

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 service is a residential school that accommodates young people aged eight to 17 years who have complex needs and severe learning difficulties, including autism. As a school providing over 295 days of residential care per year the whole school is registered as a Children's Home. It is situated in a rural village approximately five miles away from the local town centre.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was a full inspection to check on all key standards and related regulations under the Every Child Matters outcome groups for young people. This is an outstanding service. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily and their good health is extremely well promoted. This is an area of outstanding strength. Complaints are well handled. There are very good child protection procedures and practice, which help to safeguard the welfare of the young people. Behaviour management policies and practice are very good. Risk assessments are consistently well recorded and reviewed.

Fire safety procedures and practice is good. Education and leisure needs are extremely well met and the home works closely with other services to meet the range of young people's individual needs. This is an area of outstanding strength. Placement planning is excellent and placement plans are extremely well delivered, recorded and reviewed. The delivery of care and support is a notable area of outstanding strength. Staff are sufficient in number and they are very well trained, experienced and competent.

The Registered Manager exercises highly effective leadership of the home's staff and operation, such that the home is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that strives to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people. There is excellent monitoring of the standard of safety and care provided in the home. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding.

Improvements since the last inspection

The registered person was asked to ensure that a minimum of 80% of care staff have the appropriate National Vocational Qualification at level 3 care award or equivalent qualification. This target has now been met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are given choices about their food and the food served is both healthy and nutritious. Staff encourage young people to eat healthy foods and snacks. Staff are supported with training around food health, nutrition and hygiene. The staff have a good understanding of food issues that arise out of diversity. This is particularly well managed. The staff are aware of individual young people's likes and dislikes to ensure that they enjoy the food served. Young people's health is significantly enhanced by the use of a nutritionist who assists the staff in menu development and promoting healthy nutritional food. The 'eat-well plate' and the 'five a day' model are used to support this. The menu planning takes account of individual young people's religious and cultural preferences. Freshly prepared food is provided for young people at a time that is preferable to the individual young person. This includes as much fresh, homemade food as possible including sauces.

A range of recipe books have been translated into sign and picture formats, to enable young people to be engaged in preparing and cooking food according to their cultural preference. Young people are involved in planning meals and shopping and have access to a well-equipped kitchen, where they can prepare drinks and snacks for themselves. Fruit kebabs are often used as an entertaining way of supporting a healthy diet. An allotment is maintained by the young people and the produce such as herbs and vegetables are used for cooking meals. Individual learning opportunities reflecting care plan targets around health are planned and supervised on a regular basis. Records of young people's food consumption are kept to inform staff and other professionals about individual diets. There is a range of food health information available to support staff in meeting young people's needs. Catering audits are done regularly to help ensure that there is best practice in the different house kitchens. The excellent practice that contributes to young people enjoying healthy, nutritious meals that meets their dietary, cultural and religious needs is a notable area of outstanding strength.

Health promotion is an utmost priority at the home. The young people's health is closely monitored and record keeping is very good. Person-centred health action plans are used. There is good training and detailed written guidance for staff on a wide range of young people's health and medical matters, to make sure that they understand about young people's health and what their responsibilities are. Healthcare records are up to date and accurate, enabling staff to change their ways of working or to inform health professionals and parents of their children's health progress. The home has links with a wide variety of specialist health services and there is much evidence of these being used to meet individual young people's needs.

Young people benefit greatly from the exceptional range of healthy activities offered. A dynamic, qualified activities coordinator is employed to plan, develop and deliver a highly comprehensive programme of events that encourages individual interests and involvement in healthy activities. This helps to enhance many aspects of young people's health. Examples highlighted include outdoor activities, football, team

competitions, cricket, fun runs, walking and trampoline. Young people are encouraged to complete feedback sheets following activities to help improve or change the activities facilitated. Many young people are registered on formal youth achievement schemes, which include healthy activities and learning opportunities. Young people's involvement is supported by staff who explore their individual choices, likes and dislikes. Some young people are completing a sports and fitness award course run by the local college. The staff have established very good links and relationships with other schools and community based activity providers. This includes the introduction and teaching of communication methods used by the young people attending. This is a notable area of outstanding strength.

Strong measures are in place to safeguard young people's welfare. Staff are trained in medication matters to enable them to safely store, administer and record the medication that they are responsible for. Medication is securely stored and records are up to date and accurate. Internal and external medication audits are undertaken and a robust response meets any discrepancies identified. All staff have received training to enable them to provide first aid if necessary. Staff have also received specialist training to meet a range of health and medical needs. Therefore, young people's health needs are met and their welfare is very well safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines and providing treatment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's privacy is very well respected. Staff demonstrate good understanding of facilitating privacy for the young people. Young people requiring personal assistance have it provided in a manner which maximises privacy and dignity. Parents and young people confirm that this is done sensitively and safely. Details about young people's care are recorded and stored to maintain their confidentiality. Young people have access to a private telephone, which is free to use for reasonable periods.

Measures are in place to receive and act upon any complaints. All staff have received training on complaints which ensures that they know what to do if there is a complaint about the service. The young people know how to make a complaint. Staff have explained the procedure and there is also information in the young people's guide about how to complain. An accessible complaints symbol book is available to young people who can use it to show staff if they are unhappy about something or somebody. Staff are sensitive to young people's behaviour which may indicate that they are unhappy. The young people also have the support of an independent advocate. The complaints records contain the required details. The meticulous monitoring of complaints ensures that all concerns are captured and acted upon. Therefore, complaints are very well handled. All significant events at the home have been notified to the relevant authorities including Ofsted.

The young people's welfare is significantly enhanced by the organisations meticulous approach to child protection. The manager and staff have received child protection

training and the provider has a good safeguarding procedure for staff to follow, in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Staff demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect the young people's safety. There are good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. An independent safeguard forum has been established and independent safeguard visitors are employed to visit and report on the young people's safety and welfare. All staff have received anti-bullying and awareness training. An anti bullying scheme is in place which raises young people's awareness through information and activities. A young people's council meet regularly to discuss the views of young people. Anti bullying is included on the agenda. Therefore, the welfare of young people is very well promoted, they are protected from abuse, bullying and unauthorised absence and a robust response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. This is a notable area of outstanding strength.

Behaviour management policies and practices have been robustly addressed and revised to ensure that no measure of control is excessive or unreasonable. Staff confirm that they have been supported through this process with additional supervision and training. The additional training includes interventions which 'supports staff to respond to both the feelings and behaviour of the young people'. Staff describe this technique as, 'brilliant' and they enthuse about the very positive outcomes for the young people. There is ongoing monitoring of behaviour management practices which includes opportunities for staff to be reflective. The records have also been revised to include more details of the differing incremental techniques employed before the last resort of physical restraint is used. Staff are supported by the provision of clearly recorded behaviour support plans. These plans are intensively reviewed by a multi disciplinary team who offer well designed, progressive strategies for staff to implement.

Reducing unnecessary risks to young people is a high priority at the home. Comprehensive written risk assessments enable staff to know what action to take to minimise the risk to each young person during their known and likely activities. These are reviewed regularly.

All staff and young people have been involved in regular fire drills. All staff working at the home have received up-to-date fire safety training, to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home. Personalised evacuation strategies are recorded for each young person. These take account of the young people's differing responses to the situation. The fire safety check records are up to date and accurate. Therefore, young people's physical safety from fire in the home is well protected.

All staff have been appropriately recruited and undergone suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks. Managers and senior staff have undertaken safer recruitment training to help ensure that staff are suitable to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The young people receive excellent personalised support appropriate to their needs. The records contain details of individual support services involved in the health, care and education of young people. The home has links with a wide range of helping agencies and the provider commissions services to fit the young people's needs. The staff appreciate that the individual young people have a range of needs arising from diversity.

All staff have received training around equality and diversity. Themed event days are used to promote diversity. School assembly introduces young people to different forms of religion and cultural differences. A range of community events and visiting speakers promote diversity.

The home holds an Inclusion Quality Mark award for the promotion of protection, presence, participation and progress.

Education is good. It is a very high priority and it is vigorously promoted. Staff make a lot of effort to encourage good school attendance. Young people arrive at school well prepared for the school day. Individual education plans detail young people's targets, and progress is very well evidenced. This includes the use of life books, which use photographs and text or symbols to capture young people's involvement in learning, cultural and religious experiences. Young people learn about diversity through personal health and social education subjects. There is space, resources and facilities at the home, to enable the completion of homework or learning opportunities. Young people can use the school premises and resources during the evening, weekend and school holiday periods. A computer is available for the young people to use for educational purposes. This is supplemented by opportunities for young people to attend after school computer club to improve their skills. Therefore, the education of young people is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood.

All young people have a rich, varied and imaginative activity plan, which is devised from their own indicated preferences or staff and other party's knowledge of their preferences. Young people are encouraged and supported to try new activities. Young people benefit greatly from the exceptional range of activities offered. An inspiring, activities coordinator is employed to plan, develop and deliver a highly comprehensive programme of events that encourages individual interests and involvement in healthy activities. This helps to enhance many aspects of young people's lives. Examples highlighted includes parties, outdoor activity centre, fund raising, music and other clubs, football, exchange trips, competitions and outings.

Themed holiday time events are organised to promote play and learning. There is also a good range of books, DVDs and games available for learning and entertainment.

Within the activity plan, all young people have the opportunity to gain external accreditation in a range of activities, which includes crafts, physical fitness, sport, personal and social skills. Each young person gets accreditation for achieving set targets at different levels, which are incremental. Following external assessment, many young people have been presented with progressive achievement awards.

Young people's involvement is supported by staff who explore their individual choices, likes and dislikes. The staff have established very good links and relationships with community based activity providers. There is a good community cohesion policy and practice which promotes and evidences the range of activities done away from the home. This includes fund raising, community renovation projects, allotments and youth clubs. Therefore, young people are able to pursue their particular interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities in and out of the home. This is a notable area of outstanding strength.

The home has a gold Artsmark award from the Arts Council for the promotion of arts, crafts and music.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The home's referral system enables the manager to fully assess the needs of the young people concerned and to take into account the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents. Admissions to the home are planned and the child or young person and their family where appropriate are involved in the planning. Young people may visit the home before they move in. There is a young people's guide to the service provided at the home. It is produced in a variety of formats including a DVD. Therefore, young people are able to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner.

Consistently high quality placement plans are used. These are supported by the use of behaviour management plans, communication plans, learning opportunity plans, daily routines, personal care guidelines, contact plans and activity plans. The plans are comprehensively written and staff confirm that they know what action is required of them to meet the needs of the young people. The daily records called journals reflect the content of the care plan and show the action taken by the staff to meet the identified needs of the young person. Key workers monitor the care plans and produce monthly summaries of progress. Further internal reviewing takes place in light of the information recorded. Therefore, young people have their needs assessed effectively and comprehensively and written placement plans outline how these needs will be met and are implemented.

There is a system for reviewing the placement plans of the children and young people at the home. This system includes participation in the statutory reviews, person-centred planning meetings, care management meetings, best interest meetings and multi-disciplinary meetings. Statutory case reviews have taken place

within the required timescales. This ensures that the young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. This process is supported by a multi-disciplinary team infonet page which allows all authorised staff to access and contribute to young people's records. The planning and reviewing procedures are a notable area of outstanding strength.

Young people's contact is promoted and facilitated. Staff confirm that young people can keep in touch with people that are important to them and that they can have family come to visit them.

Any child with communication difficulties is provided with means to make their wishes and feelings known regarding their care and treatment in the home. This includes availability of different adults who understand how the child communicates. Staff describe ways in which young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run. This includes key worker sessions, visits from young people's rights and advocacy services and young people's meetings. A young people's council group represents the views of the young people about matters such as food, activities and lunch time clubs. Nobody is assumed to be unable to communicate their views. Parents and young people confirm that they feel that their views are important and they are listened to. Therefore, young people's views are sought and acted upon. This is a notable area of outstanding strength.

The manager makes every effort to achieve continuity of staffing, such that young people's attachments are not overly disrupted.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are taught day-to-day life skills, according to their level of maturity and understanding. The young people learn skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home, such as shopping, gardening, cooking, handling money and completing learning opportunities. They are also given guidance and support with social skills, laundry, clothing care and cleaning. Exceptionally high quality 'live' pathway plans are prepared and implemented at the earliest opportunity. They are regularly reviewed. Work is done jointly with the placing authority in a timely fashion so as to help ensure that transition planning is effective. Staff describe the record and process as very good. Therefore, young people receive care which helps to prepare them for adulthood.

The interior and exterior of the home is maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. The home is kept clean and there are homely touches throughout. There is a maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment. The garden is well maintained and safe. Therefore the young people live in a home that is clean, suitably furnished and kept in good repair and decoration.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

An up-to-date Statement of Purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. There is a very good children's guide available in a variety of formats. Before admission, the staff provide as much information as they can about the home to young people, their family or carers so that they know what to expect if they come to live there.

There is a consistent staff team, which has been added to recently to fill vacancies and to broaden the range of skills and experience among its members. There are sufficient staff members at the home and systems are set up to ensure that any shortages or crises can be managed. New members of staff receive very good quality induction training before commencing work with the young people. Staff refer to written guidance frequently during discussion and give examples of how it is implemented in practice. Staff support and supervision is of consistently high quality.

All staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. The induction programme includes best practice principles and safeguarding systems. An ongoing programme of refresher training is provided in a range of subjects to enhance the staff's competency to meet the needs of the young people. There are good measures in place to ensure that night team workers are included in training. The young people are receiving care from confident, self-assured staff that are competent, experienced and qualified to meet their needs. The service continues to provide good opportunities and support for the vast majority of staff to achieve a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. The target of 80% of staff achieving the qualification is met.

The provider undertakes monthly, unannounced monitoring visits to the home. This is to ensure that the care of children can be adapted in the light of information about how the home is operating. Additional, independent visitors concentrate on the quality of safeguarding young people's welfare. Action points are identified to be followed up by the manager. The highly motivated manager has established and maintained an outstanding system for monitoring and improving the quality of care provided in the home. It is supported by members of the management team being routinely rotated to work alongside support staff to provide advice and guidance. Senior managers conduct unannounced inspections of the delivery of care across the entire shift pattern and their ongoing discussions about improving service delivery is well documented. Catering audits ensure that health and safety in the different house kitchens is to a high standard. Therefore, there is highly effective monitoring of the quality of care, welfare and safety of the young people in the home. This outstanding approach greatly enhances many aspects of young people's care and support.

The Registered Manager is confident and self-assured, offering effective leadership of the home's staff and operation. The home is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that strives to deliver the best possible outcomes for young people.

Recording systems at the home are extremely well organised and information is very easy to retrieve.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Examples of outstanding approaches to promoting equality and diversity are detailed in all outcome areas of this report.