

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 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

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was a full unannounced inspection that concentrated on all key national minimum standards (NMS). The inspection took place over two days.

The home provides an outstanding standard of care and support that helps young people in their education, personal, social and emotional development. The home's Registered Manager provides effective leadership which results in staff being clearly focused on meeting the needs of the young people. Staff relationships with young people are both caring and very supportive. Young people benefit from living in a home that is well managed and organised to achieve excellent outcomes.

Improvements since the last inspection

No recommendations were made at the home's last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy the benefits of living in an environment where their health and well-being is actively promoted. Staff provide a high level of support to young people encouraging them to eat healthily and take regular exercise. Staff receive a varied training, including basic food hygiene, first aid and the safe administration of medication. They are knowledgeable about and sensitive to their responsibilities in respect of ensuring that young people's cultural and religious needs are also met.

Young people receive a varied and well-balanced diet based on their expressed personal preferences backed by sound nutritional oversight. Young people help to produce the weekly menu, but are guided by staff to ensure that it is both nutritionally balanced and reflects specific likes and cultural dietary needs. Records are kept of meals eaten which enable staff to monitor young people's diet. Young people are encouraged and expected to participate in the cooking of meals in preparation for adulthood. Theme nights are held to enable young people to experience different cultural meals. For these, they are expected to research different cultures, and make the meals with support from staff.

Staff work in a respectful and sensitive manner when supporting young people with their health needs. The physical, emotional and health needs of each young person are clearly identified and recorded in young people's care records. Care records are of an outstanding standard and are regularly reviewed. Staff recognise the importance of meeting young people's holistic needs and therefore work very closely with other health professionals. Staff are proactive in obtaining services and advice from other health professionals when necessary. Staff working in the home are provided with clear policies on health promotion, for example, in relation to drugs, alcohol, smoking and diet. Young people are actively encouraged to make responsible decisions about keeping themselves healthy and safe.

Good procedures are in place to ensure that medicines are appropriately handled and stored to safeguard young people's welfare. Records of medication administered and disposed of are kept. Practices and records are checked regularly by the Registered Manager which helps to safeguard young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people live in a safe and secure environment. Staff are committed to enabling young people to develop the necessary skills to keep themselves safe and to take responsibility for their actions in preparation for their adult lives. Effective and robust systems and practices enable young people to take controlled risks in a supportive environment, which help young people develop their self-confidence whilst keeping themselves safe. The home has detailed safeguarding procedures and has a copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. Staff understand their responsibilities in reporting any concerns, which helps to protect young people from the risk of harm or abuse.

Respecting young people's privacy and dignity is at the forefront of practice at the home while at the same time ensuring they are safeguarded. Staff ensure that they do not enter children's rooms without knocking. Young people's administrative records are maintained securely and contents are not discussed inappropriately. Staff are aware of the children's right to privacy and how this should be safely promoted. Young people are aware that their bedroom may be searched if safeguarding concerns arise. Where searches are undertaken, clear records are kept which the young person is given the opportunity to sign.

Systems within the home and open relationships with staff enable young people to raise any concerns they may have in a safe and supportive environment. Details about the home's complaints process are outlined in the children's guide and staff provide information and additional support if young people require this. The home's records confirm that young people have been able to access the complaints process and that all such complaints have been appropriately investigated and recorded. Complaint resolutions are shared with the young people who are afforded the opportunity to sign the record; any refusal to sign is also recorded. The Registered Manager of the home monitors the complaints record to ensure young people's rights are upheld, and that the process is effective.

Bullying is not tolerated and this is made clear to young people on admission and is regularly discussed at the young people's meetings. Safeguarding is promoted by using the registered provider's formal policies and procedures. These have been developed to comply with regulatory requirements and promote good practice in areas of child protection, including countering bullying, behaviour management and dealing with unauthorised absence.

Staff are aware of and have access to the Local Safeguarding Children Board's procedures describing how to recognise signs of abuse and indicating ways in which young people can put themselves at risk. Clear procedures and practices to deal with unauthorised absence help to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse. Risk assessments are carried out for each young person. The staff team and young people have built up positive relationships with the local community police who regularly visit the home and talk to young people about keeping themselves safe.

The young people living at this home are aware of the reason they are being looked after and how staff will promote their safety and protection within the home and in public places. Staff are aware of the types of behaviour which each young person may display and accordingly have developed individualised risk assessments that minimise the potential of harm to themselves or others. Staff know how to respond to challenging behaviours and in circumstances where young people may absent themselves without permission. Young people are encouraged to reflect on the consequences of their behaviour after such incidents to learn how to help themselves to be safe and behave responsibly.

Staff receive appropriate training and have sufficient guidance in the safe use of physical intervention. Such interventions are used only as a last resort and then only to prevent physical harm to individuals or to prevent excessive damage to property. The recording of physical interventions within the home is generally good, however, on occasions these have been incomplete when signed off by the home's manager or her deputy. Young people are routinely invited to make comment if physical interventions are applied and their refusal to do so is also recorded.

Staff working at the home take positive steps to keep residents and visitors safe from all environmental hazards including fire. Risk assessments on the environment are completed and updated on a regular basis and staff within the home are all involved

in these routines to ensure that health and safety is promoted by everyone.

The management of health and safety is outstanding which helps to protect young people and staff from the risk of harm and injury. Servicing of installations and equipment is carried out as required. Fire safety procedures are good: fire alarm tests are carried out weekly; regular fire drills take place, and the fire evacuation procedure is explained to young people on admission. General risk assessments are in place as well as individual risk assessments. Staff are responsive to changing needs of young people and newly identified risks for which they take prompt and appropriate action.

Safe and effective recruitment practices and the vetting of visitors help to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent relationships exist between young people and staff. This results from a culture of mutual respect and belief that young people should be given every opportunity and support to achieve their full potential. Young people are receiving an excellent range of individual support and guidance that is consistent with their identified needs. Staff have a positive attitude towards education and take a keen and active interest in young people's development and learning. Young people are living in a home where they can consistently enjoy and achieve.

All young people are given an outstanding level of support and guidance from a skilled and committed staff team who have an in-depth knowledge of young people's needs. This helps young people to pursue their particular interests, achieve and develop appropriate self confidence. Staff embrace multi-agency working and understand that it is integral to meeting young people's needs and have developed positive working relationships with other agencies. Individual risk assessments are in place in relation to the care of young people and young people are supported to take controlled risks, appropriate to their age and abilities. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly.

Young people's education is acknowledged as important and staff actively support each young person with their endeavours. Young people attend either the care organisation's own registered education facility, local mainstream schools or higher education colleges. Staff work closely with local education services and young people's education is based on their individual learning needs. The facilities in the home help young people with their homework. Each young person has a personal education plan.

Young people's care and support is also clearly focused on their overall plan of care, matching the placing authorities aims and objectives in relation to future plans and placements. The Registered Manager and staff have a strong focus on organising themselves around young people and their needs which supports improving

outcomes for each individual.

Staff have access to a comprehensive range of information that identifies specific needs and support for each young person. A key worker system is in operation where a member of staff takes some responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of a young person's care and support. Records also take account of potential needs in relation to a young person's diversity such as identity, race, culture and religion. Although some individual support is delivered through key worker arrangements, this process is not promoted to the exclusion of other staff offering support. It is clear that staff in the home work as a team and young people are able to approach all staff for help and support.

Young people are provided with an extensive range of activities, both in-house and in the community, which they enjoy and gives them opportunities to try new activities. Activities are based on likes, interests and needs including health and learning needs. This helps to build up young people's self-confidence. Risk assessments are in place for trips and outside activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Empowerment of young people is at the forefront of the home's care practice. The home's manager and her staff actively encourage and support young people to make positive contributions to their daily lives and have a say in their future. Staff work consistently to ensure young people understand issues and have difficult concepts thoroughly explained to them, so that they understand why procedures and rule systems are in place and how these help them to take ownership of their lives. Staff actively and formally seek the views of young people at an individual and group level and respond in a way that values their opinions. Seeking young people's opinions and helping them make decisions about matters that affect them is fully integrated into the care practices of the home.

All young people have individual files which are based on the Every Child Matters five outcomes and contain looked after children documents, placement plans and associated action plans, risk assessments and case records. Care records give comprehensive details of individual needs and how to meet the needs. Records are of a very good standard and are regularly reviewed by staff in consultation with young people. Review meetings are held as required for which staff produce progress reports, and minutes of these meetings are kept on file. Young people are actively encouraged to attend their review meetings which helps them contribute to their future plans.

Contact arrangements are clearly recorded to ensure that staff understand each young person's situation with regards to meeting with their family. Staff work hard to support young people to maintain valued relationships with family through appropriate contact arrangements.

Admissions to the home are generally well planned, and careful consideration is given to ensure that the needs of young people can be met and that they are compatible with the young person already living at the home. Young people are given good support when they arrive and leave the home and these routines are based around individual needs and circumstances. Staff understand that moving home can be very difficult for some young people and this awareness is used to provide support and reassurance in these circumstances. Young people are encouraged to bring their own possessions into the home so they can personalise their own bedrooms.

Staff use a range of ways to consult with young people in the home. Young people have the opportunity to express their views and opinions in young people's meetings as well as through individual sessions with their key worker. Young people regularly meet with the Registered Manager as part of the consultation processes to ensure the head of the home is directly informed about their views and opinions. Staff are good at consulting with young people about the routines and daily living arrangements of the home. Young people state that staff are good at listening and taking on board their feedback. Staff are active in ensuring that young people are aware that they can speak to independent agencies and professionals outside of the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are actively encouraged and supported to develop daily living and life skills, in preparation for adulthood. This is based on individual needs, taking into account a young person's age, abilities and previous experiences. The home maintains good records of what tasks young people have worked on and what they have achieved. This helps to monitor young people's progress in preparing for their adult lives and increases young people's self-confidence.

Young people receive adequate allowances to cover personal requisites and clothing. They are well informed about their entitlements because the home has good arrangements and systems in place to manage allowances, personal needs and pocket money. Key workers are responsible for ensuring that the young people maintain an appropriate stock of essential clothing. Once these are established and maintained, the young people are at liberty to save their money for special items of choice. Pocket money is clearly recorded and being paid to the young people on a weekly basis.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation which is decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people have been involved in choosing the décor and furniture in the home which gives them a sense of belonging and respect for their environment. The home is clean and well-maintained. Young people are encouraged and supported to personalise their bedrooms which reflects their individuality.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

This is an outstanding 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.

The home's Statement of Purpose contains all the information required in Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. This informs young people, their families and placing authorities about the services provided by the home. The Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the practice and registration conditions of this home. The young people's welcome booklet is given to all young people either prior to or on admission to the home. The booklet informs young people about life at the home, what they can expect and what is expected of them and local facilities.

The Registered Manager provides excellent day-to-day support to staff who's commitment to providing a consistent quality of service is an additional strength of the home. Young people enjoy being looked after by a consistent group of staff, who cover most absences themselves. When cover staff are deployed from other homes, care is taken to ensure, wherever possible, that these staff are already known by the young people. Young people are well informed about what the home does because staff take time to explain and describe its services and how they can be influenced to suit individual needs.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people's care records provide detailed information about the support they need for their individual and different needs and this information is reflected in other planning documents. There is a range of examples where young people's individual needs, including cultural needs, are met and where they are supported to explore their identity. Staff present as positive role models, treating all people with respect, and they welcome difference. Young people are provided with various opportunities to experience and learn about other people's differences in terms of race, religion, culture, sex, age and disabilities.

Young people receive a very good standard of care based on their assessed needs from a committed, skilled and competent staff team. Staff are well supported by the Registered Manager who provides clear and strong leadership and direction. Staff say they work well together as a team which ensures young people receive consistent care. Staff receive regular supervision and staff meetings are held.

A range of training is provided to staff which enables them to carry out their roles and responsibilities and therefore meet the needs of young people. This includes mandatory training and training relevant to understanding and meeting the individual needs of young people. The induction process takes place during the six-month

probationary period. Staffing based on the needs of young people, provide appropriate levels of supervision for young people to ensure they are safe and that their needs are met. Staffing levels are flexible and responsive to the changing needs of young people.

The Registered Manager has established effective internal monitoring systems which ensure young people's needs are being met and that any shortfalls are addressed promptly. The commitment of the staff team ensures that they are constantly striving to improve the quality of services provided to young people. The Registered Manager regularly checks and signs records and produces a monthly report as required. The Regulation 33 reports support the internal quality assurance systems within the home. Visits are carried out monthly and reports sent to Ofsted as required. The Regulation 33 reports are robust and help to ensure young people are protected from the risk of harm and ensure individual needs are being met.

Young people's care files are very well organised to include all of the information detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Confidential or third party information is kept in a separate section of the care file to enable the home to respond, in a timely manner, to any request made by a young person to read their care file.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that on each and every occasion that physical intervention is applied that the home's records are fully completed and include all information listed in NMS 22.9. (NMS 22.9)