

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Wilfried Maxfield
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Service information

Brief description of the service

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. There are five beds available in the home to provide overnight and holiday stays.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

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

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

This short break service continues to deliver an excellent quality of care and excellent outcomes for children and young people. They clearly love coming to the centre. All aspects of care are highly personalised. Exceptionally detailed and thorough care planning promotes the personal development of children and young people. Staff are highly committed and exceptionally skilled. They are able to offer structured, stimulating activities that are designed to be enjoyable and fun and provide children and young people with unique learning experiences. Children and young people were observed in happy and joyful play during their short break. This is facilitated through excellent relationships with staff. Children and young people talk affectionately about staff and interact actively and positively with them.

Children and young people and their families benefit from a staff team that has worked together for many years. The team is able to provide outstanding continuity of care. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the team and the service their families and their children are receiving. One parent described staff as 'very caring and amazing at understanding what my child needs to grow and develop.' Another parent explained that her child 'has grown in confidence and become so much more communicative and independent.' Professionals are equally positive. One stated 'I think that staff are very compassionate and most helpful. They do a lot a lot of the preventative work with families and their very complex children. In many cases their excellence has been instrumental in keeping families together.'

The service maintains excellent relationships with surrounding schools. Staff effectively support the education of children and young people through promoting

attendance and through active involvement and an in-depths knowledge of children's education plans.

The management and leadership of the home is highly effective. The Registered Manager is a clear expert in this area of work and inspires her colleagues through her enthusiasm, dedication and skill. The manager has very high aspirations for the continued development and improvement of the centre. No requirements or recommendations are made in this report.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

The outcomes for children and young people using this service continue to be outstanding. Young people thrive as a result. They grow in confidence and develop a wide range of essential skills. Children and young people starting at the centre often progress quickly. The centre provides experiences in an environment that effectively supports their physical and emotional well-being and their ability to learn. This in turn provides a more secure emotional basis to establish and maintain better relationships at home and with their peers.

Children and young people's development and educational progress often flourishes and accelerates as a result of highly effective partnerships between local schools and the respite centre. All children and young people attend one of the local schools. The respite centre is central to promoting learning and consequently children and young people's confidence in their educational abilities grows. This also includes learning practical skills that promote independence. These range from self-care skills to experiencing a wide range of learning activities that aid personal development. A teaching professional described how children arriving at school from a short break 'are always well turned-out and happy to come to school. They are in a good frame of mind and eager to start learning.' A parent reported that 'my child's confidence has grown so much and going to school and the centre has become central to my child's life. My child has become much more independent and it is amazing how staff have been able to better prepare my child for adult life.'

Children's health and associated needs and conditions are exceedingly well supported. Effective interventions and support promote children and young people's health and well-being and often result in better behaviour and an enhanced ability to learn. Staff are very knowledgeable about complex health needs and are well trained to understand and maintain a constructive and therapeutic level of support. Excellent networking ensures that children and young people's health is supported across a range of settings. Working together with families and enabling parents and carers to develop a consistent and positive approach is a strength of the staff team. As a result children's health improves and the symptoms and side effects of their complex conditions are eased.

Children and young people eat very healthily at the centre. Mealtimes are social occasions at which children and young people are encouraged to interact with each

other. They learn about new foods while also learning the skills to become more independent. The need for independence skills is carefully assessed and as a result children and young people will acquire new sets of skills consistently and over time.

Children and young people are supported to increase their capability to communicate with others. This in turn leads to more effective consultation and involvement in decision making in the home. For example, a good range of communication styles is used to explore what they want to eat and drink and which activities they would like to do. Thoughtful planning based on careful consultation throughout their stay ensures that children and young people are able to engage in activities they enjoy and when appropriate improve their learning and skills.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **outstanding**.

Children and young people enjoy positive relationships with staff at centre. They benefit from a fun and playful atmosphere that is created by very skilled and highly motivated staff. Staff know each of the children extremely well. They are able to maintain constructive interaction and create imaginative ways of communicating with all of the children and young people during their stay. Children in turn are encouraged to reach out and maintain alertness and willingness to engage in tasks and play. This structured and meaningful approach promotes positive behaviour. Staff are exceptional in finding creative and playful ways that capture the children and young people's imagination. This motivates them to engage with others.

Placement planning is a particular strengths of this service. Care plans are constructed with extreme care and are exceptionally detailed in all of the significant areas of care and day-to-day planning. A very insightful and thorough approach ensures children and young people's care is highly personalised and specific. Short breaks are reviewed regularly and care plans are updated in line with the changing developmental needs and circumstances. Parents and placing social workers are highly satisfied with the contribution of the home to reviews. When appropriate, young people are encouraged to attend.

Staff have created exceptionally strong and effective partnerships with external agencies, including parents and carers to ensure that respite care and all of the other care needs are still appropriate and well-coordinated. Effective monitoring tracks the progress of young people in educational placements. Staff maintain highly effective communication between schools and the respite centre. They remain in close contact with schools to maintain continuity of care across both settings and facilitate excellent levels of information sharing.

Staff are exceptionally proactive in including children and young people in the planning of their own care. Their views are collated and sought after by using a variety of communication methods tailored to each individual's needs. This ensures that all have a voice and are enabled to participate in decision making to the best of their abilities. Parents and professional praise this process. A professional

commented that 'staff are extremely able. They communicate very effectively with schools, the parents and social workers and have pulled together a highly effective care package for all of the children I am in contact with at the centre.'

Medication is managed effectively and there is a robust handover system to ensure safety when receiving and returning medication between home and respite centre. The administration and storage of medication is, like all of the systems at the centre, based on effective planning, thoughtful implementation and communication and includes the effective training of staff.

The respite centre is very homely. The environment is well maintained and feels and looks cheerful, bright and child friendly. There is a good choice of specialist adaptations and facilities to meet a range of needs. The centre provides a good range of resources that encourage and support play and meaningful activity. The management of the centre continually reviews the resources available and allocates the need for repairs and updates in line with financial constraints and limited budgets.

Children and young people enjoy an excellent range of activities in the community. They are actively involved in making choices for places to visit and meaningful things to do. Staff constantly evaluate and risk assess the activity on a range of destinations. Planning and coordination are excellent and staff constantly review the composition of groups of children and young people to ensure that each external activity can be enjoyed by all.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **outstanding** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Children and young people are safe at the home. Staff are exceptionally effective in providing a nurturing, stable and safe environment. They are knowledgeable about how to protect children and young people. The staff group's safeguarding practice is constantly updated through internal discussion and reflection and external training. All members of the team are very aware of young people's individual needs and vulnerabilities and are confident in following safeguarding and protection processes. Welfare concerns are reported promptly and investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled very effectively and professionally. Possible lessons are being learned from any incident and these help to improve policies and procedures. Excellent work is being done to ensure that children and young people learn how to keep themselves safe. Individual risk assessments are designed very thoughtfully and ensure that children and young people are enabled to try new experiences in a safe and planned way.

Children and young people do not go missing from care. They are safeguarded by a staff team who are very vigilant and proactive in implementing preventative measures. The risk of young people going missing is minimised by high levels of staff supervision. Comprehensive risk assessments make staff aware of any possible

circumstance that may trigger children and young people going missing.

Staff promote positive behaviour. Excellent behaviour management plans are in place and staff are highly effective in implementing consistent and positive practices. Strategies are constantly updated and discussed in team meetings and supervisions. Good behaviour is celebrated and praised. A mother stated that 'staff have done wonders with my child. They really understand what is going on psychologically and my child's behaviour is so much better.' Physical interventions are used infrequently and their use is always executed in accordance with the recognised behaviour management model used in the home. An excellent refresher training programme provides staff with frequent opportunities to update their practice.

The management and staff team have a very robust approach to health and safety. All safety checks to maintain a safe environment are undertaken. Routine servicing and checks include fire alarm and fire fighting equipment tests. Prompt action is taken when there is an identified hazard. A detailed and informative risk assessment of the premises is available.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **outstanding**.

Staff are highly motivated and committed to improving the outcomes for children and the quality of care in the home. They are supported by a Registered Manager who consistently drives a process of on-going improvement and development. One member of staff stated that 'the manager always has so many good ideas. She is very creative and inspiring and regularly questions the way we do things. She challenges and focuses us frequently to do things better.'

A very detailed development and improvement plan has been compiled by the Registered Manager together with senior managers. There is an excellent focus on working in partnership with young people, parents and external professionals. Relationships with other agencies are excellent. Current processes and systems are constantly evaluated against the high level of care the home already provides. The internal monitoring of the home includes routine consultation with children and young people wherever possible and with parents and placing authorities. This information is used very effectively to further improve the service. External monitoring is very rigorous. Areas of weakness are tackled effectively.

Staff are exceptionally well supported. Excellent supervision and team meetings are used by managers to consistently communicate high expectations to staff and to reflect on the needs of children and young people. The current core group of staff have worked together for many years. All staff members have gained an excellent level of training and good qualifications that enable them to provide the best possible level of care. A good culture of continuous learning and development ensures that the ever-changing complex needs of children and young people are being understood and met.

There were no requirements made at the previous inspection. A recommendation to update the Statement of Purpose has been acted upon. The Statement of Purpose clearly states the aims and objectives of the service and the facilities it provides. The staff team fully understand the functions, purpose and ethos of the home and services it provides. The children's and young people's guide is informative and comprehensive and is suitable for the young people's level of understanding. The service is well resourced. Children and young people benefit from good staffing ratios, a well equipped and maintained centre and access to regular activities and outings. Young people's files are stored securely and contain documents, which are relevant and contribute to an understanding of the children and young people's biographies.

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 *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.