

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Trevor Hall
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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 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 inspection was an unannounced full inspection, the home's last full inspection, was undertaken on 06 August 2008, when one action and no recommendations were raised, the home on this occasion was judged to be good. A further interim inspection took place on 09 January 2009 when three recommendations were raised and the home was again judged to be good. This inspection took place over one day, the home's Registered Manager was available throughout the visit, as were several staff members for various times during the inspection. Several of the home's current residents were present at various times during the inspection and took a full and active part, willingly discussing their opinions of the care they receive. The inspection looked at all key standards and several non-key standards and whilst raising no new actions it did raise an additional four recommendations. This home is well managed and young people benefit from living in an environment that is centred on meeting their individual needs. Young people living here are kept safe and receive good individual support and their education and health is encouraged and appropriately promoted. Whilst the home is judged to be outstanding in several areas, the overall judgement for the home on this inspection is good.

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 home was last inspected the emergency lighting system has been serviced. The education arrangements for all of the young people accommodated in the home have been clarified and all are now on the role of a suitable registered school. The home still does not have sufficient staff to meet the required ratio of 80% holding an National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in child care as required by the National Minimum Standards (NMS). This, however, is due to changes to the staff team and does not reflect upon any failure to appropriately address the previously made recommendation. All staff that have currently completed the probationary period of employment have either started their NVQ courses or are enrolled on suitable training that is yet to start.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are receiving an outstanding service that is clearly focused on their emotional wellbeing and health needs. Staff actively engage young people in a range of health related topics that supports them to learn about their own health and fitness. There are very effective

and well established routines in the home to ensure this happens frequently. In addition, young people's good health is supported by the provision of a varied and balanced range of foods. Young people's awareness around diet and exercise is good because staff are committed to implementing a programme of social education which fits in with the home's wider approaches to promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Young people, where appropriate, are accessing regular, high quality therapeutic support that matches their needs. Communication systems in the home are strong, this ensures that key information is used and shared to shape the delivery of each young person's care plan. Young people benefit from these arrangements because they experience a service that is focused on their needs.

Young people's health and safety is effectively promoted through the home's policies and procedures for the safe storage and administration of medication. Administration records demonstrate that staff are following individual prescription instructions. Staff are able to respond to accidents and unforeseen medical needs because they have access to first aid boxes and have been trained in basic first aid skills. Young people's health and safety is also being evaluated by managers who monitor accidents and injuries that occur in the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The safety and protection of young people is supported by a range of organisational policies and procedures that help guide managers and staff to provide safe care. The welfare of young people is positively promoted. The home ensures that staff are equipped and trained with the knowledge and understanding to fulfil their role and responsibilities regarding protection and safeguarding.

The Registered Manager provides clear leadership; she works effectively and in partnership with other agencies to ensure safeguarding procedures are followed and that young people's safety is promoted. Staff demonstrate a good grasp of the key methods for keeping young people safe they understand the need to respond appropriately to complaints from young people, to work within the child protection and Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and to promote a bullying-free environment.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is respected, staff understand the importance of storing personal information in a safe and secure place. The young people all have individual bedrooms where they are able to enjoy private time.

Young people's safety is promoted when their whereabouts are unknown because staff follow agreed reporting procedures for these circumstances. This results in practices that are consistent with wider police protocols for reporting young people who abscond. Staff have good links with other services to ensure a coordinated approach is taken to promote young people's protection and safe return home. Young people are actively discouraged from having unauthorised absences. Notification of incidents are reported to the relevant agencies.

Young people are being supported by positive behaviour management practices that are fair and appropriate. Interactions between staff and young people are observed to be positive and supportive. Young people are encouraged and motivated to behave in ways that are socially acceptable. Staff are trained in specific behaviour management strategies and techniques.

Records demonstrate that very few physical interventions have been used since the last inspection. Young people are rewarded for positive behaviour and where necessary staff use a range of sanctions as a consequence for inappropriate behaviour. The registered manager monitors these behaviour management systems.

The management of health and safety processes is good which helps to protect young people from the risk of harm or injury. All the statutory safety checks are completed. Fire safety equipment checks are completed within required timescales. Internal fire safety checks occur on a regular basis and fire evacuation procedures exceed requirements. Staff receive appropriate training in fire prevention. Risk assessments are in place that cover fire, the physical environment of the home, behaviour of the young people and their activities. Regular health and safety checks are carried out to ensure the home is compliant with all the relevant safety regulations.

Staff personnel files were not available on the inspection date, as they are held centrally at the parents organisation's Head office. These files were, however, examined on 23 June 2009. The owning organisation has clearly defined recruitment process which protects young people by ensuring that all of the NMS requirements are met, prior to any staff member being deployed into any of their homes. A written record of this process is maintained for inspection and is followed in respect of all staff currently employed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The progress and development of young people is well documented in their files and show how young people are supported throughout their stay. For example, young people are provided with regular opportunities to spend individual time with their key worker. The home's records show that these sessions provide young people with the opportunity to talk about particular issues relevant to them as individuals and to receive support and guidance consistent with their needs. Staff know young people well and are able to respond to them in a way that considers and respects them as individuals. External services are requested as necessary to meet the needs of individual young people.

The educational progress of young people in mainstream schools and colleges is actively promoted, supported and encouraged by the staff. When young people have not been attending school prior to being accommodated at the home or are reluctant to re-engage with education, staff are proactive in liaising with the local authority education department and other agencies to ensure all young people receive an education in line with their age, educational needs, interests and potential. All files contain Personal Education Plans, Individual Education Plans and Statements of Special Education Needs if appropriate. Records show that staff value, promote and encourage young people to make the best of their educational opportunities.

All young people are supported and encouraged to participate in hobbies and activities of their choice within and outside of the home. Staff ensure that is a correct balance between supervised and unsupervised time in the day as appropriate for individual young people that is risk assessed and takes into consideration the age, gender, abilities and interests of the young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people say they are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. Records show young people are actively encouraged to communicate their views in regular discussions with their key carers, during group meetings and on an informal basis every day. In discussion, staff clearly demonstrate that they value the views and opinions of young people

Young people have their needs fully assessed and the written plans are comprehensive and informative. The home produces a detailed range of information about the progress and development of each young person which is then communicated at formal review meetings.

Records show that staff respect and value equality and diversity and there is clear evidence throughout the young people's placement plans that their individual needs are identified and addressed. Staff have a proactive approach to working with external agencies, social workers and other professionals. Consequently, all young people receive the individualised care they need.

In accordance with their care plans all young people are encouraged to maintain contact with members of their families. Staff clearly understand how important communication and contact with their family is for the young people and support their contact arrangements. The records indicate and young people confirm that none of them feel inappropriately isolated from their family.

The home's records confirm that young people are actively involved with the decision-making processes within the home. Regular informative dialogue between staff and young people takes place when considering any issues that affect the running of the home. Key work sessions consider child-related issues such as confidentiality and how feedback from young people should be acted upon in a safe and meaningful manner. The interactions between staff and young people reveal that the home continues to provide a relaxed setting where the involvement of children is used to positively shape the nature of the care provided.

Staff meeting minutes demonstrate that issues with young people are dealt with using a consistent, safety conscious approach within clearly agreed parameters. The young people's meeting records, key worker sessions and the home's general records continue to support the view that staff are enabled to offer realistic boundaries, be consistent in practice and promote the welfare of each young person in a positive manner.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive adequate allowances to cover personal requisites and clothing and 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 living at this home are appropriately supported to prepare for leaving the home whether this is to return home, to alternative carers or to move into independent living. Young people, when appropriate, are provided with properly constituted Pathway plans, agreed by

the placing authorities which give focus to preparing young people to appropriately leave the home. Preparation for leaving care and acquiring the skills for successful semi-independent living are an integral part of the care packages currently being provided by the home.

Young people live in a well-furnished property with good domestic style facilities. The home is located in a semi-rural location in Shropshire and despite its location has good access to all local amenities.

Overall, this is a homely and comfortable care setting which is decorated and furnished to a good standard which creates a pleasant living environment. The home provides the right environment to ensure the social and personal needs of each young person are being met.

A programme of maintenance and repair is ongoing, however, this does not impact on the care young people receive. There are good systems in place that recognise maintenance issues and those with health and safety implications are rectified as a priority with evidence that demonstrates the owners invest generously in the home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a Statement of Purpose and Young People's guide, which outlines the principles, practice and the services that they can expect from the home.

Whilst generally the levels of staff supervision and management support are good, staff have not always received formal supervision at the frequencies or for the durations stated in the NMS, this was particularly true of staff requiring an enhanced level of supervision due to them undergoing their probationary period of employment.

There is a clear staffing structure with clear lines of accountability in the home. The Registered Manager is appropriately qualified, skilled, experienced and provides effective leadership to the staff team and young people. She 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. Young people are provided with excellent levels of supervision and support because staff manage their time effectively and are deployed in a way that meets their needs. The staff rotas are flexible to meet the changing needs and circumstances of young people. There are clear and accountable systems in place for staff to deputise in the absence of the manager.

Staff duty rotas and the manner in which staff are deployed confirm that the home keeps sufficient staff on the duty rota at all times. Staff are supported by senior members of staff who are sufficiently experienced and competent to lead the shifts. Effective information systems are in place to ensure the team's training and development needs are met, however, the home currently does not have 80% of its staff holding an NVQ level 3 or equivalent qualification in child care, as required by the NMS.

There are robust systems in place to monitor the daily lives of the young people currently living in the home. Regulation 33 visits are undertaken monthly to monitor the overall care and welfare of the young people. The reports are robust and thoroughly assess the records and physical environment to ensure the home is a successful and purposeful environment for young

people. The home's manager completes an action plan to report on what action is being taken to rectify any issues identified by this visit. The manager also undertakes quality monitoring of all the files and records as required.

The individual records for the young people in the home are very comprehensive, their needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. The promotion of their equality and diversity is outstanding. They contain a range of information about young people's history and progress, which matches the requirements set out in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

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

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

- ensure that all staff receive formal supervision in line with the frequencies and for the durations listed in NMS 28.2
- ensure that all staff whilst undertaking the probationary period of employment receive the enhanced levels of formal supervision indicated in NMS 28.2
- ensure that a written record detailing the time date and length of each staff supervision session is kept within the home and that this record is signed by both the supervisor and the member of staff (NMS 28.3)
- ensure as soon as possible that a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff have completed their Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People (NMS 29.5).