

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC015264
Inspection date	29/04/2013
Inspector	Stephen Halliley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	08/11/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, and/or learning difficulties. This is a children's home which specialises in offering long-term placements to boys. The home has an independent special school on site.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make extensive progress in all areas of their lives during their time in this home. The improvements in their educational attendance and achievement are huge. A social worker says, 'When he arrived at the home he wasn't accessing education at all but he now attends full time. He has produced some lovely work which he has been very proud to show me.' This is a significant step in young people understanding the importance of education and taking the opportunities they are offered to achieve qualifications before they move on.

The provision of well planned, focused and highly-individualised care plans, supported by input from the young people, informs staff practice and ensures young people's needs are met. Young people are consistently asked for their thoughts, views and feelings on the way the home is run, on their specific individual needs and how these can best be met. This ensures young people feel that they are central to the service.

Young people are consistently positive about their experiences in this home. They say that the home is 'definitely as good as it could be' and they clearly state that staff listen to their input about the home and act upon their ideas. This attitude of listening and responding appropriately to young people is central to the very good relationships staff have developed with the young people in the home. These relationships are relaxed but young people respond very well to reminders, prompts and challenges from staff when their behaviour starts to deteriorate.

Young people are very clear that they feel safe in the home and this is supported by social workers and parents; very high staffing levels, clear risk assessments, good planning of shifts and clear lines of communication support this. Managers are clear about the direction in which they want the home to go and which areas need to be addressed in order for further improvements to be made.

Some minor shortfalls were noted in the frequency of staff supervision, the regularity of training updates and the fact that the development plan is not written down to allow staff to feel they are a part of this working plan. Further shortfalls were noted in the recording of some restraints, specifically the duration of restraints, the time and location of the restraint and the clarity of recording young people's views following the use of restraint.

Areas for 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 person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include the date, time and location of the use of the measure; confirmation that the child has been spoken to about the use of the measure; and the duration of the measure of restraint. (Regulation 17B (3) (d) (h) (4) (a))	31/05/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the registered person has a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that all staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)
- ensure all staff's work is consistent with these regulations and national minimum standards, the homes' policies and procedures. With particular reference to staff training being updated in line with the home's own policy and procedures. (NMS 21.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make exceptional progress in all areas of their lives while living in this home. The improvements in emotional literacy, educational attendance and achievement, physical and emotional health and social awareness and interaction are immense.

Young people develop an emotional stability and understanding of their lives while living in this home which is, in some cases, their first stable placement for many years. They develop trusting relationships with adults and are able to talk openly about their feelings and thoughts. Young people are confident in the skills they have learnt and developed and are keen to add to these. This improved emotional resilience and increased self-esteem will be hugely beneficial to young people for their futures when they move on from this home.

Young people have access to, and support from, a number of health professionals. Aside from general practitioners, dentists and opticians to support their physical health, additional help is provided by physiotherapists and dieticians if required. Emotional health is supported by ready access to a clinical psychologist, child and adolescent mental health services and specialist nurses. This ensures young people's health needs, both physical and emotional, are fully met and their health has, in some cases, improved greatly, due to this intensive support.

Educational attendance and achievement is given a very high priority in this home. Young people benefit from the on-site school; attendance at this is 100%. Social workers comment on the highly-individualised curriculum offered to meet young people's needs and the pride they have in showing social workers some of the work they have produced. Young people have the opportunity to take a range of examinations; recent successes include adult numeracy and literacy awards. This ensures young people will move on having achieved their potential and with skills to benefit them in adult life.

Young people are very actively involved in the day-to-day running of the home. They lead and record their house meetings and are involved in household tasks on a daily basis. The level of self-help and life skills in which young people are involved increases with their ability and understanding until they take part in a complete independence programme designed to support their transition into adult life. This approach ensures young people have an important say in how their home is run and that they are aware of the tasks necessary to make a home function properly. In terms of community involvement, young people take part in a range of activities. On an individual level this includes swimming for the county and passing lifesaving qualifications which have helped develop an enormous sense of pride and achievement. As a group, young people have held a number of fund-raising events for charity, for example, recently raising £380 for Marie Curie Cancer Support. This type of activity ensures young people have a balanced view of the needs of others

and a greater understanding of issues which affect society.

All young people have contact with family and friends and say that this is good. The level of contact varies greatly depending upon individual circumstances. Social workers and parents are glowing in their praise of the home for the support they provide to ensure contact with families is maintained and encouraged. Through transporting young people, supervising contact or financing activities, the home ensures young people have positive contact with their families and that those relationships which are important to them are maintained or re-established. This is important for young people in terms of being able to understand their place within their family and the reasons why they are living in the home

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy relaxed, mutually respectful relationships with staff and with each other. Behaviour is generally very settled and young people respond well to the low-level prompts and challenges from staff when they get too excitable. Staff involve young people fully in all aspects of the home; conversation around the meal table is at an appropriate level to allow everyone present to contribute appropriately.

Young people are very clear that their thoughts, feelings and wishes are integral to the day-to-day running of the home. Young people comment that, 'Staff respond quite well to our requests,' and, 'Staff really listen to what we say.' This ensures young people feel their views are important, that they have a say in what happens to them and that they are seen as important by, and to, staff. This is balanced by an understanding that there are times when their needs and demands cannot be immediately met. If this occurs, staff explain the reasons behind this decision clearly and young people are happy to compromise about times, durations or venues to ensure they can still do the desired activity. If young people are unhappy with any aspect of their care they can complete a 'grumbles form' though they are also aware they can talk to staff, their social workers, independent advocates and Ofsted if they wish. This ensures that young people's voices are heard if they are unhappy with any aspect of their care.

All young people have detailed, highly individualised care plans which inform staff practice. These are regularly updated and reviewed with young people's full involvement. An integral part of this planning is an individual culture and diversity plan which covers all aspects of a young person's identity. The fact young people are party to these plans ensures that needs are clearly and accurately identified and are not the opinion of staff. Young people are also fully supported to take part in their reviews and other meetings about them. This approach ensures young people are party to all decisions taken about them and their future. It ensures their voice is heard and that all plans are made with their involvement, once again highlighting that they are seen as important people in their own right and that their views are important to the adults around them.

Young people are fully supported by staff to ensure they are healthy and participate in a range of physical activities to support healthy lifestyles. Young people comment on the well-balanced menus they help produce; they are very aware of the need to ensure they eat fruit and vegetables as part of this. Young people regularly participate in swimming, trips to the gym, bike rides and walks with staff to support their physical health. They can also take part in more relaxed activities such as trips to the cinema, playing games consoles or enjoying a game of chess.

Additional external professional support has helped address specific health issues and young people are clear that their individual health needs have improved as a direct result of this input. Young people say that staff support them when they feel ill and that they see a range of health professionals at appropriate intervals. This is supported by a range of detailed health records which are in place in the home. This joined-up approach to health, including educating young people in healthy lifestyle choices through key work sessions and activities, ensures all young people are very active and in very good health.

Links to education are extremely strong and staff are very proactive in supporting young people to attend education. For those who are unable to attend academic classes, the staff have devised very individual vocational programmes which are seen by the social workers as a very proactive and successful approach to engaging young people in education.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe in the home and that 'there are enough staff around to keep us safe'. Social workers also comment that young people are 'happy there and feel very safe'. This is supported by the fact that there have been no incidents of young people going missing from the home since the last inspection and the incidents of restraints are very low. There have been five restraints since the previous inspection in November 2012; all have been appropriately recorded though there are some gaps relating to the time, location and duration of restraint, and on one occasion it is not clear that the young person was spoken to following the use of restraint. The use of restraint is monitored by managers and on one occasion some concerns were raised about the actions taken by staff. This was fully addressed by the Registered Manager with the staff involved and the young person was fully involved in discussions about the hold. This showed a proactive response to the situation from managers and a clear understanding of how this may have affected all of those involved.

A robust vetting system is in place for staff who work in the home which involves a range of checks being carried out before they can start work. There is also a clear and well-recorded system of visitors being signed in and out and they are escorted around the site by staff when young people are present. These systems help protect young people from the possibility of harm or abuse from staff working with them or adults who visit the home.

There have been no allegations of harm or abuse recorded at this home. Staff are, however, very clear on when they need to pass on information, what information they should record and how young people should be supported. The Registered Manager is also very clear about when he should pass information to outside agencies such as Ofsted, Local Authority Designated Officers or Local Children's Safeguarding Boards. This ensures that young people would be appropriately responded to and protected should any allegations or disclosures be made.

Leadership and management

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

This home is well managed by an experienced, passionate and knowledgeable Registered Manager. The ethos of the home is clearly about meeting young people's needs and providing them with a positive experience of being looked after. One parent commented 'I am really impressed with their rationale for running the home and the clear philosophy that it is all about the kids - taking them on holidays etc. - and not about the bank balance.'

The staff team is well trained and offer a range of life experiences and role models to young people. They are professional and focused in their approach. Parents comment that, 'There has been lots of turnaround in behaviour and this is due to the professional attitude and behaviour of the staff who are working with him.' Social workers also support this saying, 'I like the fact they do not have a high staff turnover and this means there is always a member of staff he can identify with and relate to.' All staff have undertaken mandatory training courses which ensures they are able to work with young people in a consistent and professional manner. The updates to fire safety training are overdue for some staff as the home has a policy of renewing fire extinguisher training annually. The Registered Manager has addressed this and liaised with the training officer and courses are now booked in the near future.

Staff say they are supervised regularly and that supervision is of a good quality and supports them in carrying out their jobs. The manager is described as knowledgeable and approachable and always open to discussion. However, there are gaps in the frequency of the supervision of some staff which could impact on their practice.

The home has made significant progress since the last inspection including developing a clearer culture of professional accountability and responsibility among the staff. Policies have been reviewed and updated and staff made aware of any significant changes. Recording systems have been reviewed and a much more robust system of recording individual behaviour management plans for young people has been implemented. The rota is also being looked at as the manager feels that no shifts should extend beyond eight hours in order to get the best out of staff at all times.

The Registered Manager is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of his team and the home. The primary strength is the staff team is their experience and the stability

they provide to young people. Weaknesses relate to the consistency of recording procedures by some staff. The Registered Manager has a clear plan in place for the development of this home which includes recruiting more staff to allow for rota changes, buying newer, smaller multi-person vehicles so more staff can drive them and supporting several staff to gain professional qualifications. There is also some thought being given to how the organisation can extend the services they provide. This development plan is not currently in written format. To present it in writing would allow the staff to fully understand the planned improvements and to feel part of taking the home forward.

Monitoring of the home is undertaken regularly by both the Registered Manager and an external visitor. Reports of this monitoring are filed and copies sent through to Ofsted within agreed timescales. Any issues picked up as a result of this monitoring are appropriately addressed. There have been no notifications of serious events from this home and no complaints have been received either from young people or other parties. This is a further sign of a well-managed, calm and successful home in which young people are flourishing.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.