

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC014235
Inspection date	22 July 2009
Inspector	Gaynor Moorey
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	29 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 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 tries 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 an outstanding 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

At the last inspection the home received one recommendation to ensure a system was in place to check that notifications had been sent to the appropriate agencies. This has now been seen to happen, with notifications being sent in to Ofsted.

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 and vegetarian options which meet their individual dietary needs. 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. As a part of the combined placement and care plan dietary needs are identified and any special diets are monitored. Staff are given training to run a safe and clean kitchen in order to produce meals for the children. Information is available for the young people about healthy living and safe cooking practices.

The health and welfare of the children are carefully considered and actively promoted. Children identified they felt very well looked after when they felt ill. The combined placement and care 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. The approach taken includes access to specific services and information linked to children's specific needs such as sexual health, substance misuse, alcohol and smoking. This is undertaken with age appropriate information and guidance. 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. Where necessary, the children are supported in seeking specialist help in regard to their health.

Staff manage children's health needs, including medication, in a clear and comprehensive manner with systems in place to safeguard their needs. All staff are trained in first aid. All medication is kept securely and records are accurate with a robust stocktaking system. Medical consents are available for emergency treatment, first aid, and the administration of medication

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff ensure that children's confidentiality and privacy are respected and safeguarded, by knocking on bedroom doors and making and receiving telephones calls in private. Confidential information relating to each young person is kept in an appropriate locked facility. All information is contained in the office/sleeping in room. Staff receive guidance on the confidentiality of information.

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. Staff enable children to make complaints. This is evidenced within the complaints log. By the use of one-to-one sessions and residents' meetings, staff are proactive in seeking out the views and concerns of children. Children said they felt safe within the home and that the adults would always listen to them.

Staff receive child protection training within their induction programme and subsequent refresher courses during their employment in order to have clear insight into dealing with such issues. The home has a clear policy when dealing with child protection which includes up to date safeguarding guidance. There have been no child protection incidents since the last inspection.

The home operates a policy of zero tolerance toward bullying and the children are made aware of the guidance on admission. If bullying does occur, staff at the home deal with issues in an appropriate manner. The children have behaviour management plans which look at any potential issues related to bullying behaviour. The home has in place forums for children talk on a one to one basis or as a group to look at any issues there may be in the group. Children said that staff would deal with issues of bullying and help them to complain if they wanted to.

There is a policy and procedure for reporting children who are absent without authority. Records of absconding show no increase in the number of incidents. There has only been one incident 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.

Records examined indicated that serious incidents are reported as required by regulation. 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.

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 young people have risk assessments in place to look at any risky behaviour, these are contained within their behaviour management plans. 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 amount of restraint used in the home has decreased since the last inspection.

Areas of potential risk for the young people are assessed and the young people are safeguarded where possible from harm. The home has documentation related to risk assessing activities, holidays, fire risk and the environment. Records demonstrate that the home's fire alarm system is tested regularly and evacuation exercises carried out. Clear systems are in place and checks could be seen from outside agencies and from the home's monitoring systems.

Staff records seen at the head office for new staff employed since the last inspection indicate that staff are subject to a comprehensive recruitment process. Such records show that all required checks are completed prior to staff working with the children. Agency staff are vetted by their agency and details forwarded to the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive considerable individual support, guidance and care. Staff adopt an holistic approach and staff are imaginative and creative when looking at ways of providing nurturing therapeutic care. Very clear combined placement and care plans are in place, listing comprehensively the needs of each young person. The placement and care planning are built on the therapeutic ethos of the organisation. 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. Young people attend mainstream, residential special schools and the Cornerstones school. The children's files contain Personal Education Plans. When a new child arrives at the home they are given a programme of induction into the Cornerstones 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.

Staff facilitate access to activities and clubs within the community. Individual and group activities are specifically geared towards each child, such as dancing, boys brigade and model building. Each activity is risk assessed to minimise the risk factor for each young person. Staff organise both trips and holidays for the children. Each child has a main holiday either in the British Isles or abroad. The home has its own transport that is used to support social and recreational activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The children's needs are assessed prior to placement. Comprehensive documentation is kept on file to offer historical information on each child. The children have combined placement and care plans 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 reports for the review process.

A written admission procedure aims to help each child settle in. Children are provided with a guide on admission. The home is preparing for the admission of a new child and to help this process the planned induction visits have been placed on the summer holiday planner, which is helping both the resident children and the new child coming in to have a sense of inclusion in the day to day life of the home. Every effort is made by staff to ensure that arrivals and departures are planned. Staff spoken with indicate that preparation for leaving starts well in advance of an agreed date. 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 appropriate contact with family and friends to retain ties with family, friends and their local community.

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. This can be with their key workers or with any staff member. Staff strive to create an inclusive, reflective and participatory environment that encourages consultation and discussion. This appears to be effectively balanced by realistic boundaries.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

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.

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. There are adequate bathroom and toilet facilities and some of the bedrooms are en-suite. Sleeping-in staff have their own dedicated accommodation.

The home is tastefully decorated in a excellent manner and includes a lounge, an activities room, a computer area and quiet lounge. The home has just had most of the common areas decorated. 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 young people an outstanding 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.

The management of the home is good with the long term manager providing a consistent and comprehensive approach. Children benefit from having a core staff team which has in the majority remained stable. The statement of purpose provides excellent information about the home's services. The children's guide is in an appropriate format. The children are provided with a copy of the guide when they arrive at the home.

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. All of the staff have completed the therapeutic childcare course rather than National Vocational Qualifications and are trained to the specific nature of the service. The children also benefit from a staff team who are supported and supervised.

External monitoring of the home's systems and practices occurs on a monthly basis, with reports being kept in hard copy. 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.

Good 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

There are no recommendations.