidance and care. Staff adopt an therapeutic holistic approach and staff are imaginative and creative when looking at ways of providing nurturing therapeutic care such as special foods, play sessions and life story work. Very clear combined placement and care plans are in place, listing comprehensively the needs of each child. Evidence could be seen at the home of the intensive levels of work being achieved which is based around life story work, building relationships between children and their birth parents and looking at disclosures which the children have made about their past lives. Staff encourage and support children to undertake appointments with outside agencies. The children observed at lunchtime and throughout the day appeared to be at ease in the company of all the staff on duty, and social interaction was both spontaneous and warm.

Staff actively support children in their education. The children attend mainstream, residential special schools and the organisation's school. The children's files contain personal education plans. When a new child arrives at the home if appropriate they are given a programme of induction into the organisation's school or encouraged to maintain their current school placement. Each child has clear records on file of their progress at school and the staff provide support to children with their homework.

Children enjoy a range of activities and clubs in the community. Staff support and facilitate access to opportunities. Children express their choices in regular group meetings and one-to-one sessions. Activities also take place such as group trips to theme parks, visits to the beach and picnics in local parks to bring the children together as a small community. Each child benefits from an annual holiday either in the British Isles or abroad. Excellent individual risk assessments are in place to minimise any potential risks during activities and holidays.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The children's needs are assessed to a high and comprehensive level prior to placement which is kept on file, alongside historical information. The children have outstanding combined placement and care plans which have all been updated since the last inspection, that identify their health, physical, social, educational, cultural and leisure needs. Staff review the progress of each child and identify changes to meet individual needs. Documentation shows placing authorities operate a reviewing process to chart the progress of the children. Due to the age group of the children they are supported by staff to attend statutory reviews. Key workers and the manager produce comprehensive and clear reports for the review process which look at all aspects of the children's progress.

Excellent procedures are in place aim to help each child settle in. Children are provided with a appropriate guide on admission. One of the children who had recently been placed at the home identified they had enjoyed their introduction to the home. A clear planning process is in place for when children arrive at and leave the home. Staff support and plan these processes with the children, an example of this was the support a child needed when leaving the home after seven years and making this a positive experience. The child was able to plan a party and invite children and staff who had left the home during their placement. Staff try to avoid emergency placements, and every effort is made to minimise their impact when they do arise.

Staff encourage and facilitate children to have positive appropriate contact with family and friends. Children's contact sessions can be used as a therapeutic basis of working with the children on their life story work and to strengthened relationships with family. Children spoken with confirmed they could maintain regular contact via visits, the phone and in some cases email. The manager confirmed that any restrictions regarding access were, when appropriate, made clear to all parties.

Staff consult children on a daily basis and empower them, as far as it is possible, to consider their circumstances, behaviours, relationships and interactions. The children are provided with forums both formally and informally to discuss any choices and views they may have. On the day of the inspection the children were seen to be involved in consultation about the home for quality assurance purposes and were able to give clear answers and express how they felt about living in care. Staff strive to create an inclusive, reflective and participatory environment that encourages consultation and discussion.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Due to the age group of the children in the home the home does not prepare them for leaving care. However, as mentioned throughout the report, they do begin to teach the children independence skills in preparation for growing up and leaving the home.

The home is in a location that can offer the young people lots of facilities which help to meet their diverse and specific needs. Records demonstrate that the home is subject to regular health and safety risk assessments and has up to date certification relating to gas, electrical and fire equipment.

The accommodation is well maintained, clean and tidy. The home provides each child with both communal areas for group living and individualised private areas, such as their bedrooms, where they can spend time alone. Bedrooms are decorated according to the child's choice of colour, furniture and accessories and the staff at the home can be seen to have paid special attention to providing for the child's specific likes and interests. At the inspection some of the rooms were seen to be damaged and awaiting repair. There are adequate bathroom and toilet facilities and some of the bedrooms are en-suite. Sleeping-in staff have their own dedicated accommodation.

A tour of the home indicated it was structurally sound and generally in good decorative order. Although areas such as the dinning room, entrance hall and stair carpet need some renovation due to recent damage. The home has a wide range and eclectic mix of facilities and resources for recreational and creative activities. There is a well kept garden which offers a child focused area to play in. The home offers the children a good environment to live in, which is both comfortable and homely.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff ensure through practice and guidance that the rights of the children are met and that they do not face racism or discriminatory abuse. The children have their cultural needs met by individualised care planning, general ethos and review processes which highlight and guide staff to meet the wishes of the children themselves. Due to the very specific issues and needs some of the children have issues which are not only met through equality and diversity but through understanding and knowledge staff hold to help each children reach an understanding of past events and how to manage future needs as they grow up.

The management of the home is outstanding with the long term manager providing a consistent and comprehensive approach. The updated Statement of Purpose offers clear information to staff and those professional staff placing children at the home. A new colourful, attractive and informative user friendly guide has been produced for the children.

The children benefit from a staff team that is of a mixed gender and cultural mix together with a balance of youth and maturity. The staff are provided with an extensive mix of training, including child protection, team teach, health and safety, fire safety, as well as qualifications and training specifically geared towards those children placed at the home. A majority of the staff have completed the therapeutic childcare course which is specifically geared to the specific nature of the service, rather than National Vocational Qualifications. The course is accredited at university level. Supervision levels are good for one to one supervision although recent some supervision sessions have been cancelled and not re-booked.

External monitoring of the home's systems and practices occurs on a monthly basis with a report being sent into Ofsted on a regular basis. The manager responds to findings and monitors practices to ensure standards are maintained. The home is part of a therapeutic organisation which undertakes quality assurance visits. This was seen to be taking place at the home with the consultation happening with the children on the day of the inspection.

Excellent systems are in place to monitor the daily lives of the children living in the home. Children's files are maintained and organised and kept securely in the staff office.

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 any missed staff supervision sessions are replaced in order to maintain monthly supervision sessions (NMS28)
- ensure the home is maintained in good order throughout(NMS24)