

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC020602
Inspection date	11 March 2010
Inspector	Trevor Hall
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	20 July 2009
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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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 children's home provides care and accommodation for up to five young persons of either gender aged from eight up to the age of 17 years. The home is owned by a private childcare organisation.

The home is located in a quiet village in rural Shropshire. Accommodation is provided in a well-appointed detached family house, converted from a former school premises, in the village. This provides young people with individual bedrooms and ample communal space. The home's positioning in a village not far from the outskirts of a large town facilitates easy access to schools and a wide variety of recreational, social and sporting activities.

Summary

This was an unannounced interim inspection that concentrated on checking all key national minimum standards under the Every Child Matters area of staying safe; it also followed up on four recommendations, in the organisation outcome area, from the home's previous key inspection which took place on the 20 July 2009.

This inspection confirmed that this home continues to be well managed, with an appropriately robust set of policies and applied procedures that ensure young people's safety is given priority. Young people benefit from living in an environment that is centred on meeting their individual needs. The home has well-established regimes in place for the effective assessment of risks and staff take all reasonable precautions to ensure that young people, staff and visitors are safe at all times.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, staff supervision and its recording have improved. All staff now receive formal supervision from either the home's Registered Manager or one of the senior care staff at the frequency and for the duration stated in the national minimum standards. Those staff undertaking their probationary employment period receive their supervision at the enhanced frequencies dictated by these standards. The home's supervision records are now signed by both the supervisor and the staff and clearly indicate the duration of each session.

The ratio of staff currently deployed in the home, holding a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 or above, in looking after children and young people, now surpasses the required 80%.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people live in a home where staff understand their role and responsibilities for keeping young people safe. Safeguarding procedures are in place, staff are trained and are aware of what to do if they are concerned about a young person's safety or protection.

Young people's privacy is respected, as the home has clear guidelines on privacy and confidentiality, which are known and followed by staff. Staff do not enter young people's rooms without permission, except when young people are considered at risk. Information held in respect of young people is stored in lockable facilities, which are only accessible to staff. There is guidance regarding the circumstances under which room searches can be carried out and a log of room searches is maintained. Young people have access to a telephone, which allows private conversation when this is an agreed part of their placement plan.

Young people understand how to make a complaint if they have any concerns about their care and they are confident that the manager and staff listen to them and take appropriate action when necessary. Young people are able to seek support from an independent advocate if they require. Information regarding making a complaint is included in the children's guide. This indicates that the home takes young people's concerns seriously.

Young people live in a caring and safe environment. Young people's welfare is protected by good staff awareness of safeguarding, anti-bullying and unauthorised absence procedures. The home has clear procedures for responding to child protection concerns and the staff have initial training in child protection, which is regularly updated. Staff take all appropriate action to keep young people safe; this includes increased supervision where it is believed that young people are vulnerable. Staff work actively in the home to ensure that bullying does not happen. Unauthorised absences are well recorded with staff having clear protocols about informing the appropriate authorities. Staff have prepared profiles of the young people to share with the police to assist in locating young people if they are missing from the home.

The home develops clear plans to protect each young person. These are supported by risk assessments and behaviour management plans. Staff have received training in respect of managing young people's challenging behaviour and are able to diffuse difficult situations where necessary. Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through discussions with staff on an individual basis and being provided with clear details of the home's rules and expectations of them when they are admitted to the home.

A range of appropriate rewards and sanctions is used to reinforce positive behaviours. Sanctions, rewards and consequences are age and needs appropriate and reparation is encouraged. Staff know how to manage challenging behaviour because they receive regular training using an approved management methodology which includes the safe and minimal use of physical restraint. Any incidents arising are fully recorded and evaluated by the home's manager.

Young people live in a home that provides physical safety and security, with risks from young people's behaviour and environmental factors being well managed. Testing of emergency lighting, fire alarms and fire fighting equipment is taking place within appropriate timescales. However, proof of the annual servicing of the emergency lighting was not available. Fire drills have taken place within the frequency required, including a night-time evacuation.

Staff personnel files were not available on the inspection date, as they are held centrally at the parent organisation's head office.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

This is a good home that is extremely well managed. The quality of the home's management impacts directly on the quality of the care and support young people receive within the home. Excellent communication is a feature of the home, which enables each staff team to be well informed about daily events, routines and the progress of each young person. Staff know and understand the stated aims and objectives of the service which is consistent with the home's Statement of Purpose.

There is good leadership and management support because the Registered Manager is qualified, skilled and experienced and provides strong and effective leadership to the staff team and young people. The Registered Manager is actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the home and has clear expectations that the staff team will achieve the best possible outcomes for all young people in their care. Staff receive regular one to one supervision from either the home's manager or one of the seniors. Those staff members who are still completing their probationary employment period receive supervision at the increased frequency required by the national minimum standards.

Young people are being looked after by a staff group that is relatively experienced, enthusiastic and which now surpasses the expected ratio of 80% of staff holding a level 3 or higher qualification in childcare required by the national minimum standards. There is a good emphasis given to staff training and development which is focused on areas relating to young people's needs.

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

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

There are no recommendations.