

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	18/10/2012
Inspector	Robert Curr
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	20/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is owned and managed by a charitable organisation. It is registered to provide both short breaks and longer-term care to children and young people with complex disabilities and sensory impairment. The home also accommodates young people aged over 18. The home forms part of a school campus and the school is inspected separately by Ofsted.

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**.

Constant high quality of care is offered to young people that is always tailored to reflect their individual needs. This provides a highly child-centred approach in which young people's emotional, physical and social needs are fully recognised and actively promoted. The relationship across the whole community is founded on a climate of mutual respect.

Young people benefit enormously from their experience and the excellent individual support they receive. They are happy, treated with dignity and respect and relate extremely well to staff. The staff team provide an outstanding quality of care and make every effort to engage the young people in discussions about their behaviour and needs with great success. Each young person is cared for and respected as an individual with their own personality and unique traits. As a result, young people make excellent progress in developing a positive self-view therefore form and sustain attachments.

A key strength of this setting is that staff never assume that young people cannot communicate their views. Staff continually consult and engage with young people in planning their daily routines and activities. Consequently care plans are robust, clearly identifying personal needs and outlining effective strategies for staff to follow. One parent comments their child does things they cannot get them to do at home, such as setting the table and washing pots.

The safety and well-being of young people is of paramount importance. This includes ensuring young people experience a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. Most importantly, young people feel extremely safe when they are in their individual houses.

The dedication and enthusiasm of leadership, support staff and governors means young people experience the very best of care. This is helped by the exceptional standards of communication between staff, leadership, parents and placing authorities.

There no weaknesses identified which have any direct impact on outcomes for young people. There is one area for improvement identified. These relates to the independent monitoring visitor not consistently consulting with young people and their parents.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the young people and their parents are regularly involved in contributing to the independent person's visits. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

Each young person is cared for and respected as an individual with their own personality and unique traits. As a result, young people make excellent progress in developing a positive self-view therefore form and sustain attachments.

A key strength of this setting is that staff never assume that young people cannot communicate their views. Staff continually consult and engage with young people in planning their daily routines and activities. Person centred meetings are used highly effectively with young people to capture their wishes and feelings on their individual care; for example, choosing holiday activities and leisure equipment for their house.

Young people are successfully moving towards independence. There is a separate flat that is well used for young people that are preparing for adulthood. The young people using this facility actively participate in day-to-day decisions about their care and develop further social skills.

Young people's health needs are extremely well met. They have access to the services they need to ensure they experience a good quality of life, including speech and language development practitioners and in-house mental health services. Staff are well trained to meet the specific needs of the young people in their care.

Young people are actively involved in keeping themselves fit and healthy. This is made possible by the stimulating physical activities available every day. These include, bike riding, swimming, football, wall climbing, dance clubs, music sessions and gardening. Also, they are supported to appreciate the importance of healthy eating. Everyone involved in the care of young people is aware of children's specific health and care plans. These are viewed as an essential aid in ensuring care is both coordinated and tailored to reflect individual needs. Parents, social workers and staff report on marked improvements in young people's self-esteem and development, promoting positive well-being.

All young people benefit from 100% attendance at school, thereby promoting positive educational outcomes. Excellent daily communication is maintained between school and education staff, allowing for any concerns or achievements to be shared, further promoting young people's well-being and attainments. Shared aspirations and targets for young people ensure a holistic approach to developing social and life skills and educational ability.

Young people are effectively prepared for a successful transition to adult life. They are supported to develop necessary life skills such as personal care, choosing the clothes they want to wear and helping to tidy shared spaces and their bedrooms. Young people have developed skills around making drinks and collecting and placing their clothes in the washing machine. These are examples of great strides that have been made with some young people. In addition, they are enabled and encouraged to attend activities, places of worship and utilise facilities within the local community. Young people are involved in bag packing for nation charity initiatives and support work with children in Africa. This promotes inclusion while bolstering young people's self-esteem and confidence. A social worker stated: 'You wouldn't believe the change in him. He is accessing local provision and able to go out in the community. He is making strong relationships with his peers.'

Excellent contact is maintained between the home and young people's parents. Maintaining significant relationships for young people is seen as extremely important. Consistent contact arrangements are fully promoted with those who are significant to young people. Staff support contact not just within the home but on shared outings and holidays. This promotes inclusivity and enables positive and fun shared experiences. Young people fully benefit from the security, stability and sense of consistency this provides both now and for their longer-term relationships and support in adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy excellent, warm and positive relationships with staff that are based on mutual care and respect. Parents and social workers say that relationships with staff are one of the best things about the service. The quality of care is second to none.

Placement plans are child-centred and provide a holistic assessment of needs. The care planning process never loses sight of the young person, and with consent of parents is implemented so that daily needs are always met. There is a strong culture of listening to young people. There is no time where their views and opinions are not actively sought. This is made possible by the wonderful and sincere rapport established between the support staff and young people. This positive interaction extends to the school's council, in which some young people actively participate. These formal meetings enable them to take responsibility for helping to develop the residential provision.

All young people benefit from a seamless 24-hour curriculum. This enables them to maximise opportunities that come from this inclusive service and the activities which are tailored to reflect personal needs and interests. The smallest achievements are celebrated, giving young people a strong sense of personal development and fulfilment. Similarly birthdays, gaining qualifications and obtaining awards are all celebrated and often involve parties to ensure important events are never forgotten.

Designated health practitioners that work within the organisation provide young people with advice and guidance on a regular basis. They also deliver health promotion advice to support staff, which they then deploy in their care. The procedures for accurately administering medication are rigid and these practices ensure young people receive their prescribed medication safely.

Young people enjoy nutritious meals that are plentiful and of high quality. The level of enjoyment is validated by the empty plates at the end of the evening meal. Nothing goes unnoticed by the support staff; they are quick at spotting and taking action when a young person needs support. This includes staff utilising their extensive knowledge of effective communication to help to divert young people if distressed, to prevent their behaviour from escalating.

Staff deal sensitively and effectively with young peoples' needs and concerns. This includes them having access to a complaints procedure, which is reflective of their different methods of communication. Supporting this informative procedure are telephone numbers of external organisations that young people can also contact to talk through any concerns. This openness enables young people to never feel isolated or fearful to raise concerns.

The setting offers a range of houses including a flat for young people to develop independence skills. Each house is personalised to the young people resident there. They are decorated and furnished according to their tastes and needs. This offers young people individualised choice and care. Full time staff are employed to maintain the premises. This offers consistent, comfortable care for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home makes outstanding provision for safeguarding young people's welfare. Young people are and feel safe. Everyone involved in supporting them plays a role in ensuring young people stay protected from harm. This includes staff being confident in all areas of child protection and having the necessary knowledge and skills to keep young people safe. Strong links with other agencies give staff access to up-to-date advice and guidance so that everyday practice puts young people's welfare first.

The welfare of young people is always the most important consideration. This includes ensuring there are comprehensive records maintained for all incidents or concerns. Support staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to health and safety so that the safety of young people never becomes compromised. Excellent staffing levels ensure that any potential episodes of bullying are identified and addressed immediately. There is a strong commitment by staff to tackle all types of bullying through initiatives and strategies that improve behaviour and increase awareness. This well implemented approach means no young person experiences any form of bullying or discrimination from their fellow residents or staff.

Young people choose not to go missing. A parent said: 'They are caring for her very well and she is looked after all the time because she can never be left alone. She is completely safe.'

Both families and social workers consider young people to be extremely safe, protected and valued by staff. These strong relationships provides young people with the knowledge that they will be protected. There are comprehensive risk assessments to identify any potential dangers to young people and these form action plans that help staff to keep them safe.

A hierarchy of behavioural techniques are used, which take into account a young person's age, understanding and the seriousness of the situation at any given point. This support enables young people to cope with their emotions. Where staff need to give additional help, their use of diversion, re-direction and de-escalation is highly effective. This avoids behaviour escalating to a level where young people become distressed and place themselves and others at risk of harm. Because of this highly effective approach, young people do not engage in damaging, risk taking behaviours.

Training and written guidance on safer recruitment practice is in place to ensure the recruitment and selection of new support staff remains meticulous. This ensures that only suitably vetted people work with young people.

Young people benefit from living in a safe environment. Young people's health and safety needs are high priority and strong health and safety procedures for the building are very well managed. Fire safety risk assessments and regular safety checks protect young people from fire. Excellent evacuation procedures and practices ensure that young people of all abilities know what to do in the event of an emergency and staff know how to protect them. All utilities are checked and regularly serviced. A social worker said, 'He is completely safe there and I have no concerns about the home at all.'

Leadership and management

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

The home is efficiently and conscientiously managed. A variety of arrangements exist for monitoring the quality of care by the strong management team. The experienced and nurturing Registered Manager has positive relationships with the young people in her care. The manager maintains a close day-to-day overview of each young person individually, alongside the general running of the home. Any shortfalls are promptly identified and addressed. As a result, young people's progress is monitored and the demonstrable differences the home has made to young people's outcomes are identified. This promotes and maintains high standards while contributing to young people's experience of being valued.

A Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the home. In addition parents and young people receive information, in a format they can understand, in their individual welcome pack. This clearly informs them about the home and the care that is to be provided. As a result young people are appropriately placed thereby enhancing their life experience.

No complaints have arisen since the last inspection. Effective communication between the home and parents ensure that parents feel confident that their concerns will be heard and acted upon. Young people's welfare, well-being and safety are promoted by this practice.

The Registered Manager actively monitors the quality of care provided under Regulation 34, Schedule 6 and uses the information gathered positively to further benefit young people in the home. The Regulation 33 visits further monitor care practices. However, these reports do not consistently capture the views of young people and their relatives. Young people are protected by multi-agency decision making as the Registered Manager communicates with and notifies agencies, including Ofsted, of any significant incidents. Records are securely kept and diligently maintained.

Young people benefit from high staffing levels and the care and attention they receive from the well-supported and committed staff team. A staff member stated: 'No doubt about it, this is a good place for children, we make it that way. I don't think there are any staff here who don't like being here.'

All staff members either hold or are enrolled on the National Vocational Qualification at level 3, diploma course, apart from new staff members still within their probationary period who are undertaking induction training. Staff members report that they receive strong peer and management support and benefit from a good, formal supervision process. Parents report that the key worker system ensures that their children receive consistent continuity of care. A parent commented: 'She loves her key worker, who goes to all of her medical appointments with her so that she doesn't have to have different people all the time. She even comes in on her day off

to go to her appointments. I can't say any more about how thoughtful and kind they are.'

The Registered Manager's motivation is driving forward the continuous improvement. This level of motivation ensures young people are provided with a safe, caring and stimulating environment where they can develop and achieve in areas of physical and emotional well-being, sustain their educational attainment and have their spiritual and cultural belonging respected.

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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.