

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Steve Pearson
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Date of last inspection	13 January 2010
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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 is the boarding provision for an independent residential special school for boarders and day pupils. It is operated by a trust that provides education and care to deaf children.

The children's home is on the same site as the school. It is registered to accommodate five children of either sex from age 5 to 17 years who have a sensory impairment. The home has three single bedrooms and one double bedroom. At the time of this inspection there were three children resident at the home. There is a lounge, kitchen, dining room, study area, utility room, bathroom and toilet. There is a staff office where staff also sleep-in and a separate staff bathroom. The home is surrounded by its own walled gardens, driveway and parking area. Local amenities are close by and there is public transport to the town centre. The home has its own vehicle for transporting children to visits and for trips out.

Summary

This was an unannounced, interim inspection. It assessed the key national minimum standards (NMS) associated with how young people are enabled to stay safe. The inspection also assessed whether the registered persons had met the three requirements and a recommendation made at the previous inspection on 13 January 2010. The requirements were about the recording of physical interventions, the content of the Statement of Purpose and monthly monitoring visits. The recommendation concerned the décor of the bathroom.

An over-riding issue at the current inspection is that concerns of members of staff about the welfare of young people have not been immediately passed on to people in a position to do something about it. This failure to report such concerns in a timely manner puts young people at risk. In addition, the written policies associated with safeguarding welfare and the duty to report concerns are not adequately detailed. This means those working in the home are not being provided with enough clear information about what they must do to safeguard young people's welfare.

Other outcomes associated with promoting the safety of young people are positive. For example, the Registered Manager and staff promote young people's need for privacy appropriately; sound arrangements are in place to enable young people to raise concerns; the staff are effective at promoting positive behaviour and the premises are maintained in a safe condition. Appropriate recruitment policies and procedures are also in place.

However, the significant weaknesses in the policies and procedures associated with safeguarding welfare mean that the overall promotion of safety is inadequate.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There is now greater accountability for the use of any restraint because the staff record all the relevant information in a bound and page-numbered book.

People are now better-informed about the home because the Statement of Purpose contains all the necessary information.

Quality monitoring is now more robust because the monthly visits by the external person contain the relevant information. The Registered Manager now has a new template for future visits to ensure that relevant information continues to be considered and recorded at each visit.

The bathroom and toilet have also been refurbished so young people benefit from better facilities.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

The Registered Manager and staff promote young people's need for privacy well and they understand how to deal with information confidentially within relevant limits. They readily support young people to raise any concerns about their care and they deal with such concerns quickly and effectively. A formal complaints procedure is also in place and this is implemented properly.

Where concerns have arisen about the welfare of young people, such concerns have not been passed on to appropriate people in a timely manner. These concerns have therefore not been addressed quickly enough and the welfare of young people has been put at unnecessary potential risk. Alongside this, the provider's disciplinary policies and procedures do not make clear that failure to report an incident of abuse or suspected abuse to an appropriate person is a matter on which disciplinary proceedings may be instituted.

Consequently, those working at the home are not being given enough emphasis about the importance of reporting concerns. Additionally, the provider's written policies and procedures about safeguarding young people's welfare are not sufficiently detailed and so important information is not available to those working in the home. It is therefore vital that the written policies and procedures are updated and that the staff receive training in these procedures to ensure they know and understand them fully.

There is no bullying in the home and effective measures are in place should this problem arise. Although risk assessments for bullying are in place for each young person, a general assessment of the times and places within the home when bullying may arise has not been done. There is therefore a slight weakness in the measures to counter bullying.

Young people rarely go missing from the home although suitable procedures are in place should this happen.

Sometimes Ofsted are not informed about significant events which happen in the children's home. This means the regulator is not able to monitor potentially serious issues properly. However, such under-reporting is due to a misinterpretation of the legislation rather than any intent to withhold information.

The Registered Manager and staff are skilled at enabling young people to behave positively. They rarely use sanctions and they rarely need to restrain young people. Any sanctions that are used are fair. There have been no restraints since the previous inspection but if the staff do have to restrain a young person, they only do so to protect the welfare of young people or others. The record of any sanctions and restraints are appropriate and meet the requirements of the relevant legislation and national minimum standards.

The home itself is maintained as safe premises. However, there is not enough privacy in the bathroom due to the lack of window coverings. In addition, the locks on the bathroom and toilet are not adequately secure to fully ensure privacy.

Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. The staff also conduct regular fire drills with the young people at various times of the day and night.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe. For example, prospective staff meet young people and staff, and their views are then taken into account before a recruitment decision is made. All necessary checks are also conducted to make sure staff are suitable to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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
17	implement a written policy which provides for a requirement for persons working at the home to report any concerns about the welfare or safety of a child accommodated in the home to a person named in the relevant regulation (Regulation 16)(2)(f))	7 June 2010
17	prepare a written policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect and which provides for all the relevant issues required by	5 July 2010

	national minimum standard 17.3 and this regulation (Regulation 16(1) and (2))	
17	ensure that the written policy regarding disciplinary matters provides that the failure on the part of an employee to report an incident of abuse, or suspected abuse, of a child accommodated in the home to an appropriate person is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instituted (Regulation 27(2)(b))	14 June 2010
17	ensure that all persons employed at the home receive appropriate training, specifically in relation to the policies and procedures for safeguarding the welfare of children (Regulation 27(4)(a))	8 September 2010
20	notify Ofsted of any significant events. (Regulation 30)	7 June 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure appropriate window coverings are fitted in the bathroom in order to provide privacy (NMS 25.4)
- ensure that only the staff (not children) are able to open the doors to bathrooms, showers and toilets from the outside in case of emergency (NMS 25.6)
- conduct a risk assessment on the times and places when bullying may occur. (NMS 18.5)