

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Oldham
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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 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

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to nine boys aged from 10 to 17 years.

This is a children's home which specialises in offering long-term placements to boys.

The home has an independent special school on site.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides packages of care designed to meet the individual needs of each young person. The staff are supported by a psychologist who meets with the deputy manager on a monthly basis, offering advice and guidance. She also meets with the young people if they wish. The documentation system shows that records are cross checked but does not evidence the placement plan progress in the day-to-day care of young people. However, young people are making progress in many areas of their lives.

The young people speak warmly about the quality of care in the home; they particularly like the holidays and activities provided. They have some influence on menu choices and how they spend their free time. Staff and young people have fun together, but staff also set very clear boundaries about behaviour and expectations. Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise, good wholesome meals and good night-time routines.

Young people said that they feel happy and secure in the home. They are kept safe through good risk assessments both for themselves and for the home. Staff have a very good understanding of safeguarding issues and young people very rarely go missing or require physical restraint.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
30 (2001)	notify Ofsted without delay any significant event in accordance with Schedule 5 (Regulation 30.1)	30/09/2011

4 (2001)	compile a written statement which shall include matters listed in Schedule 1, in particular the number, relevant qualifications and experience of persons working at the children's home and a description of any electronic or mechanical means of surveillance of children. (Regulation (4)(1), Schedule 1)	07/10/2011
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child (NMS 25.2)
- ensure that where there has been physical restraint children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- regularly review incidents of challenging behaviour, examine trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice. (NMS 3.21)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people often come to this home with low self-esteem and very difficult patterns of behaviour. The home offers clear boundaries and has realistic expectations for the young people. Within the long term placement, with a small established staff team, young people gradually settle and start to see their own capabilities and achievements. Positive achievements are recognised and rewarded through the annual 'star pupil' awards. There are individual written placement plans for each young person. There are also detailed running record sheets that give a flavour of the work that is done with the young people. However, there is no regular written monitoring of the progress of the care plan. Staff spend time with young people talking about issues that arise and this helps young people make progress. The company's psychologist provides ongoing guidance to assist the staff in their work with the young people. Consequently young people are developing a positive self-view and their self-esteem is rising.

Staff consider all aspects of the young people's health. When a young person is admitted, they are registered with the local health professionals and all health needs are pursued including specialist support and advice. Young people enjoy plenty of activity including bike riding, water sports, horse riding and the local gym and gymnastics. The home has a cook who provides nutritious and wholesome meals which the young people enjoy. Bed times are well managed with opportunities to

unwind and relax, so that young people sleep well. Consequently young people are encouraged to make healthy choices and establish a consistently active life.

Young people are encouraged to attend education, and with staff support, attend the on-site school regularly. Young people are making good progress in their education and enjoy the varied programme which includes woodwork, metalwork, and information technology skills. There are well developed links with the local college for further courses beyond school age. Young people are encouraged to find areas of work that interest them. Staff are very supportive in finding work experience and college courses to develop these skills and interests. This is a strength of the home, having an on-site school and good networks for developing interests and skills. Care staff provide additional support in the classroom and this enhances communication between school and home. This ensures that young people's needs are met with regard to their time in school.

The home is very well maintained by a staff team separate to the care staff team. They include a cook, gardener, maintenance person and housekeeper. This enables the care staff to focus on their work and ensure that the home runs smoothly. Young people say they like the home and have some influence regarding the day-to-day running of the home. Staff support young people having genuine, positive involvement in the community, such as getting involved in local youth activities, restoration projects and work experience.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Staff are proactive in ensuring that contact between family members and young people takes place. Staff also support young people in understanding when restrictions are in place. For some young people the home has facilitated the building up of damaged relationships between them and family members. Where appropriate, visits are welcomed at the home and staff ensure that these are well managed events. Young people confirm that they have contact as agreed in their care plan.

An independence programme is put in place for each young people over the age of 14.5 years according to their circumstances and proposed future plans. This covers finance, developing basic home keeping skills, social skills and finding work. Young people enjoy cooking and learning new skills, although documentation does not always demonstrate progress. However, all young people go on to college or work and most achieve well given their starting points.

Quality of care

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

Young people are admitted to the home in a planned way for a long-term placement. This enables both staff and young people to establish sound, trusting relationships and for young people to generally interact well with each other. Young people behave very well and respond to the clear rules and expectations. Sanctions are clearly understood and infrequent poor behaviour tends to result in an early bedtime

or time away from the group. Positive behaviour is encouraged through opportunities to enjoy activities such as horse riding. However, this system is not well documented and it is therefore not clear whether this strategy affects behaviour.

Young people's meetings are recorded infrequently but young people say that they are able to influence the running of the home such as devising menus, choosing activities and setting rules. Young people understand their plans and are encouraged to attend their review meetings. They have focus meetings in school time, but key work is not clearly documented. However, young people do feel that the house is their home, and young people who have previously lived there often phone or visit, and stay in touch. This demonstrates that young people feel a strong attachment to the home and the staff team.

Staff help young people understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes and set clear limits in place. Staff have had to implement plans that have placed limitations on contact with family and young people have struggled to accept this. Through staff taking time to explain to the young people the reasoning behind the decision, young people develop an understanding of why certain wishes cannot be met.

Young people are given a written guide when they are first admitted to the home. This includes the complaints procedure. Young people confirm that they feel confident in making complaints but have not done so as they have no concerns.

Placement and care plans are in place for young people and include cultural background and personal identity. These show the individualised needs of the young person and where appropriate, their religious and cultural needs and interests. Records are maintained on a daily basis and address daily living but they do not reference back to the care planning. This means that it is not clear if young people are being helped to understand their behaviours and that the strategies for change are effective.

The home provides a healthy environment and staff are committed to ensuring that all the young people's medical needs are met. In addition, staff encourage young people to take up additional specialist support such as children and adolescent mental health services. Young people are encouraged to develop high standards of personal care and hygiene. The weekly menu demonstrates a good variety of food including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. It is a real strength of the home that there are plenty of opportunities for exciting physical activities including water sports at a nearby lake. This ensures that young people have their health needs met very well and gain confidence from trying new sports. In addition to the significant array of physical activities young people are encouraged to join local groups such as 'scouts' to meet other young people of their own age. There are also plenty of activities in the well-resourced games room, toys and board games, and opportunities for watching DVDs and listening to music.

The home and surrounding grounds are spacious, and very well maintained. Maintenance and repairs are managed by an in-house team of staff. The location

enables young people to interact with the local community and the home has its own transport for trips to shops, cinema and other amenities. Young people are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms. They take some responsibility according to age, for cleaning their bedrooms. All young people have daily responsibility for simple household chores such as helping set the table and wash the dishes. The home has few locked doors, in the spirit of a family environment. However, young people's files are kept securely locked and alarms protect young people from intruders. Night-time movement alarms alert staff to young people who are out of their bedrooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There is a complaint and representation policy and procedure. Young people are aware of how to make a complaint and also know who they could talk to if they have concerns. They say with confidence that they feel safe in the home. All staff receive training in child protection procedures and this is regularly updated. Staff have a good working knowledge of what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff. Young people talk about concerns that they may have to staff. Young people say that any bullying is dealt with swiftly and the sanction is one they all agreed together. This sanction works, and bullying is not currently an issue in the home. Staff ensure that there are comprehensive individual risk assessments appropriate to each young person. There have been no incidents of young people going missing since the last inspection. This ensures that young people are kept safe at the home.

Young people acknowledged that there are rules, but these are reasonable and that staff want good behaviour. Expectations are clear and staff are very open about the standards of behaviour expected. Sanctions are infrequent and incidents of restraint are rare occurrences. However, there is no opportunity for staff to review incidents of challenging behaviour or examine trends or issues emerging from them. This prevents opportunities to inform the future practice of the staff team to change young people's behaviour. Also, where there has been physical restraint young people are not always asked if they would like medical assistance to check their physical well-being.

The staff group are well established and there has been no recruitment to the home in recent months. However the organisation has systems and processes for the recruitment and vetting of staff. Criminal Records Bureau checks are updated regularly. This ensures that all staff are suitable to work with young people and they are kept safe from harm.

The environment is well maintained and kept safe through a system of weekly and monthly internal safety checks and risk assessments. Fire drills are carried out regularly and overseen by a member of staff with specific responsibility as a fire marshall. In addition, services such as electricity, electrical appliances and fire fighting equipment are regularly checked by the appropriate professional companies. Day-to-day maintenance and redecoration is all achieved by the in-house team.

Consequently the home is very well maintained. Visitors to the home are checked for identification; they are signed in and signed into the fire log.

Leadership and management

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

The requirements and recommendations from the last inspection have been partially met and two have been repeated at this inspection. The staff team are now all appropriately qualified, bar one, who is on the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction programme. To date a procedure has not been put in place to notify the appropriate authorities and persons following significant events and incidents. The Statement of Purpose is currently under major review and information regarding staffing has not yet been added.

The home is long established and part of a small group of homes within the area. The organisation carries out monthly monitoring visits and these gather the required information for the manager and staff. Young people are always spoken to and their views recorded on these visits. There is also a basic system of internal audits to ensure that documents are in place. Staff speak positively about their own development opportunities, and the recent opportunity to enhance their own learning with a specialist course, relevant to the needs of their key young person.

Young people are very clear about the purpose of their placement in the home and their future plans. Each young person has a working day-to-day file which contains all the required details and is very clear and easy to follow. These are kept in a locked office. Staff are clear about their roles, and additional responsibilities and how to obtain additional support for the young people.

The manager confirmed that the home is financially sound and well resourced. The home is fully staffed for the current number of young people and provides sufficient cover with a degree of flexibility according to the demands of the group. The organisation has other homes within the area. Therefore, should the need arise, on very rare occasions, additional cover can be provided by one of these homes. Staff confirmed that levels are always sufficient to keep young people safe, and rotas support this.

Staff receive relevant training and records show that there is an ongoing programme including induction and mandatory training. All staff are suitably qualified. Staff confirm that they receive regular supervision and that they are able to seek advice and support whenever necessary. The home is currently reviewing and amending all policies and procedures in addition to the Statement of Purpose. Management monitoring of staff training is thorough, consequently staff have the appropriate skills and training to work with the young people and meet their individual needs.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.

