

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035181
Inspection date	9 November 2009
Inspector	Deborah White
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	28 May 2009
--------------------------------	-------------

© Crown copyright 2009

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.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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 offers short-break care and accommodation for up to six children of either sex aged 12 years to 17 years.

The home is situated in a village community and is within walking distance of local facilities.

The ground floor is made up of a lounge with a large screen satellite television, a dining room, a children's room with a computer, a kitchen and a child's bedroom with an en suite bathroom. The first floor has bedrooms and bathroom facilities. There is an enclosed garden to the rear.

There were two children present during this visit.

Summary

The purpose of this unannounced key inspection was to look at the key national minimum standards (NMS) and recommendations from the last inspection.

All outcomes for children were looked at. Outcomes for being healthy; staying safe; positive contribution and organisation are good and outcomes for enjoying and achieving and economic well-being are outstanding.

Children attending this home receive a very good service. Children are kept safe and how the home counters bullying is very good. Children's health needs are met and the home is very well organised and monitored.

Individual support for children is outstanding. There are many examples where staff have creatively engaged children to help and empower them. Activities are also rated as outstanding and feedback from placing authorities is very complimentary and positive. The home has worked hard to provide a homely environment and children and parents actively encouraged to contribute their views about the services provided.

Outcomes for equality and diversity for children are excellent. Children are listened to and have their rights promoted.

Fire safety training for staff is not adequate and the home have not fully met a previous recommendation to improve children's placement plans. There is one action and one recommendation arising from this visit.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered person was recommended to ensure children's comments are included in restraint records.

There have been no restraints since the last inspection, however, staff know the importance of ascertaining children's views and there is a section in the restraints log to show how children feel following a restraint. Therefore the recommendation is judged as met.

Another recommendation was made to ensure that children's placement plans fully reflect assessed needs and how these will be met on a day-to-day basis.

The plans have been reviewed and updated and there are improvements in some aspects of how children's placements are monitored and recorded, however, not all assessed needs are recorded so the recommendation will be re-issued in this report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy healthy nutritious meals. Individual likes and dislikes are recorded in placement plans and children help with menu planning. Each child is involved with the government initiative, change 4 life, to help them learn about healthy eating. Physical activities are encouraged to help keep children fit and active.

Children's health needs are met. There are procedures in place to access primary healthcare services and children with specialist health needs are referred to the appropriate healthcare professionals. Children are given good advice and support on health and personal care and clear records of healthcare interventions are kept.

There are procedures in place for the safe administration of medicines and first aid. Staff receive regular training to ensure they are competent to manage prescribed medicines and there are first aid boxes in the home to ensure any emergency injuries are treated quickly.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's privacy is respected. All bedrooms are single rooms and children are given keys to secure their rooms if they wish. There is a private telephone for the use of children and ample space for private meetings. Children are given good information about room searches and where searches are carried out the reasons are made clear.

Complaints management at the home is very good. Children's information about how to complain is written in a child friendly way and includes contact details for a number of children's support networks. Staff actively support and encourage children to express their views. Children's meetings and key-worker sessions show children feel comfortable talking about how they feel.

The home have built up a positive relationship with local advocacy services. An advocacy worker visits the home, unannounced, bi-monthly so children are able to build a relationship with a person independent of the home. Where any child is known to be vulnerable, staff alert the worker to ensure all children have an adult to support them.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by staff who are knowledgeable about child protection matters. A lot of one-to-one work is done with children to teach them how to stay safe and any safeguarding concerns are promptly reported to the appropriate agencies.

Countering bullying measures are exemplary. The home operates a zero tolerance to bullying behaviour and staff are working towards maintaining their anti-bullying accreditation award. The home has a wealth of countering bullying information for staff and children and the home's risk assessment clearly identifies where children may be at risk.

The home has set up an email address specifically for the children attending this service. Children can privately email any worries or concerns they have and they know that the only people who have access to the email address is the registered manager and the deputy. Staff at the home are also training three children to be peer mentors to help support children who feel afraid or threatened.

Children who go missing are safeguarded by good procedures. Staff know to look for children and agreed protocols with local police are in place to provide additional support for any child who is known to be vulnerable.

Behaviour is managed positively and staff have good relationships with the children who stay at the home. Restorative justice techniques are used to help children understand the consequences of their actions and rewards are given to encourage children to behave in a good way. There have been no restraints since the last inspection.

Health and safety measures, including a health and safety audit and fire safety risk assessment, are in place to protect children, staff and visitors. All facilities are regularly checked, and maintained, and there is a certificate of insurance displayed.

Measures to prevent fire include regular checking of equipment and fire drills, but not all staff have had regular fire safety training to ensure they are fully aware of fire prevention measures.

Children are protected by good recruitment procedures, and measures are in place to vet visitors to the home. All safety checks are carried out on new starters and all visitors to the home have their identity checked.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive very good individual support to meet their needs and wishes. There are some excellent examples of effective one-to-one work with children and all five social workers consulted identified individual support as being one of the main strengths of the home.

Children have positive relationships with staff that enable them to feel secure in talking about their worries and concerns. Where complex needs are identified there is access to specialist services and all placements are managed by a multi-disciplinary team approach to provide holistic care.

Social worker comments include:

'This is a very good service, the staff are very good and go the extra mile. They engage children and all my children have had good relationships with staff. Feedback from the children has been positive, this is a very good home.'

And:

'Children love coming here. They can talk to staff and staff are aware of each child's needs. I had a child who refused to work with me or any other workers but the staff here managed to engage the child and do some excellent work.'

All children who currently attend the service are in full time education. Education is promoted and staff work jointly with schools and teachers, to promote good educational outcomes. Practical arrangements are in place, such as transport, and there is ample private space for children to do their homework. Educational activities are included in the weekly activity programme to help children learn new things in a fun way.

Activities are rated by children and placing social workers as one of the best things about staying at the home. Outdoor activities are arranged to teach children the benefits of being healthy, walking and fishing trips are very popular.

Staff have attended training courses to enable children to participate in sports and physical activities. For example, a staff member is learning cycling proficiency, as schools no longer teach cycling safety skills, and another staff member has taken extra scuba diving examinations so he can take children out to experience local diving trips.

Children are also engaged to contribute to their local communities and local charities. Staff and children at the home recently set up a stall at County Hall to sell pink goods to raise money for breast cancer.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's placement plans are written in a child friendly way and include the objectives of each placement. There is an evaluative section, to show that children are appropriately placed, and children are included in any decisions made about their lives.

There are some very good examples where children have contributed to their placement plans and identified what they feel their needs are. Multi-disciplinary meetings agree children's assessed needs and parents views are taken into account.

Placement plans are based on the Every Child Matters outcomes for children and focus on positive results. However, in practice, not all known assessed needs are recorded to ensure that the right day-to-day arrangements are in place.

Children have regular placement reviews and staff attend to offer support. Contact with family and friends is promoted and all contact arrangements are recorded in case files.

Children are made to feel welcome when they come to stay at the home. Each child is given a welcome box that contains useful information leaflets; small gifts such as toiletries and stationary and the children's guide. A social worker said 'The staff are very welcoming and children love coming to stay at the home.'

The home is very good at consulting with children and their parents. Key-worker sessions and children's meetings give children a say in how the home is managed. For children who have problems expressing how they feel there are a number of games; feelings cards and workbooks to help children communicate their thoughts and opinions.

A local advocacy worker consults with children about how it is to live at the home; this consultation is additional to the home's systems for consultation and provides children with a person to talk to who is independent of the home.

Parents, and social workers are regularly consulted and their views have resulted in positive changes to services offered to children. Coffee mornings are arranged where parents can talk to staff in a relaxed environment and regular questionnaires are sent to all parents and social workers to ascertain their views.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Children using this service attend for short breaks only so they do not make the transition from the children's home into independent living. Where a child needs help with independence skills interventions are included in individual placement plans. Children are encouraged to learn about independent living during their day-to-day activities, for example, children help with household jobs and are responsible for keeping their bedroom tidy.

The standard of accommodation is outstanding. The home has recently had a new modern kitchen fitted and large American style refrigerator makes the room look attractive to teenagers who like to cook. All the rooms on the ground floor have been decorated and refurbished to provide homely comfortable accommodation. The lounge has a wide screen television and modern gas fire and it is evident the staff have made a great effort to have co-ordinating fixtures and fittings which are attractive to look at.

Children have been actively involved in how the home has been decorated and furnished. They have helped by choosing colour schemes and carpets and have been shopping with staff to choose pictures and ornaments.

Consultation with children has led directly to changes being made at the home. The outcomes from children completing a questionnaire about the environment showed they were not happy with the television reception in the bedrooms and they said they would like some outdoor furniture for the garden.

All bedrooms now have a digital receiver and children chose new outdoor furniture for the garden.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children, families and placing authorities are given good information about how it is to live at the home. The Statement of Purpose explains how children will be looked after and the children's guide clearly sets out the home's expectations.

Children are cared for by competent staff. The home has a 100% of care staff with their Level 3 National Vocational Qualification, in Caring for Children and Young People, and a number of staff are currently undertaking their level 4 award.

Staff are committed to looking after children and enjoy coming to work. A staff member said 'I love it here, I love coming to work. I enjoy working with the children and teaching them new things. I respect all the children and I think they respect me. We have a good team and the moral is good. I think we do a good job.'

Staff have attained additional professional qualifications to improve their practice and outcomes for children. For example a staff member has completed a diploma to work with children who

have a learning disability and another staff member has attended a course to learn how to offer learning support to children who need help with academic study.

Staff are sufficient in number and work flexibly to cover any sickness or absence. There are arrangements to cover the absence of the manager and an equal gender balance of staff ensures there male and female staff members on all shifts.

There are good systems in place to monitor the performance of the home. The registered manager regularly checks and signs the home's records to identify any issues. Safeguarding information is collated and analysed to identify any trends and written action plans are in place to ensure ongoing service improvements and development.

Children's needs and development are recorded in individual case files that are stored securely.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Children are kept safe and secure, and initiatives to counter bullying are exemplary. Children are given outstanding individual support and enjoy attending the home. Consultation features throughout this inspection. Children are given a voice and their thoughts and opinions are important. Feedback from placing social workers is particularly positive. All say their children have benefited from having short breaks at the home and outcomes for children are very good.

All social workers were asked what score they would give the home in measuring outcomes for children. Four said they would score nine out of ten and one said they would score nine and a half or ten out of ten.

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 Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
26	make arrangements for persons working at the home to receive suitable training in fire prevention. (Regulation 32 (1) (d))	31 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure the placement plan for each child sets out the clearly assessed needs, the objectives of the placement, how these will be met on a day-to-day basis and the contribution of the registered person and staff of the home. (NMS 2.1)