

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035687
Inspection date	26/10/2011
Inspector	Robert Curr
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	09/02/2011
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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 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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is a residential school that accommodates young people who have complex needs and severe learning difficulties, including autism. The whole school is registered as a Children's Home.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

Young people benefit tremendously from staying and living at this service. One parent said of the service, 'It is a special place and is run by special people'. Staff provide extremely personalised and well-planned care that meets the individual and complex needs of the young people. Another parent commented that her child's introduction to the service was, 'planned with precision and extremely thoughtful to all my child's needs'. Children and young people benefit from excellent relationships with staff. They feel they can trust staff and feel safe in their care. Their parents and carers also feel they can relax in the knowledge that their child is being well cared for and having an enjoyable time. A comment from another parent, which reflects the views of others, described the service as an, 'excellent place. It helps knowing our son is in a great place.' There is an extremely positive and calm atmosphere in the home. Each young person's individuality is promoted and respected and this helps them to develop a positive self-view. Young people make outstanding progress in respect of their social interactions and confidence.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people achieve great outcomes from this service. As the school offers care and support along with their parents and carers, they develop social confidence; learn new skills and emotional resilience, which is especially important as they prepare for adulthood. All of the young people benefit from being supported by staff who have consistently high expectations of them and are prepared to work extremely hard to help them develop their potential.

Every young person has a detailed health and care file. The plans identify their holistic care needs and how these will be met, providing as much continuity as possible with the care and support the young person receives at home. For example, one plan identifies how to support good sleeping routines and how to provide personal care in a manner that promotes privacy and dignity. Individual health records are comprehensive. There is excellent communication with families in relation to meeting health care needs. Staff work very closely and effectively with the in-house positive behaviour analyst, improving areas such as inappropriate behaviour

and sleep patterns. There has been significant improvement in some individual behaviours.

Young people benefit from a staff team that has an excellent understanding of their individual and complex needs. Each young person has a comprehensive plan, to which they have contributed. There are robust systems in place for monitoring and reviewing plans that fully involve young people, parents, social workers and school. This approach demonstrates the service's commitment to providing an open and inclusive service that works in the best interests of young people.

Young people benefit from having a nutritional and healthy diet and can develop skills and knowledge that will help them in adult life. All the staff are very familiar with individual dietary needs and preferences and there is good liaison with parents to ensure any changes in dietary requirements are appropriately met. Staff encourage young people to enjoy a diverse range of meals and to eat healthily. Mealtimes are well managed; staff endeavour to ensure that they are orderly and sociable occasions where young people and staff sit down together. Specialist aids and utensils are provided if required so that young people can develop key skills and independence at mealtimes.

Quality of care

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

Staff and young people enjoy excellent relationships. Staff have a very positive attitude and are highly motivated and enthusiastic about providing a high quality of care. The staff team are proactive and imaginative in finding ways to ensure children and young people get the most from their time in the service. The staff work effectively as a team, but also with families and other professionals. They also ensure that they listen to young people's views and respond appropriately. For example, staff provide appropriate support when young people wish to raise issues with their social worker or facilitate access to an independent advocate.

There is an established and comprehensive complaints procedure in place. Information is provided in a wide variety of formats to meet individual communication needs. Any issues raised either formally or informally are managed quickly and effectively. Children and young people also have access to an independent visitor who attends the service regularly.

Staff treat young people respectfully and reciprocal respect is encouraged between young people and staff. Individual diverse needs are appropriately identified and addressed, both in daily living and care planning. Staff place the well-being of young people at the centre of their practice. For example, staff pay excellent attention to personal safety issues, health needs and special dietary requirements. This helps young people to feel valued and to achieve a healthy and positive personal identity.

The activities coordinator, along with the staff are positive in their support of education, offering a variety of activities and opportunities to enhance and reinforce

learning and personal development. Excellent consideration is given to the diverse communication needs that young people have. All progress and achievements are celebrated. This positive, nurturing approach is a particular strength of the service.

Medication is very well managed. All medication is stored appropriately in locked cabinets. There are robust checks in place to ensure medication is correct and there are detailed records in place demonstrating thorough and safe procedures are followed. All staff responsible for administering medication receive regular training, including specialist training to meet any specific medical needs. Staff also receive first aid training and are aware of emergency procedures. This means that young people are supported by staff who are knowledgeable and competent to meet their needs.

The service as a whole is very child friendly. Each house is fully equipped with a range of aids and adaptations to meet diverse needs. This enables young people to experience a higher degree of independence and dignity. Externally, the service provides well-equipped safe grounds, with a sensory garden and play equipment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people who attend this service are safe and feel safe. They are protected by staff who are extremely competent carers and who treat their safety and well-being very seriously. Detailed risk assessments are in place; individualised staffing levels are deployed and staff are well trained. There are excellent systems established for responding to allegations and suspicions of abuse.

There are risk assessments and protocols in place in the event of a young person going missing and staff are clear about the level of individual support needed to keep young people safe during outings. Bullying is not identified as an issue at this service. All young people are closely supervised and any inappropriate behaviour is managed sensitively. Staff receive regular training in how to manage behaviour positively, using low arousal and diversion techniques. There is excellent liaison between the service, parents, social workers, school and the in-house behaviour analysts. Young people clearly benefit from this joined up approach, as it provides better consistency and makes positive progress more achievable.

All staff are carefully selected and vetted, with all checks in place before a new member of staff starts working with young people. Visitors to the home are also vetted and supervised as appropriate. These practices support the view that young people are protected from people who may pose a risk to them.

The environment is fit for purpose. The houses are well maintained and the relevant safety checks in respect of gas, electricity and fire are carried out at the required intervals.

Leadership and management

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

The manager is suitably qualified and experienced. The staff team works effectively together and feels valued. Young people are very much central to the home's ethos and the service continues to demonstrate capacity for further improvement and to positively manage change. The service is regularly monitored and any shortfalls are identified and action taken.

The service has a detailed Statement of Purpose and an individualised guide for young people. These documents are reviewed regularly and are presented in a variety of child-friendly formats. Information relating to significant events affecting young people's safety is notified to relevant agencies, including Ofsted and placing authorities. This ensures that issues relating to young people's safety are appropriately shared and effectively managed. All of the required records are maintained to a very good standard. Information is well organised and secure. Staff have had training on information sharing and confidentiality.

The service positively embraces the challenges of caring for young people with diverse and complex needs. Young people are helped to develop confidence in a range of situations and to develop a positive self-view. The service has an excellent commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and discriminatory issues are managed sensitively and effectively. The staff team supports young people by providing positive role models and any imbalances are addressed to ensure that the needs of individuals are effectively met.

Staff and parents feel that the service is well resourced and employs a sufficient number of staff to maintain good levels of cover. The service employs a diverse range of staff that provide positive role models and who work effectively with young people to establish good values, such as respect and tolerance. All support staff benefit from regular staff meetings, supervision and appraisal, which means their training needs are regularly reviewed and addressed. At the time of this inspection, staff have achieved a National Vocational Qualification at least at level 3 or are registered to undertake a diploma at level 3.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.