

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Pat Stanton
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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

The home provides care and accommodation for up to seven children aged between eight and 14 years of age who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is situated in a quiet residential area. The accommodation comprises of a large dining room, lounge, play room, study room and large garden. Each child has their own bedroom.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides good consistent and well planned care, which means that the outcomes for children are good. Children make good progress through their placement; and children and staff recognise and celebrate progress and achievement. Children are happy in their placement, and feel that the service helps them within all areas of their lives. Children benefit from sound relationships with staff and feel staff care about their welfare. Sound safeguarding practice promotes the safety of children who say they feel safe.

Areas for development include urgent need for major redecoration in the home, especially children's bedrooms and bathrooms. The home uses the practice of imposing financial penalty to children which is unacceptable, with the exception of when property is damaged. There is no up-to-date quality assurance and monitoring system to help improve care and staff do not ensure children are given privacy in bedrooms.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17 (2001)	ensure the use of imposition of a financial penalty, other than a reasonable payment towards damaged property is abolished (Regulation 17 (2) (g))	31/05/2011
31 (2001)	keep all parts of the home in sound construction and kept in good structural repair internally, and are suitably furnished to meet the needs of children accommodated. Each child is	31/05/2011

	provided with sleeping accommodation with adequate storage space (Regulation 31 (2) (d) (e) (4)	
31 (2001)	ensure that each child is provided with sleeping accommodation which is adequately heated, and appropriate to their need. Ensure there are a sufficient number of lavatories, showers and baths for the number and sex of children accommodated (Regulation 31 (5) (a) (b)	31/05/2011
11 (2001)	ensure the home is conducted in a manner which respects the privacy and dignity of children accommodated and staff do not routinely enter bedrooms without permission (Regulation 11 (2) (a)	31/05/2011

Recommendations

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

- provide Ofsted with a plan to ensure children are provided with a comfortable and homely environment without risk, during building work, which includes timescales for completion (NMS 10.2)
- ensure during building work children are not placed in a shared bedroom until an assessment has been carried out to ascertain their views (NMS 10.14).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children develop their own identities through very supportive staff and access to personal interests and fund raising in the community. Children enjoy a balanced diet and active lifestyles, which keeps them healthy.

Children access suitable medical and mental health services, which include confidential appointments with their own doctor and other health care providers. This means they receive personalised and age appropriate healthcare.

Children have a very good attendance at school, and make good use of their learning opportunities. Children make good progress in education with support of staff and their positive achievements are recognised.

Children are well informed and consulted over their own placement plans and included in decisions about changes that may affect their future. This promotes a collaborative culture within the home, which gives children a good degree of control over their life. Children are encouraged to make good use of independent visitors and take part in fund raising activities in the community. Activities include annual holidays, days out, horse riding, swimming, theatre and eating out with staff.

Children benefit from consistent and well facilitated appropriate contact with friends and significant others in their lives. Planned meetings are enjoyed by individuals and telephone calls may be received in private.

Children make good use of opportunities to practise and develop life skills, at their own personal pace. This means that children complete domestic chores and gardening with support from staff to help them prepare for adulthood. Children are encouraged to pursue personal interests and choose where to be educated. This demonstrates the home's commitment to promoting young people's confidence and success in education.

Children's bedrooms and bathrooms are sparse, cold in winter and in urgent need of redecoration and refurbishment to make them homely and comfortable.

Quality of care

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

Children enjoy good relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect and benefit from highly individualised support in line with their needs and wishes from both staff and independent specialists. Children say the staff are "fun". Staff encourage children to develop skills linked to their ability which are highlighted in care plans. Children complete tasks they are interested in to achieve their goals and aspirations. Examples include children participating in train projects, horse riding, sponsored bike rides and fund raising. Staff are able to communicate very well with children. Consequently children enjoy very positive and trusting relationships with staff.

Children are supported and encouraged to attend and achieve in education. The home supports children who have to travel to school and children confirm they successfully pass exams, which help them progress in education.

Children are able to pursue their particular interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported by staff to engage in leisure activities independently. Children say they enjoy going out with staff. One child says "We celebrate everything here". Children have access to transport provided by staff, which enables children to access activities in the community and visit family.

Children in the home are appropriately placed there. Young people's needs are thoroughly assessed and care plans outline how these needs are met. Care plans contain detailed information which is updated appropriately and includes all relevant information regarding young people's needs. Records include information about care and support given to children.

Children's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. Staff, children and family contribute effectively to a child's review. This ensures that any decisions are implemented into the daily care plan. The report provides up-to-date information, through discussion and children's individual needs and wishes. Placing social workers confirm the home is good at supporting placements and includes them in any changes to children's care.

Children are able to maintain constructive contact as deemed appropriate by the placing authority with families, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives. Children have contact with friends outside the home as they come to visit. Individual plans contain information regarding any contact and details of family or friends who may visit the home. Risk assessments help identify any contacts which need supervision. This helps keep children safe.

Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives in line with their individual needs. Staff communicate very effectively with children which results in them being able to respond, making their needs known. As a result children are helped to make decisions about their lives and influence the way in which the home is run. Children confirm they are included when making choices.

There are procedures in place to be followed which indicate that any complaint is addressed without delay. Children know how to make a complaint and feel confident

appropriate action will be taken.

Children in placement are very well-presented and have appropriate clothing and belongings to meet their needs. They receive pocket money and appropriate allowance to help purchase clothing and food while accommodated. Money held for children is managed appropriately and children's clothing and personal requisites are fully met.

Children live in a large home which provides sufficient space to meet their needs. However, all parts of the home especially bedrooms are in need of redecoration and refurbishment. This work is now urgent as children's bedrooms contain soiled carpets, broken curtain rails and furniture. Children's beds need replacing along with furniture. Some bedrooms have no space to hang clothes or any seating. The home's heating is not sufficient to help keep children warm in winter and children are not able to use the showers in the home, due to lack of screening. The home has a spacious and clean dining room and lounge. Children enjoy the home's games room and large fully equipped garden, but are negative about their bedrooms.

Children enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. They plan and help prepare meals with the support of staff in preparation for independent living. Children are allowed in the kitchen to help themselves to drinks and snacks with staff supervision, although no fresh fruit is available in communal areas. Children are encouraged to share diversity and other cultures. For example, the home has a themed night, where staff invite a guest from another country, then choose a meal, shop and prepare a meal from that particular country to share and help children learn more about other cultures.

Children live in an environment where their health needs are identified and services provided to meet them. Files contain health information and details of each child's General Practitioner (GP), dentist and optician. Staff support and encourage children to access external health professional in line with their individual needs. Examples include, staff taking children to CAMHS services. Records of appointments with health professionals are clearly maintained ensuring the physical, emotional and mental health needs of children are met.

Children's health is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines and providing treatment. Medication is securely stored within the home and designated staff are trained to administer medication safely. Clear records are maintained for the administration of medication and staff are vigilant in checking medication dispensed, ensuring accurate and up-to-date records are maintained. Files contain drug information, a photograph of the child and signatures of two staff qualified to dispense medication. The home has a list of homely remedies for children in the home, approved by a doctor.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children confirm that they feel safe and protected within the home. They can openly talk to their carers over their worries and concerns, and feel that the adults listen well and care about their welfare. The home has clear and well understood risk management strategies in place, which recognise the personal vulnerabilities of children and provide suitable strategies to manage any associated risks. The staff group is very proficient at recognising and managing risk taking behaviour and individual risk assessments are in place to help keep children safe.

Children are protected from bullying. Staff are vigilant with regard to relationships within the home and good supervision and rules in the home regarding bullying. This means there are limited opportunities for bullying or inappropriate relationships to develop. Children have discussions with staff about inappropriate relationships and any issues are recognised and addressed when possible.

Young people's records are stored appropriately in a locked office to protect their confidentiality and staff understand the importance of confidentiality. Young people's privacy is protected in bathrooms but not always when in their bedroom. Staff do not always knock or wait for permission before entering children's bedrooms, which compromises privacy of children.

Children are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement and an effective reward system. There is guidance in place for staff to adhere to when working with individual children and restraints are rarely used. However sanctions used at the home include a practice of imposing an unreasonable financial penalty for behaviour unrelated to property damage.

Children live in a home that provides physical safety and security. The premises is not currently of good repair but it does not compromise the physical safety and security at present. There are no major hazards to compromise welfare. Fire safety checks are carried out at the required intervals and evacuation records evidence response times and the names of people involved in fire evacuation. All testing happens on a regular basis.

Staff are clear about their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding young people's welfare and staff are encouraged to keep their knowledge up-to-date by attending appropriate training. Staff are confident and clear about the action to take following any child protection incidents. This ensures that children are protected from abuse. Child protection incidents at the home are dealt with appropriately and all professionals notified within appropriate timescales.

Young people's health and safety is protected by careful vetting of visitors to the home to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers. No member of staff is allowed to work in the home until full checks are completed and records confirm all visitors' sign in and out of the building. Children are also protected through systems that are in place that prevent absence without authority. This ensures their safety. There are systems in place to notify the appropriate authorities of any significant events. The home works with local police and local authority to help keep children and the community safe.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed and organised well by a very proficient Registered Manager and her experienced and stable staff. This helps to keep children safe and secure. All staff understand, share and implement the home's ethos, philosophy and approach to caring for children. Staff have access to regular training programmes and a copy of the latest Ofsted report, national minimum standards and regulations for children's homes to help them meet the needs of children accommodated.

Children are guided through and know what services they can expect from the home, how they will be cared for and who they are likely to share with. Children are happy to seek affection from staff who are very caring and kind. A clear statement of how the home operates is available for parents and others needing this information. The home's Statement of Purpose (SOP) covers matters as outlined in Schedule 1 of The Children's Homes Regulations.

Children receive care and support from trained and competent staff. The roles and responsibilities of staff are clear. They receive mandatory training which includes child protection, team development, restorative justice, and social pedagogy. Eighty per cent of all staff working in the home have completed National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in caring for young people.

Staff are sufficient in number and qualifications to meet the needs of the young people. Children receive individual support reflected in the good staffing levels. As a result children's individual needs are met.

The Registered Manager of the home has not completed a recent annual quality assurance and monitoring system to help progress the home. Regulation 33 visits are completed regularly to help evaluate the service and records evidence how staff are to improve outcomes for young people, and comments regarding the need for the homes refurbishment.

It has been acknowledged by the management of the home that urgent action is required to ensure children's bedrooms and bathrooms are refurbished at the earliest time possible. The registered provider will provide Ofsted with a plan of action regarding building work timescales, which include how children's sleeping accommodation is to be managed during this time.

Although the children are negative about their bedrooms and bathrooms they are happy and make good progress. The Registered Manager has restricted admission to the home until all building work is complete. This helps keep children safe. Children enjoy the stability of a very efficiently run home, with a stable staff team and experienced Registered Manager.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.