

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	29/05/2012
Inspector	Caroline Oldham
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	21/03/2012
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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 each have a placement plan designed to meet their specific needs. These are reviewed and updated as required. Staff have high aspirations and clear goals for the young people in their care, and consequently young people make excellent progress. Young people are actively involved in their highly personalised care plans and reviews, and know the plans for their future.

The quality of care in the home is good, and young people respond well to the consistent messages and expectations. They make good progress in all aspects of their welfare and development, for example, significantly reducing challenging behaviours. They are involved in the running of the home through frequent informal discussions with staff, but currently young people are not engaging in their meetings. Young people say that they like the staff team, and get on well with each other.

Leaders and the manager have systems in place to monitor progress and have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. There are development plans in place, but currently no system for identifying trends and issues of concern. The manager has a thorough understanding of the operational issues and is an excellent role model for staff. Staff confirm that they are given good quality regular supervision, and access to all relevant training. All the staff team talk with enthusiasm about the young people and are keen to do their very best for them, consequently young people respond well and their behaviour is good and achievements at school are significant.

Young people are kept safe through excellent working practices, and good highly individualised up-to-date risk assessments which are regularly reviewed. Consequently young people are able to enjoy some freedoms within clearly agreed boundaries. They respond very well to this, and they say that they feel happy and safe in their home. Young people's behaviour within the home is generally very good; however reflective work following a sanction or restraint is not well documented. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding issues through a comprehensive training programme, and are especially vigilant regarding any incidents of bullying.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the manager identifies any concerns about specific incidents and identifies patterns and trends (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that the wishes, feeling and views of children are taken into account in developing the home (NMS 1.7)
- ensure that where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home. (NMS 3.18)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making good progress in developing a positive self-view and building emotional resilience. They make and form attachments within the home and within the local community. Staff help young people to understand their background through life story work, and help them to find interests and hobbies that may help them in the future such as motorbike maintenance and construction work. Consequently young peoples grow in confidence, their behaviour improves and they enjoy their education and their hobbies.

Young people enjoy an active lifestyle including running, swimming, riding bikes and playing football. They eat freshly cooked meals with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, and have a good understanding of living a healthy lifestyle. None of the young people are involved with alcohol or drug abuse, and smoking is very actively discouraged.

Most young people attend education on-site and staff assist in the classroom which ensures consistency and good links between school and home life. Sometimes young people attend college nearby, and staff maintain excellent links with college staff. Consequently young people achieve well at school and often gain a good range of

qualifications to enable them to pursue jobs in construction, catering, and the uniformed services.

Young people are involved in the day-to-day running of the home through regular discussions with staff. They attend residents meetings, but are not engaging with the opportunity. Young people keep their bedrooms clean and tidy, and help with household chores such as washing up. All young people are actively involved in the community either through local groups or contributing to village events such as the Diamond Jubilee.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Staff are extremely proactive in arranging, monitoring and supporting contact visits to ensure that they are fruitful, enjoyable events. They ensure good communication links with family members to make the best arrangements, and to work in the young person's long term interests. This means that some young people are forming good bonds with family members, and making appropriate attachments.

Young people are developing budgeting skills, home keeping and cooking skills commensurate with their age and understanding. All are learning how to keep themselves safe, and consequently risk taking behaviour is very low. When young people leave the home, many go on to have good jobs and lead settled lives. Some keep in touch to report on their progress.

Quality of care

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

Young people have very good relationships with the staff team. Staff have high aspirations and hopes for the young people, and highly individualised agreements encourage cooperation and improvements in behaviour. Staff are very skilled at helping young people understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes, and to set clear limits in place. Also, there is an excellent reward system in place which encourages good behaviour. Consequently young people generally behave well; respecting staff and one another, and sanctions are rare.

Young people are given a clearly written guide prior to admission to the home. This includes the complaints procedure. Young people say that they know how to make a complaint, although they have not done so. Young people are treated with respect at every level, and their views influence the day-to-day running of the home, and their care.

There are detailed placement and care plans for all the young people, these include a section of the file covering culture and diversity, and all sections, for example, risk assessments and focus work, are very comprehensive. They detail the specific, individualised needs of the young person and where appropriate their religious and cultural needs and interests. Staff regularly review the plans and revise risk assessments. All staff are made aware of issues through the handover meetings and

staff meetings. Consequently staff offer consistent care and young people remain at the centre of care practice. Each young person is treated as an individual and plans demonstrate this. For example, one young person may go to the park alone for up to half an hour, whereas another young person always goes with a member of staff. Activities are sometimes for an individual, such as scouts, lifesaving and horse riding, or group activities such as swimming, camping and bowling. All social workers spoken to said that the young people residing at the home were making very good progress. Social workers say the home is, 'like a proper home' and that their young person is, 'a different child now' due to the reduction of challenging behaviour, and being happy and settled. Young people have regular individual sessions with their key worker, covering a range of issues as identified in the placement plan.

The home provides a very healthy environment. On admission young people are registered with the local health professionals, and all health needs are actively pursued. Staff work proactively with other agencies to meet the young people's ongoing medical and psychological needs. Young people are actively involved in choosing the weekly menu, and there is plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables in the daily diet. They talk with enthusiasm about trying different fruits and spend their pocket money on coconuts and pomegranates. Regular opportunities for physical activities are incorporated into daily living through cycling, swimming and football.

Staff actively supported young people to attend education and work experience. All young people are in education, mainly on-site, although young people may attend local colleges as needed. Attendance at school is excellent and young people enjoy the lessons and activities. Care staff offer support within the school environment ensuring good continuity of care and communication. Consequently young people re-engage in education, and are making the most of the opportunities provided for them.

Young people are actively involved in choosing how they spend their free time and staff talk to them about their particular interests. This enables young people to engage in a broad range of activities such as scouts, motor bike scrambling and maintenance, and the local gym. There is an emphasis on outdoor activities such as camping; water sports and cycling, however, trips to the cinema and meals out are also regular events. Young people also enjoy annual foreign holidays and short breaks.

The home is beautifully maintained and spacious there is a lovely garden for games. The location enables young people to access a local park, and shops and services are accessible via car. Young people are actively involved in the local community, getting involved in village celebrations and volunteering to help repair the local church and other amenities. According to their age and ability they take some responsibility for caring for their bedrooms, managing their laundry, helping with meals and sharing household chores.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe in the home, and they know the staff will protect them from harm. All staff receive comprehensive training in child protection procedures, and have a good working knowledge of what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff. There are comprehensive individual risk assessments for each young person that are regularly updated according to need. There are clear procedures in place for when a young person goes missing however, incidents of young people going missing are extremely rare events. Consequently young people are kept safe.

There is an excellent reward system in place, which is individualised to each young person's interests and so this motivates them to succeed. Young people feel a sense of pride in their achievements, and this is also recognised by the wider community, for example being asked to stay later at community projects to help, and receiving letters of praise from local dignitaries. Staff provide consistent boundaries, and achieve good cooperation with the young people. They sometimes work in conjunction with psychologists, and social workers say that by putting in place appropriate strategies, negative behaviour is significantly reduced. Sanctions and physical restraints are very rare occurrences, and most behaviour is managed through negotiation. When sanctions and restraints occur there is excellent direct reflective work, but this is not always well documented.

There is a stable staff team with low turnover. However, there has been one new member of staff join the team since the last inspection. The staff recruitment and selection process is rigorous, and comprehensive checks are made to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with young people and they are kept safe from harm.

The environment is very well maintained and kept safe through a system of weekly and monthly internal safety checks and risk assessments. In addition, services such as electricity, electrical appliances and fire fighting equipment are regularly checked by the appropriate professional companies. Fire drills are carried out regularly, and particularly when a new young person is admitted. Visitors to the home have their identification checked, and they are signed in.

Leadership and management

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

The manager is actively involved in the day to day running of the home. The action from the last inspection has been addressed and a regulation 34 overview report is being prepared. The home continues to make improvements and develop the staff team. The registered person ensures that monthly monitoring visits occur and these always include consultation with young people. The manager also has a system of internal audits, although this currently does not identify trends and issues of concern. The manager identifies the significant improvements of the young people, and this is confirmed by social workers. For example, criminal behaviour has stopped and challenging behaviour has significantly reduced, due to the care provided by the staff team.

There is a Statement of Purpose, which clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the home. Placing authorities are clear about the aims and objectives of the home, and what services and facilities it provides. They say that the home offers a comprehensive package of care and education. All social workers spoken to emphasised the progress that their young person has made in every aspect of their development; education, social skills, behaviour management and preparation for independence. Young people are very clear about the purpose of their placement in the home and their future plans, and they are actively involved in the review process. Staff are also clear about their roles, and how to access additional support for young people.

The home has a very stable staff team with few changes. Staff rotas ensure that young people receive the levels of care they need. Staff receive excellent training, some is now on-line to ensure easy access to courses without delay. All staff are suitably qualified or completing their qualification. All staff receive frequent supervision, and staff say that they are able to seek advice and support when necessary. The home is financially well resourced.

Care planning documents demonstrates that staff have a very thorough approach to meet young people's individual needs. They have working documents with high levels of detail that are reviewed and revised as progress is made. All documentation is kept in a lockable office.

There are very good relationships with the local community, enabling young people to be well regarded and helpful members. Receiving positive feedback for their contributions to village life further enhances their self-esteem.

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.