

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Helen Walker
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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 is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to nine boys aged from 10 years to 17 years old.

This is a children's home which specialises in offering long-term placements to boys. The home is set in its own grounds in a country village. Ground floor accommodation comprises of two lounges, a dining room, kitchen, utility room and games room. First floor accommodation comprises of bedroom and bathroom areas. The home has an independent special school on site. There is good access to local health and leisure services and the home has its own transport. There is an enclosed garden to the side of the house and parking to the front and rear.

Five young people currently live at the home. All the young people talked to the inspector.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this full, unannounced inspection, the key national minimum standards in all the outcome areas are considered. The one recommendation made at the last inspection is commented on in the improvement section of this report.

The overall outcome is that the home is judged as good with an outstanding judgement in enjoying and achieving. The home is effectively managed and young people benefit from being looked after by a consistent and caring staff team.

Staff are familiar with safeguarding practice and understand the need to keep young people safe from harm. Some young people have lived here for a number of years which evidences stability and continuity of their placement.

Young people have excellent levels of individual support and education is exceptionally well promoted. The ethos of the home is to provide young people with a supportive environment in order for them to reach their potential. Young people enjoy living in this home and consider staff look after them properly.

Young people benefit from spacious, very well-maintained and comfortable accommodation. Staff and young people take great pride in the upkeep of the house which is very clean, homely and welcoming.

An action and recommendations have been made to further promote the well-being of the young people. These relate to medication stored in the home, staff

qualifications, the follow through of review meeting outcomes and that the staffing arrangements are detailed in the Statement of Purpose. Also, that staff in charge of a duty shift have relevant and substantial experience of working in the home.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection a recommendation was made for 80% of staff to have a relevant childcare qualification. This has yet to be achieved. However, an ongoing programme of training is in place, to enable staff to obtain an appropriate qualification.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff understand the importance for young people to have a good choice of well-balanced meals for a healthy diet. A cook is employed and meals provided are balanced and varied. There are opportunities for young people to shop and cook which helps them to learn skills for independence. Healthy snacks such as fruit are available.

Young people say they are listened to about their food choices and they enjoy their meals. They describe the food as 'the best'. The home has a suitably furnished dining room. Mealtimes are very social and inclusive occasions where the events of the day and activities are discussed.

Young people's health needs are well considered. They have good advice and guidance about health and social matters. This includes information about sexual health and smoking cessation. Young people confirm they have regular check-up visits to the dentist and optician, and see the local doctor as necessary. This enables their routine health needs to be met. More specialist advice is available to the young people, for example, the looked after children's nurse and the children and adolescent mental health service.

To benefit the physical well-being of young people, staff encourage them to take regular exercise. Young people choose to attend activity adventure holidays and participate in sports such as football and leisure activities at the gymnasium.

The home has guidance in place for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medicines. Staff are qualified to administer first aid treatment as needed. Medicines are securely stored in the home out of the reach of the young people. However, a number of prescribed tablets were not recorded on the relevant records. Additionally, details of non-prescribed tablets removed or used are not always accounted for. Therefore, the systems to monitor the administration of medicines and maintain clear and accurate records are insufficient.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Confidentiality is managed effectively and personal records are securely stored. Young people have an individual bedroom which provides them with their own personal space. They have access to a telephone in the home and some have a mobile telephone. This allows them to make calls in private without reference to staff. Bedroom doors do not have locks. This is in line with the philosophy of a family home and young people agree with this arrangement.

The complaints procedure is known to the young people and they confirm they have the opportunity to raise any issues they are unhappy with. Link worker sessions and house meetings give young people a forum to have their say. Young people also have contact with people they can talk to who are independent of the home. Young people talk of their discussion with their link worker, contact with family, friends, and health and education professionals.

Staff are aware of the need to keep young people safe. They receive training and are familiar with safeguarding guidance. Staff follow this guidance in order to help to protect the young people from harm.

Young people are made aware that bullying is not tolerated. At this time, young people say there is no bullying and understand bullying is unacceptable. There are no issues relating to young people missing from the home. However, should this happen, staff know and follow the home's procedures to enable young people's safe return to the home.

Young people are encouraged to develop appropriate and acceptable behaviours. Staff receive support and training to assist them to deal properly with challenging behaviour. They promote a positive culture within the house which includes rewards and incentives for young people. Young people have the opportunity to obtain more pocket money and additional activities. Young people talk enthusiastically about the trips out and holidays they have had during their stay at the home. Young people say staff are fair with them and they like living in this home.

Systems are in place, to enable young people to be cared for in a safe, physical environment. Checks, such as those that relate to fire safety, the use of electrical equipment and gas appliances, occur routinely to ensure the safety of people in the house. In addition, thorough recruitment and employment procedures help to confirm staff are suitable to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have a high level of support from staff. This includes the benefit of a designated link worker, which give young people the opportunity to talk about a

diverse range of issues on a one-to-one basis. Staff provide positive role models and use a range of interventions to raise young people's confidence, self-esteem and social skills. Young people receive care that suits their specific needs. For example, significant advice and support are given about education and personal health issues.

Young people enjoy living in this home and consider they are looked after very well. They comment on the support they receive to do the things they want to do. They feel staff act in their best interests, for example the promotion of contact with family. During the inspection, the young people made a visit to a local glass maker. On their return to the home they were excited and extremely proud of the glass 'friendship' ball they made during their visit. Staff are proactive and encourage young people to participate in and maintain hobbies and interests of their choice.

Staff have a very positive and holistic approach to education and its value for the young people. Staff encourage young people to reach their full potential in school. The home has a registered school on site. This is adjoined to the home with separate access reached through the staff office.

Communication between staff in the home and the school is extremely good. Care staff provide support in the classroom according to young people's needs. This allows staff to have a better understanding of how to support the young people with their education in the home environment. The contact between care staff and the teacher enables the teacher to be fully aware of issues that could impact on the young people's educational needs.

Staff strive to ensure that young people have the same life chances and opportunities as others and enable them to achieve their aspirations. Young people regularly receive awards and rewards from school and from the home for their schoolwork and achievements.

The school is very well equipped with an array of facilities including an information technology suite and workshops for metal and woodworking. Young people have the opportunity to keep a small pet and for most, this is a goldfish, which is kept in a tank on their desk in the schoolroom.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Placement plans identify young people's care needs. Staff are aware of the young people's individual needs and aware of how these are to be met. Young people are fully involved in the care planning process. Young people have their needs assessed effectively prior to admission which means good consideration is given to the appropriateness of the placement.

Young people contribute to their statutory review so that their future care needs are considered and their views taken account of. Staff provide a detailed report for the review meeting to fully inform the placing authority of the young person's progress in

the home. However, some review minutes are not thoroughly checked to ensure staff follow through the outcome decisions for the benefit of young people.

Staff understand the significance of contact between the young people and their family and friends. Young people say staff fully promote contact and they appreciate how much staff support them with this. This enables young people to maintain links with those that are important to them outside of the home.

Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned manner. The ethos of the home is to provide long term placements with continuity of care. Most young people have lived in the home for several years. The Registered Manager is very much aware of the need to match any new placements with the established group to ensure compatibility.

Young people are asked their opinions about issues that affect their daily life and future. This includes obtaining their views in house meetings about aspects of the running of the home, for example, choices of decoration for their bedrooms, menus and activities. This level of consultation helps to improve young people's quality of life.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff encourage young people to learn skills to help them, as they move towards independence. Advice is given about education, as well as support on practical matters relating to leaving care. Although young people are not of an age to have a formal leaving care plan, opportunities in the home allow young people to undertake household tasks and to gain an understanding about looking after themselves. Young people say that as part of their school lessons they learn how to cook and bake.

A strong link between school and the home ensures preparation for employment is covered as part of the school curriculum. This allows the young people to discover the work, training and further education opportunities available to them.

Young people benefit from spacious, comfortable and very well-maintained accommodation. The decoration and furnishings in the home are of a good standard and the environment is homely and welcoming. The home is located in a quiet rural village and has the benefit of domestic staff and a gardener. It is evident that all staff and young people take great pride in the upkeep of the house which is very clean, homely and welcoming.

Young people have their own bedroom and the option to personalise it, which reflects their individuality. Communal and private areas in the home allow young people the opportunity to spend time with others or by themselves.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home is well-managed and offers a very good level of stability to young people. To support the work of the home and deputise for the Registered Manager there is an experienced and competent assistant manager in post. A consistent team of staff helps to provide continuity of care to young people.

The Statement of Purpose contains relevant information relating to the care provided at the home. However, this does not give full information about the home's staffing policy. For example, the document lacks details of the number of staff required to be on duty at night and whether they are waking or sleeping in the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff are very responsive to, and understand the individual care needs of the young people. The ethos of the home is to provide young people with a caring and supportive environment in order for them to reach their potential. Staff encourage young people to have aspirations and support them to find suitable college placements and work experience opportunities.

Staffing levels are appropriate to meet the assessed needs of the young people. At times, staff with little relevant experience of working in the home, have sole charge of young people on the night duty shift. Although staff feel confident to undertake these duties, they have yet to gain relevant skills and knowledge to support them in their work with young people.

An ongoing programme of training is in place for the recommended 80% of staff to achieve an appropriate childcare qualification. Staff undertake mandatory training such as first aid and child protection awareness. Additionally other training is available to increase staff skill levels in relation to their work, for example, understanding children's rights and preventing bullying. Young people say they feel, 'staff do a good job and understand us.'

Staff meetings occur on a regular basis and discuss the work of the home and care of the young people. Systems are in place to monitor the performance of the home. They include the Registered Manager monitoring the necessary records and monthly visits to the home by an independent person. Additionally, social workers and family are asked to comment on the care given to young people. Responses are very positive and indicate staff are extremely supportive, caring and attentive to young people. These systems give the Registered Manager an overview of how the home is running and help to maintain good standards of care.

Documentation in the home relating to young people's individual history and progress is kept securely and in good order.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
13	make suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping and disposal of any medicines received into the home (Regulation 21.1)	15/02/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure the agreed outcome of reviews is reflected in the day-to-day care of the child, in particular staff take action to follow through review decisions (NMS 3.1)
- ensure staff members placed in charge of the home have substantial relevant experience of working in the home and have successfully completed their probationary period (NMS 29.3)
- ensure the staffing policy is set out in the Statement of Purpose (NMS 30.2)
- ensure a minimum of 80% of care staff have completed Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent qualification. (NMS 29.5)