

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC020606
Inspection date	28/03/2012
Inspector	Robin Whistlecraft
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	27/10/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection (March 2011)*.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Service information

Brief description of the service

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

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **good** progress.

At the last inspection in October 2011, the overall quality of the home was judged as satisfactory. There were five requirements and nine recommendations for areas identified for improvement.

The first requirement was in relation to support plans for preparing young people for adulthood. The home uses the provider's own independence training programme. Staff record their assessments of each young person's skills and progress in relation to a variety of skills and knowledge. This means that young people are supported to prepare for adulthood.

The second requirement was for written records of the use of disciplinary measures and physical intervention to contain all the required details. The home uses the provider's pro-forma for recording these matters. The pro-forma contains all the relevant elements. The manager described how de-briefing sessions are also used to explore the incident. There has been only one incident of the use of physical intervention since the last inspection and the record is clear about why restraint was necessary. This means that young people's welfare is promoted by clear recording and internal review of incidents.

Similarly, the record of disciplinary measures used in the home also contains all the required elements. The home's manager adds appropriate comments if an entry needs additional information. Young people are able to add their own comments to entries in both records, for example in the record of disciplinary measures used: 'I don't feel like I threatened XX but I understand the reason for the consequence' and 'I think this consequence is fair.'

The third requirement related to the recording and administration of young people's medication. Managers in the home use routine monitoring of records to oversee the accuracy of the administration of medication. Managers also require that two staff check the medication stock and administration each day. Managers use staff meetings to identify when there have been errors and emphasise the importance of accurate administration and recording. This means that young people are now protected by good practice in the administration of their medication.

Another requirement related to the routine cleaning and maintenance of the premises. Since the last inspection, the home has expanded its daily checklist of tasks and chores to make sure that staff do not overlook those areas. The home has also made the specific repairs recommended at the last inspection. This means that young people are assured of a clean, tidy and appropriately maintained home.

The fifth requirement made at the last inspection was for the home to consult with the fire and rescue authority about the most appropriate locks to use on the building's external doors. The home has now fitted locks that can be opened from the inside. This means that young people, in the event of a fire, can leave the home without waiting for a staff member to unlock a door. Managers are also considering the fire officer's suggestion that internal bolts would provide a sufficient security and fire safety measure. By upgrading the locks, managers have met a recommendation from the last inspection and ensured that young people and others do not come to view the home as restricting liberty.

The last inspection recommended that there be a policy with regard to the use of individual positive handling plans. Staff are able to explain the strategies used with each of the young people. The strategies include staff using neutral 'word prompts' that some young people have agreed, as a signal for them to withdraw from heated or inappropriate exchanges. The home also uses a 'positive consequences' record which has more entries than the disciplinary measures record. This record demonstrates the how the home provides rewards to young people who meet their personal targets. The home also rewards young people who spontaneously exhibit positive and constructive behaviour such as ignoring other young people's disruptive behaviour. This means that young people are encouraged, through incentives and opportunities to talk to staff, to reflect on their behaviour and opt for appropriate alternatives. The home's statement of purpose, however, does not adequately explain what the 'negative consequences' that staff can use as disciplinary measures.

Other recommendations related to the home developing a more proportionate approach to risk-taking. Since the inspection, the home has reviewed the use of alarms on young people's bedroom doors. Staff now only switch these on after young people have settled for the night. The home has removed a cabinet that housed one of the televisions. The home has not yet provided an internet connection for the computer provided for young people's use. This prevents staff from helping young people to learn about personal safety with the internet. It also means that young people do not have access to the internet to support their school work.

The last inspection noted that insufficient staff had an appropriate qualification. The manager has reported that, after delays by a local course provider, all relevant staff have commenced training in the level 3 Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma. Staff also reported receiving a range of core training in recent months. This means that young people benefit from trained staff. The home's statement of purpose, however, does not give detail about the staff's previous relevant experience.

The last inspection recommended that the home improves the way it used its internal

and external monitoring procedures systems to assure the quality of the care provided. The home has added items to daily task lists, is monitoring how staff complete these lists and gives reminders in staff meetings. This means that the care around young people is better organised.

The last inspection found shortfalls in young people's understanding and involvement in their care plans. Young people now sign their care plans. As one young person said, 'Staff help me read my care plan...they talk to me about things in the plan...and how my views can be talked about at the review.'

The final recommendation of the last inspection was about how key-workers should monitor the implementation of young people's plans. Staff and the home's records confirm how tasks relate to young people's plans and how this work is monitored to ensure that specified tasks are undertaken. This means that young people's care is supported by the agreed tasks.

At a more general level, the home consults with young people at weekly meetings about menus, activities and such matters as the home's colour schemes. Young people also make formal requests that staff consider at the next staff meeting. This means that young people can influence the running of the home.

The home has a development plan and this contains many tasks as 'areas for development'. However, these are largely about maintaining a range of minimum standards rather than assessing what the home does well and where it needs to develop. The home compiles periodic reports under Regulation 34. However, these reports do not yet analyse data; for example, that collected by monthly audit checks, to inform plans to further improve care in the home. The home's provider has started to analyse the home's monitoring reports, one aspect at a time, but this falls short of the informed development envisaged in statutory guidance. This means that the service young people receive is not being efficiently developed.

The home has displays relating to different cultures, including photo-montages of themed events. Staff and the home's records confirm that the home is responding to issues around sexuality and is challenging any homophobic bullying. These examples demonstrate that the home is actively seeking to address equality and diversity in the lives of young people.

The home asks involved professionals to complete a short survey about young people at each statutory review and completed surveys sampled indicate that young people make good progress in the home. Staff are able to describe areas where young people have made progress, such as education attendance and independence skills. The home also operates a number of recording systems required by the provider, not all required by regulations. Within these records there is a wealth of information about events in young people's lives. However, there is not a systematic and regular internal evaluation young people's progress in relation to defined benchmarks. This means that, while young people are generally achieving good outcomes, the home is missing the opportunity to further improve those outcomes.

Staff know when and how to trigger child safeguarding procedures. Young people and staff are relaxed in each other's company and one young person said 'Since I've been here, my life has been happier and safer.'

Areas for improvement

Statutory 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
4 (2001)	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement including the arrangements made for promoting the behaviour of children, and for the control, restraint and discipline of children. This is in relation to explaining, in the statement of purpose, what the disciplinary measures are that staff can use (Regulation 4 (1) Schedule 1 (16))	22/06/2012
4 (2001)	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement including the number, relevant qualifications and experience of persons working at the children's home. This is in relation to providing detail, in the statement of purpose, about the previous relevant experience that staff have. (Regulation 4 (1) Schedule 1 (5))	22/06/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children have access to a range of educational resources to support their learning and have opportunities beyond the school day to engage in activities which promote learning. This is relation to enabling the young people's computer to have access to the internet (NMS 8.2)
- ensure that there is a system in place to monitor the matters in Schedule 6 in order to identify any trends and issues of concern so that those involved in running and working in the home can continually improve the quality of care they are providing. This is in relation to systematically evaluating the information and applying the learning from the monitoring carried out under Regulation 34. (Volume 5 statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)