

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC033919
Inspector	Jackie Graves
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	London Borough of Harrow
Registered person address	Civic Centre Station Road HARROW Middlesex HA1 2XF
Responsible individual	Christopher Spencer
Registered manager	Eithne Staunton
Date of last inspection	05/03/2014

Inspection date	16/12/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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This home provides high quality of care which helps young people achieve excellent outcomes. It is a well-led service which meets the needs of young people and families very well. Young people benefit from very warm relationships with staff who want them to do well and enjoy their stay. Staff and managers know and respect each young person as an individual. A parent says, 'We are very satisfied with the service given by the home.' The home is particularly strong at using preventative strategies and managing challenging behaviour.

Safeguarding is strong. A very robust recruitment system helps ensure only suitable people are employed. One aspect of the home's missing procedure should be reviewed.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home is owned and run by a local authority and provides short breaks for children and young people with learning, sensory and physical disabilities. The home is registered to admit five children and young people but only four bedrooms are currently available in the home to provide overnight and holiday stays.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/03/2014	Interim	good progress
20/11/2013	Full	outstanding
05/02/2013	Interim	good progress
28/08/2012	Full	outstanding

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Recommendations

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

- review the missing person's procedure to ensure that not reporting an absence immediately is correct and line with the local RMFHC protocols and procedures maintained and managed by the police or by the local authority area where the home is located and complies with any other processes required by the placing authority (NMS 5.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Parents are happy that as well as looking forward to and enjoying their short break, their children are helped to make progress. A parent says: 'Our child is comfortable and happy staying there and we always feel confident that they will be well looked after.' Another says: 'We are very satisfied with the service given by the home.'

Young people are very well prepared for a stay away from their families. Staff visit them both at home and school so they get to know them and what they need from the service. Young people then get the chance to visit until they build sufficient confidence and familiarity for an overnight stay. A teacher says young people 'have some anxieties at first, but once familiar, they love it'.

A teacher finds that after staying in the home, young people arrive at school more refreshed and ready to start the school day. As a result, they are better prepared for learning and able to make more progress at school. They say young people, 'Look well cared for and are more settled - sometimes more than when they come from home.' School staff find young people's behaviour is 'generally calmer' as a result of staying in the home.

Young people's ability to do things for themselves improves considerably. Some parents are impressed by how much their child can do, and are expected to do, during their stay in the home. For example, some can now set the table before meals and help clear away afterwards. Some young people, who had to be fed by adults, are now able to feed themselves. As well as learning useful skills to help their independence, young people gain confidence about what they are capable of.

Young people make very good progress in their social skills and behaviour. For example, some learn to take turns and some learn how to listen to music. There is better tolerance of others young people and adults. A few, whose behaviour is extremely challenging and aggressive elsewhere, are calm and helpful in the home, responding well to firm boundaries. . Those with no interest in eating have improved their eating and drinking habits, which benefits their general health.

Some young people's sleep patterns improve considerably. Some, who would not sleep at all when they first visited the home, now sleep through the night. This has a significant effect on their well-being, behaviour and readiness to learn. Some, who could only sleep with an adult close by, are now reassured and able to settle and sleep just by knowing who will look after them during the night.

Young people's communication skills improve. They are helped to feel secure and involved in their short break, for example, by helping staff arrange a sequence of pictures which plan out how they will spend their time. Those staying for seven day

breaks enjoy compiling scrapbooks with staff, which include photographs, so that they can show their parents what they have been doing during their short break. Young people communicate with staff and other young people through their preferred method/s. For example, some prefer lots of visualisation through points of reference, PECS or photographs, rather than just spoken English.

Young people participate in varied activities which help them learn about their own and others' culture and religion. They celebrate festivals such as Diwali and other festivals, for example, by trying new foods or doing arts and crafts.

Young people are able to make a valuable contribution to society. Each year they choose a charity and raise funds for this, for example, by baking and selling cakes or holding raffles with staff. They are involved in making their donation to the bank so that they can see the end result and feel that they have helped.

Young people experience activities that they may not get the chance to do elsewhere. They make use of the very good resources in the home, such as the sensory room, playing percussion instruments and playing with iPads. They experience trips to a wide range of places of interest such as zoos, farms, the cinema and an autism-friendly performance of The Lion King in a theatre.

Quality of care

outstanding

The resource is highly valued by parents who feel that they can trust the staff to provide outstanding quality of care to their children. A parent says, 'The home seems very well managed, is kept clean and well-resourced to cater for baths, play, meals and sleep. The staff are friendly and welcoming whenever we visit.'

Young people benefit from being looked after by a stable, consistent staff team, many of whom have worked in the home for a number of years. New staff are carefully inducted into the home and supported to work effectively with young people. If agency staff are used, these are used consistently so they are familiar with the home and young people's needs.

Staff work extremely effectively with schools and other professionals involved in young people's lives. Partnership working optimises young people's chances to progress. For example, staff look at goals set at reviews and then work with young people to achieve these. A member of staff says, 'All try to work together as this makes more sense for the child - school, home, the family.' Staff work effectively with families to support them in managing their children's needs and behaviour.

In surveys, parents agree or strongly agree that staff help their children to know their culture and racial background. One parent states, 'This is something we don't expect the staff to do but they certainly act with great respect to our child's background.'

A social worker says of those young people using the service, 'Some of them have had complex needs or family circumstances and the staff have always supported the young people and their families often going the extra mile to support.'

Health needs are managed exceptionally well. No one is denied a service due to having a complex health need. Staff seek specialist training so that they are competent to deal with individual health needs, for example, in gastrostomy feeding or stoma management.

Medication arrangements are very strong. Care is taken to safely record, store and administer medications which are sent into the home by families. Young people eat very well in the home. They benefit from having most meals prepared by a cook. They are encouraged to eat a broad and healthy diet which reflects their individual needs regarding food allergies, likes and dislikes and religious or cultural needs.

Records are very well kept. Care plans are clear and succinct so staff can readily refer to these in their work with young people. Young people's files contain pertinent information to provide an accurate record of their time in the home.

Young people enjoy a very comfortable, homely environment. Good use is made of a well-resourced, adapted garden which supports play and activities throughout the year. For example, young people grow some plants for their sensory qualities and plant vegetables which they can tend and eat. Play equipment is geared to young people's needs so that all can fully participate. Young people are consulted about all proposed changes to the premises, whatever their communication needs. For example, they were asked about installing new cupboards and changes to the wet room. This helps them feel part of the home and that their views matter.

Keeping children and young people safe good

The protection of children is given a high priority. Staff are well trained and put their learning into practise. They are very confident about how to report any concerns or allegations. No allegations have been made against staff and no referrals made to children's services. Parents say the staff keep their children safe. A parent says; 'They always keep our child's safety at the forefront of their arrangements. They consult with us regularly to make sure the situation of (child's) health and medication is clear, and report to us any concerns they have.'

A very robust staff recruitment system helps protect young people. For example, references are obtained and verified and checks are conducted with the Disclosure and Barring Service. Potential staff are observed with young people so managers can observe their interaction and young people can comment, indicate by body language or sign their opinions on a candidate's suitability.

Positive behaviour strategies are effectively applied. Staff reflect on their practice and work well in partnership with parents and professionals to help recognise triggers to challenging behaviour and manage each young person's behaviour individually.

Communication with parents is excellent. Staff make sure parents are kept up-to-date about how their child has been during their short break. A parent comments that as their children cannot always express themselves, they 'want to know everything while they were there; what they did, how they were, if they were happy'; staff make sure they are kept informed.

The environment is very safely maintained and appropriately secure. Staff take into account young people's needs in how the home is arranged and equipped, for example, with hoists and adapted beds for wheelchair users. Fire safety is promoted. For example, the building is well signed, including pictorially for young people, systems and equipment are regularly maintained and tested and drills are conducted. Maintenance and improvements to the premises are carried out in consideration of young people using the service to ensure they are safe; the bathroom was refurbished while young people were out on activities during the half term.

The chance of young people going missing is minimised through careful risk assessment, high staff ratios and knowledge of behaviours and circumstances which may trigger a young person to go missing. No young people have gone missing from the home. On one occasion a young person went missing while on an outing. Staff reported this appropriately and the young person was found. Management worked openly with all professionals involved and reviewed this incident to learn from it. Parents remain confident of the staff's ability to keep their children safe. It is positive that the home is not risk-adverse and tries to give young people the chance to try new things which they may not experience elsewhere. The home's missing procedure includes a short time delay before staff are to report young people missing. This does not appear congruent with what the staff would do in practice, so management is asked to review this.

Leadership and management

outstanding

Management is very strong. The manager is appropriately qualified and experienced. She has worked in the home since 2001 and became Registered Manager in 2008. There is a drive to continuously develop and improve the service. For example, by obtaining funds in order to develop different aspects of the provision. A teacher finds staff and managers 'child focused - the provision and support they provide is invaluable' and that 'they will always try to change things for the better for an individual'.

Staff are highly motivated and committed to improving young people outcomes. The Registered Manager has high expectations of staff and the service. They delegate tasks well so that staff all make a valued contribution to develop the quality of care.

Management's detailed development plan has clear targets to improve the service that young people receive.

Very good use is made of a range of monitoring activities to improve the service. The manager's own checks, together with those of an independent visitor, help highlight strengths and any areas for development. Managers monitor young people's progress and seek ways to help improve their outcomes.

Staff have confidence in the Registered Manager. One describes her as 'very thorough but fair', finding she 'knows her job and the staff'. Management has an 'open door' policy, welcomes staff ideas and encourages them to take on responsibility for developing the service with them.

Staff are very well supported. They receive regular team meetings, supervision and annual appraisal to help them in their work. Staff say they work well as a team and are good at 'Keeping children safe, teamwork, commitment, communication.'

Training is effective in helping staff support young people. In addition to basic and mandatory training, training is responsive to young people's needs, for example, in self-harming behaviour. All staff are trained in medication and then their practice is observed before they are 'signed-off'. This ensures staff are competent to administer and record medication. A member of staff says, 'I receive regular training and also training as a result of discussions in supervision and appraisal.'

Young people receive a children's guide which gives them information about what to expect from their stay in a very simple, succinct way. The home's Statement of Purpose is currently under review.

Management met the one recommendation made at the last inspection, indicating capacity to improve. Young people now have personal emergency evacuation plans so that they all know what to do in an emergency.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information 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 framework of inspection for children's homes.