

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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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 part of a residential special school which is part of a large private children's care organisation. The service is registered to accommodate 23 children and young people with learning disabilities. The home offers planned long-term placements. The school is registered with the Department for Education.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children and young people grow and progress while staying at this service. Their behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs are effectively supported. The provision is particularly resourceful in managing a clear framework for communication with children and young people and managing their behaviour. Individualised engagement with children and young people leads to positive relationships with staff. The structured approach to daily living, nurturing relationships and meaningful communication processes enable children and young people to be less anxious and embrace opportunities and new experiences.

Staff are committed to providing children and young people with challenges and opportunities to develop new skills both socially and educationally. Children and young people experience improved behaviour and grow in confidence to explore and reach their potential and prepare for their transition into adult life. They are treated with a good level of respect and clear efforts are made to ensure their wishes, feelings and views are heard and included in the day to day running of the service.

Safeguarding is placed at the highest priority. Effective risk assessment, high staffing levels and excellent liaison with placing authorities lead to excellent safeguarding outcomes for children and young people living at the service. Promoting equality and diversity is also an outstanding feature of this service.

Monitoring processes provide continuous quality assurance to maintain good standards and further develop improvements in the running of the service.

There is one requirement and one recommendation as a result of this inspection, relating to the fabric of the building and involving children and young people further in some decision making.

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
31 (2001)	ensure all parts of the home are of sound construction and kept in good structural repair externally and internally. (Regulation 31.2 (d))	31/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon in the day-to-day running of the home. (NMS 1.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people grow, develop and progress in this service. They make good progress due to a clear and structured behaviour management framework coupled with a clear assessment and celebration of each young person's needs and individuality.

Children and young people grow in self confidence and can express themselves positively because they are treated with respect. They are proactively enabled to try different opportunities and develop new skills. Children and young people are encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes because they are provided with clear and consistently-implemented communication strategies, including verbal, symbols, photographs and sign language. They grow in confidence, are calmer and included because they can make sense of their daily routines and activities. They can express themselves and enjoy meaningful relationships with others. While all children and young people respond well to the same structured daily living routines in the home, their individuality is clearly identified and valued. Children and young people are able to express their cultural and religious identities and gender differences are respected and valued. For example children and young people eat multi-cultural meals, enjoy dressing up in clothes from different cultures, listen to a variety of music and have key workers and staff who reinforce their racial and gender identity. Girls are a significant minority in the group and are safeguarded and respected with their own private space and facilities.

Children and young people are able to develop a positive sense of worth because their achievements and positive experiences are consistently reinforced. All children and young people have an achievement book which show an array of photos of their experiences, activities and achievements. Children and young people enjoy looking at

photos of when they planted trees, went to the dentist, prepared and cooked food, visited the seaside and enjoyed their favourite ice cream.

Children and young people have involvement in their daily living routines; they are responsible for dusting, laying and clearing tables at meals times, helping with laundry, doing food shopping, cooking and baking. Children and young people enjoy a variety of practical and leisure activities. There are various photo displays of children and young people enjoying a trip to theme park, visiting a water park and enjoying holidays at the beach.

Children and young people feel good about themselves and as they learn new words and skills. They have a variety of opportunities and can do many things they could not do before coming to the service. These include enjoying going for a haircut, going out for a meal, going shopping, visiting the medical centre and going to football matches. The positive ethos of the service, clear focus for behaviour management and high levels of respect for children and young people ensures they enjoy nurturing and interactive relationships with staff.

Children and young people enjoy good health because staff liaise with relevant health agencies and professionals. Their medical needs are met excellently and effectively

good health promoted with clear procedures for medication, excellent staff training and the provision of healthy eating and exercise routines. Children and young people are encouraged to develop their knowledge and understanding of their own health and medical conditions. For example, this includes brushing teeth, attending the dentist, healthy eating and making sure they put on sun protection cream.

Children and young people enjoy excellent attendance at school because they are well supported and there is meaningful assessment of their needs. Their self-esteem and progress builds because they are able to achieve targets that are individually set. Children and young people learn in an environment where they are supported by care staff in education activities. Children and young people's achievements, efforts and individuality are clearly promoted, reinforced and rewarded at school. There is an array of creative work completed by young people displayed throughout the school and houses. Parents' comments about the service include 'excellent in caring and education' and 'it is a wonderful place to learn and develop'.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people are looked after by a competent and well-trained staff team. There are effective frameworks for care, education and behaviour management. Children and young people are cared for and develop in confidence in a stable, structured and nurturing environment. They progress because staff implement clear expectations and boundaries, coupled with developing and maintaining meaningful communication processes and respectful relationships with children and young people.

Identifying individuality, difference and promoting equality is a key strength of this service. Staff have a sensitive and meaningful knowledge of the personalities and preferences of the children and young people. They understand and respect how children and young people like things to happen and be done. This knowledge is particularly beneficial when managing behaviour and enabling young people to meaningfully participate in daily living tasks, leisure activities and new opportunities. This individual approach to each child and young person is celebrated with individual achievement records or scrapbooks. These books provide excellent evidence of how equality and diversity is valued and promoted in the home and enjoyed by the children and young people living there. Care planning, risk management procedures and behaviour management plans are effective because they provide a comprehensive assessment of need. Children and young people receive good support because the plans guide staff with practical strategies to support the daily routines and respond to their complex needs. Individual care and educational plans set achievable targets which help young people aspire to their potential. Health care plans are also comprehensive, effectively implemented and closely monitored. Assessment and review of each young person's placement contributes to the level of care provided, and the clear progress made by children and young people.

Children and young people's communication processes are integral to the quality and understanding of their daily routines, experiences and opportunities. These processes are effective because staff understand the communication systems for each young person. There is a close working relationship between the carers, school nurse, education staff and parents. There is a school attached to the home. Staff also maintain good working relationships with local colleges. The routines in the house including bedtimes, getting up and staffing levels are arranged in order to promote education. Staffing levels are arranged to ensure children and young people to enjoy a variety of activities and leisure opportunities.

This joined-up approach to young people's care, support, education and health needs provides consistency and positive outcomes for children and young people. For example, they enjoy better health, take part in visits in the community, are calmer and have more stable behaviour. There are good facilities available to support children and young people with self-care, domestic and independence skills as they prepare for the transition into a variety of adult placements.

Staff relationships with young people are nurturing, interactive and enabling. Staff have a clear understanding of how young people express themselves. There are clear and varied communication systems in place for children and young people to express how they feel and make choices. However, on this inspection staff did not facilitate children and young people in making choices about the evening's activities even though they were present during the decision-making process. Children and young people's participation is promoted in regular house meetings which are creatively and thoughtfully managed. A variety of topics including personal hygiene, health checks, friendships and making choices have been covered using verbal explanation, symbols, sign language and pictures. Children and young people's contribution to these meetings are celebrated and reinforced with display boards in each house.

Staff know how each child and young person expresses how they are happy, sad, anxious or distressed and this is reinforced in written placement plans. Information about what children and young people should do if they are not happy is displayed in all the houses and regularly discussed and reinforced in house meetings. The information is in symbol and word form and, therefore, understandable for most young people.

Young people's physical and emotional health is promoted and monitored. The school nurse and staff have comprehensive knowledge of learning disabilities, associated medical issues and health promotion awareness. There are safe procedures and effective staff training and understanding for the administration of medication. Menus are balanced, multi-cultural and provide children and young people with choice at each meal. Arrangements for healthy eating and promoting exercise contribute to the good health of children and young people at this home.

The accommodation consists of a five separate but adjoined units, including post-16 accommodation that includes self contained bed-sits. Parts of the building are currently under or awaiting refurbishment. The accommodation provides young people with an environment which meets their needs. Areas where refurbishment is complete provide facilities that are thoughtfully designed to meet the complex needs of children and young people with learning disabilities. There is also detailed attention given to managing group and individual behaviours by providing smaller, quieter lounges, private meeting rooms for families and kitchens for independence skills. The standards of maintenance, décor and furnishings throughout the service are generally good. However, some bathrooms are in a poor state of repair and some areas still awaiting refurbishment present poorly in comparison. Young people's bedrooms are decorated and personalised according to their taste. There are good levels of privacy for children and young people. Most rooms have en-suite toilet and shower facilities and there is a choice of communal rooms. Children and young people are encouraged to enjoy the large, safe garden and playground areas.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people are protected by effectively-planned and implemented safeguarding arrangements. There are robust recruitment and selection processes and all visitors to the service are closely scrutinised and checked. The competence of staff, robust and regularly-reviewed policies and procedures plus consistent monitoring of practice provides children and young people with a safe and secure environment in which to live.

Staff are able to promote the safety and welfare of children and young people because they understand the complexities of their disabilities, behaviours and communication processes. Staff clearly grasp the importance of the smaller picture and how concerns must be reported as these could contribute to a much larger safeguarding and behaviour management picture.

Procedures to promote the welfare, safety and positive behaviour of young people are comprehensive. Young people are safe because staff receive good training and are able to consistently implement the procedures on a daily basis. Staff are aware of their own roles and responsibilities and other agencies involved in keeping young people safe. The service maintains good links with the local safeguarding team. While there have been no incidents of children and young people going missing from the service there are clear protocols in place.

Children and young people are safe and enjoy improved behaviour because risk assessment and behaviour management plans are excellent and consistently implemented. Staffing levels are high, there are clear routines to ensure all young people are supervised and observed. Risks are identified and clear and practical management strategies put in place. Concerns and challenges are clearly identified. Strategies to manage these concerns focus on safety but also ensure children and young people have opportunities to try new opportunities, explore their potential and achieve. Children and young people are enabled to do as much as they can rather than limit their opportunities.

Children and young people experience significant improvement in their behaviour and relationships with others. Relationships are respectful and based on an effective understanding of learning disability and exploring meaningful communication with children and young people. Children and young people develop and grow in an environment where there are clear boundaries and expectations. All young people have an individual behaviour management plan with clear targets. Staff are patient and committed in finding ways to encourage positive behaviour and decrease anxious moments for children and young people. Young people have a strong sense of safety and stability. Physical restraint is only used as a last resort. Records demonstrate excellent approaches to managing very challenging behaviours and a strong sense of accountability for the reasons for such interventions. The records are regularly monitored and provide meaningful information about trends in behaviour, including effectiveness of strategies and the progress made by young people.

House rules are simple and clear and include not hitting and kicking. They are reinforced throughout the home in picture and symbol form. House meetings are used to reinforce and remind young people about respect and how to treat each other. A recent house meeting discussed and showed photos and pictures about friendship and anti-bullying. High staffing levels, close supervision and clear expectations ensure behaviour is well managed with no concerns about bullying.

Children and young people are cared for in a safe environment. Health and safety is effectively managed. There are excellent checking and monitoring systems in place to promote safety. Security is thorough and well monitored. Children and young people know what to do should there be a fire and have enjoyed visits by the fire brigade to enable their awareness about fire safety.

Leadership and management

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

This service has addressed all recommendations from the last inspection and has continued to improve the quality of care to children and young people.

This home does very well in providing children and young people with a stable, safe and nurturing environment where there are good levels of care and support. There are clear policies and procedures, effective organisation of staff and effective implementation of behaviour and safeguarding strategies.

Daily briefings and regular staff meetings contribute to the effective and consistent running of the service. Children and young people benefit from consistent care and education as there are effective communication processes across the education and care services.

The manager is experienced and leads a management and staff team with clear roles and responsibilities. There is a strong commitment to staff development. Children and young people are looked after by an experienced and competent staff team. Staffing levels are effective and are managed in keeping with the home's Statement of Purpose. Professional development is supported by a comprehensive training programme. Staff say they receive regular supervision and they value the training they receive which covers all mandatory areas, such as safeguarding, behaviour management and health and safety.

Internal and external monitoring of the service identifies good practice, shortfalls and further areas for development. The manager ensures accountable monitoring of staff performance, care planning and daily routines and recording procedures.

The service has an annual development plan which has impacted on procedural improvements, such as better organisation of safeguarding responsibilities. The manager acknowledges that the current development plan for the service may benefit from a clearer focus on the participation and consultation with children and young people. The clear commitment to improvement is demonstrated by the recent recruitment of a health promotion manager and ongoing development in how the catering arrangements in the home are managed. There is a clear commitment and motivation to provide a care and education framework that enables young people to overcome significant obstacles and difficulties so they can achieve their full potential.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.