

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Smith
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Date of last inspection	7 April 2009
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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 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 unannounced inspection looked at all key standards and examined all outcome areas.

This children's home is a good service that is very good in some parts. It provides young people with very good support for their health and ensures that care is provided in a way that meets young people's individual needs in an inclusive manner. Staff have formed very positive relationships with young people. This means that their behaviour is very well managed in a way that encourages them to become more responsible for their own behaviour. Care planning is very effective and regular reviews of plans ensure that children's needs continue to be met appropriately. The work of the home is well monitored by the registered provider to ensure its quality. Staff are well trained and supported. Staffing levels are based upon children's needs and this means that young people are kept safe. The home works well with children's schools to ensure they receive support with their education and involve any professionals necessary to ensure their needs are met. It works hard to help young people maintain contact with those people important to them.

The home's environment is satisfactory and work is ongoing to improve this. However, the home's bathroom's décor and fittings are in need of improvement to make them a suitable environment for the young people.

Generally the home's records are of good quality. However, its Statement of Purpose does not cover all the required areas, and records of the provider's visits to the home do not address the state of the premises. More importantly, its records of physical interventions do not bring all the required information into one dedicated and bound volume. This could mean that vital information about an incident of physical intervention may not be recorded and retained. However, the home's effective management of children's behaviour means that incidents of physical intervention are extremely rare.

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 two actions were required of the registered provider and two recommendations made. These related to recording matters regarding sanctions, the method of recording the home's very rare restraints of children, and the need to add some information to the complaints procedure. The home has fully actioned three of these matters. It has given attention to the system for recording any incidents of restraint but this remains not fully met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Food provided for young people is good. The home is in the process of seeking advice from a dietician to ensure the diet provided is varied, balanced, wholesome and nutritious for young people. Young people are encouraged to be involved in buying food and learning to cook in the home and have a choice of meal. The home ensures that children who have special dietary needs receive the correct food and diet, whether this is for reason of faith or health. This is managed well with the home's menu planning incorporating these needs so that children are not marked as different because of their different diets. Nearly all staff have undertaken training in safe food handling. This ensures food is prepared safely. Staff have a good understanding of the dietary needs of young people in order to promote their health.

Young people's primary and specialist health needs are well planned for and met. Detailed information is sought about children's health conditions and staff take proactive action to seek specialist health support and input where needed. Consent for medical treatment has been obtained. Good care planning determines young people's holistic assessed health needs and how these will be met. The home develops strong working relationships with other health professionals and benefits from support from the school nurse and doctor. Children are provided with support and education relating to their emotional, relationship and sexual health and safety. The home ensures that children receive information and education on health matters, such as drug and alcohol misuse and the effects of smoking.

The home has secure and appropriate storage for medication and staff are trained in the safe handling of medication, which helps to keep young people safe. Medication is administered as prescribed and recorded fully and accurately. This ensures young people get the medication they need to stay healthy. Arrangements for consent for young people to receive the administration of first aid and over the counter medication are clearly identified. This ensures young people's health is fully promoted and the risk of adverse reaction to any treatments used is minimised.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are afforded privacy and respect by the home's staff team. They have free access to a telephone, text phone and computers to keep in touch with people important to them. The home is arranging to purchase webcams to assist deaf young people to communicate with family and friends. Information is stored securely which protect young people's rights and children are able to see information recorded about them. The home has a policy about searching young people's possessions in the interests of their welfare and safety.

The home has a complaints procedure and appropriate information is provided to young people. Young people know how to complain. Records are in place to record any complaints. These show only infrequent minor 'day-to-day' complaints by the young people. The fact that the home records these and the action taken shows its open approach to ensuring children are happy with the care provided. No formal complaints from children, their families or other parties have been received.

The home has a child protection procedure in place that has been submitted to the Local Safeguarding Children Board for comment to ensure that it complies with their requirements. Staff members understand the policy and know how to help protect young people if there was ever an allegation or suspicion of abuse at the home. They have received training in child protection. Young people at the home feel safe and well cared for.

Relationships between young people and the staff team are very good and this creates an environment in which bullying is not a big problem. Children are encouraged to discuss any problems with staff and meet regularly in house meetings to talk about any relationship difficulties. The home has a policy about countering bullying in place and staff members have undertaken training in countering bullying which helps them to protect young people.

A procedure for dealing with any absence of a young person without authority is in place and accessible to staff. Staff understand and follow the procedure to help safeguard young people. Young people rarely absent themselves from the home. All recent incidents have been where children were late back or out without authority rather than absconding from the home. There is a record kept by the home of any incidents, the action taken and the people notified.

Children's behaviour is very well managed at this home. Staff have very good relationships with young people. The home works in a way that encourages and shapes positive behaviour. For example, children's behaviour, and how they can be helped to manage it, is discussed with them in detail. As a consequence sanctions are infrequent with none being imposed for a number of months. Sanctions are discussed with young people and they are involved in decisions regarding which sanction would be appropriate. There have been no physical interventions for over three years. Despite this, staff members receive training in physical intervention and the home has a policy which is just being updated to cover this eventuality. The home's records of any physical restraint are maintained in a number of records that feed into the school's recording system. Records look at antecedents, behaviour and consequences and are well monitored by the registered provider. However, there is no central, bound and page numbered record of physical interventions that contains all the information set out in the regulations and national minimum standards. As such, if a physical intervention was to occur the records of it would not be as good as they should be.

Risk assessments of young people's known and likely activities are carried out and recorded so staff know what to do to keep young people safe. Generic risk assessments of the home and its grounds are also undertaken and kept up to date. Health and safety matters are managed well. Maintenance and checks of equipment, including the gas boiler, portable electrical appliances and fire equipment are carried out appropriately. These matters help to keep young people safe. Fire drills are carried out regularly and all staff and young people have been involved so they know what to do to stay safe.

No new staff members have been recruited in the last year. Files of previous staff appointed demonstrate that a suitable and safe recruitment process is in place in order to ensure new employees are the right people to work with children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with good individual support. Assessed needs are clearly identified in care planning along with how they are to be met. Plans are regularly monitored to ensure they continue to be appropriate. Any specific care needs arising from young people's culture, ethnicity or disability are clearly identified and sensitively addressed. The home's staff engage effectively with other professionals to meet children's needs. Young people receive information and education on matters relating to substance misuse and sexual health, as well as other health and social matters. Young people are able to approach any staff member for advice, guidance and support.

The home has close links with young people's school or college and provides a good support for children's education. Young people have the necessary education plans in place and clear records are maintained of their academic progress. Young people's care plans make education arrangements clear and set out how support will be provided. The home makes sure that children's needs are being met in the school or college they attend and works to make alternate arrangements if this will help children. A wide range of leisure and recreational opportunities are provided.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's care plans provide a very clear and straightforward description of children, their needs and how these are to be met. The information in plans is clearly accessible and regularly updated. This ensures that staff members all know how best to support each young person. Plans make clear how young people's sometimes very complex needs will be met and identify the external professionals involved in children's care. Young people know the content of their plans and regularly discuss the provision of their care with staff members. The quality of this approach to care planning helps provide very good outcomes for children.

Statutory reviews of care plans take place as required and care plans are updated regularly. The home contacts placing authorities to arrange additional reviews and meetings if young people's situations change. Young people attend their reviews and are supported to give their views of their care and plans. Contact arrangements are clearly set out in young people's files and contact events are recorded. The home provides young people with very good support to keep in touch with people important to them. It provides support to travel long distances to contact and a range of methods of electronic communication suitable for deaf children to use.

The home provides good support for young people moving into or leaving the home. Admissions are careful and planned with close consideration being given to whether the home can meet the young person's needs and how an admission will impact on children already resident. The home works effectively to help plan for children leaving the home. It works supportively with young people and their authorities to ensure that suitable placements for young people are provided.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home works well to help young people to prepare for their adult lives. Young people have pathways plans, where appropriate, and the home ensures that its internal care planning for young people reflects these. Young people are engaged in the provision of their own care and the development of skills needed in later life. They help to buy and prepare food and are helped to undertake their own laundry. Support is provided to help young people learn to budget and manage their finances. Care planning takes into account children's specific needs arising from their disability, culture or ethnicity and work is undertaken to help young people learn the social and emotional skills that will be needed in adulthood.

The home provides a satisfactory environment conducive to the care of young people. Some areas of the home have been refurbished and further work is planned. The décor and fittings home's bathroom are ageing and not in good condition; this means the room is not as homely and positive an environment for children as it should be.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The Statement of Purpose sets out how any specific requirements arising from children's culture, faith, ethnicity or disability will be met. Care plans ensure that children's individual needs are identified and how they will be addressed. Staff ensure that the home's routines allow children's individual needs to be met in a way that is inclusive and does not mark them out as different. Matters that promote fairness, such as access to the complaints system and the sensitive way in which young people's behaviour is managed, are good.

The Statement of Purpose provides satisfactory information about the home and the services it provides, though this information is not wide-ranging enough to cover all the required elements. The young people's guide is detailed and attractively presented. It provides young people with a very good idea of what they can expect from the home and how they will be cared for. It gives young people clear information about what to do and who to contact if they are not happy at the home.

The home's staff team is well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable. Staff members have undertaken required essential training in order to provide a good level of safe care to young people. The home provides staff with good training and support. Staff members understand the needs of young people and how to meet them. The home provides staff members with signing training to ensure that all staff are able to communicate effectively with the young people. Staff are sufficient in number and the home increases staffing levels as necessary to ensure that children are provided with good levels of care and support. Staff have good relationships with young people, treat them with respect and spend a lot of time talking with them. Young people think highly of staff members.

External monitoring of the home is sound. Visits that take place under Regulation 33 are carried out each month and reports provided. These visits examine a much wider range of matters than those required and the visitor works closely with the Registered Manager to ensure that any matters identified are addressed. However, the visits do not report on the state of the home's premises well enough and this reduces the effectiveness of this monitoring. Internal monitoring

of the home is good and linked closely with the external monitoring. This means that the registered provider maintains a clear view of the operation of the home.

Young people's files contain all required information so they have a full history of their care.

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
22	ensure that records of any restraint are retained in a bound, numbered volume kept for the purpose that contains all the information required by this regulation and National Minimum Standard 22 (Regulation 17(4) of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001)	5 March 2010
1	develop the statement of purpose to include all the matters listed in Schedule 1 of these regulations (Regulation 4(1) of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001)	5 March 2010
33	ensure that reports of visits by the registered provider cover all the elements required under this regulation. (Regulation 33(4) of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001)	5 March 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all areas of the home are maintained in a good state of decorative repair; specifically attention is required in the home's bathroom. (NMS 24.3)