

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Nick Veysey
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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 is a local authority children's home providing short breaks for up to four children at any one time with learning or physical disabilities. The children staying for short breaks usually are not in the care of the local authority and their parents have the primary responsibility for their health care and education.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children enjoy short breaks in an exceptionally caring and supportive environment that enables them to have fun and make excellent progress in all aspects of their lives. Children are safe and protected from significant harm. Children's parents and social workers are very happy with the quality of care and the support children receive from the staff.

All aspects of care planning and practice are highly personalised and tailored to comprehensively meet the individual needs of each young person and take into account their characters and disabilities. Staff work in a coordinated way with children, their family, social workers, health professionals and schools. This ensures that children continue to get the right help, guidance and advice. Children's needs and views are central to the running of the home. Staff actively encourage all children to become more involved in making choices and enjoy a full range of social opportunities, activities and experiences. Staff use effective communication and observation skills to seek children's views about all aspects of care and always take them seriously.

The home is very effectively managed. The manager provides strong leadership and works hard to improve the service. There is a strong emphasis on providing a very high standard of professionalism and childcare practice. Staff are highly committed and show a high level of skill, understanding and knowledge in meeting children's complex needs on a daily basis. They are kind, friendly and determined that children really have a good time during their stay. This is reflected in the strong and positive relationships and trust that exists between children and staff.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children are making exceptional progress as a result of their short breaks at the home. They really enjoy and make the most of their stays. They make friends and have fun spending time together. A parent said, '(my child) gets to meet new friends with similar interests and disabilities and they go out to the seaside or park which is

good for them.'

Children have every opportunity for personal growth and development through taking part in a full range of well-planned and stimulating activities. They are making significant and continuous improvements in their communication and social skills and becoming more confident in taking part in activities in the community. As a result, children with disabilities and complex health problems are becoming more independent. They make informed choices about how they spend their time, routinely access the community, use public transport and, as a result, enjoy life to their full potential.

In addition, children are developing their practical skills by being routinely involved in the running of the house. This includes taking part in shopping, helping to prepare meals, using money and taking suitable responsibility for their own personal care.

The home's strong and effective links with parents, schools, health and social workers mean that children's education and health care is not disrupted during their stays. Children's excellent school attendance is maintained and they continue to work hard and achieve at school. Children enjoy healthy lifestyles and continue to have excellent access to a full range of health services and receive excellent support with any health problems. Staff support parents and children keep in contact to help children to feel settled and happy while being away from their family.

Quality of care

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

The excellent relationships between staff and children have created a warm and relaxing atmosphere where children thrive and feel at home. Children are very positive about their time at the home. One young person said the best thing about the home is 'I like the staff and I have loads of favourite staff members'. Parents are also very pleased with the quality of care provided and feel that the children are happy.

Children have strong and trusting relationships with staff, are valued and accepted as individuals. Staff are extremely effective at building positive relationships with children. They are very knowledgeable about individual children's levels of understanding and comprehension associated with disability. As a result, staff engage appropriately to provide the support and reassurance children need to reduce their anxieties. They understand how best to communicate with individual children in ways that children easily understand. Staff's excellent communication skills are encouraging children to express their wishes and feelings and make choices. Children, for example, choose what they have to eat, how they spend their pocket money, what to wear and which activities they want to do.

Staff see children in a positive and realistic light. They have consistently high aspirations for children and are proud of how well children are doing. They are fully committed to enabling children to overcome any difficulties they may face to lead

happy and fulfilling lives. The manager said, 'our children want more from life.' Staff work really hard to ensure that children and their parents are very happy with the support they need. Children confirm they know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy. Parents feel that they are able to raise any concerns they may have about their child's care with staff and that their worries are taken seriously and dealt with properly.

Staff always place the well-being of individual children at the centre of their practice. They are very knowledgeable about children's individual needs and provide an excellent standard of care. This enables staff to plan for children's care and accommodation exceedingly well. Children's placement plans provide a comprehensive picture of all their personal needs and the support children require. Staff put children's plans into practice effectively to ensure children's specific needs are met on a day-to-day basis. Care planning and staff's day-to-day practice recognise children as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. Therefore, staff ensure that children receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs, disability, cultural background and identity. Staff work exceptionally well with parents, social workers and other agencies to promote children's welfare. Parents feel they can talk to staff about their child's care as often as they like and that staff keep them fully informed of their child's progress.

Children live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. They are fully supported to develop healthy lifestyles. Staff understand the importance of a well-balanced diet and ensure children enjoy healthy and nutritious homemade meals, have a varied diet and try new things to eat. Staff always understand each child food preferences associated to his or her disability, for example, choices relating to the colour and texture of food. Staff have an excellent understanding of children's specific health needs to ensure children's needs are met on a daily basis. Staff carrying out specialist health tasks are always competent and suitably trained. They closely monitor children to make sure they are healthy in ways that promotes children's dignity and independence. They also ensure children get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell or showing signs of distress. The arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective.

Staff have created a stimulating environment that promotes children's development. Staff ensure that the daily routine supports children's participation in education and school attendance. Staff praise and promote children's talents and achievements, for example, praising a child for their beautiful singing. Children have easy access to books, computers, art materials, games and other educational resources. Children routinely take part in leisure activities at home and in the community that enable them to follow individual interests and enjoy the same social experiences as other children. Children enjoy watching films and favourite television programmes, listening to music, playing games, shopping, going out for a walk, trips to the countryside, going to the circus, bowling and being active.

Children live in a suitably designed and very comfortable house. It is handy for the shops, parks and the beach. The house is very clean, well-equipped and suitably decorated to a high standard. Children's bedrooms are well-designed and furnished

to promote children's privacy and meet any specific needs they may have in relation to their health and disability. Staff ensure that children's bedrooms are prepared for them before they arrive with their belongings and reflects their personalities and tastes to help them feel at home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children feel safe and are protected from harm. Staff give children's safety the highest priority and they are well trained in safeguarding. They are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse, including issues in relation to children's personal circumstances and learning disabilities. They have taken decisive and appropriate action to protect children. Staff work effectively with parents and the safeguarding agencies to promote children's safety.

Children's individual plans clearly identify any risks they may face and outline effective strategies to ensure their welfare is promoted and protected. Staff ensure plans for children's safety are consistently put into practice and fully address children's needs. They have a very clear understanding of children's particular vulnerabilities relating to their level of understanding and disability. This enables them to ensure children are safe at home and in the community. Staff balance the need for protection with enabling children to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development. For example, children are always suitably supervised and any activities in the community are carefully planned.

Children's behaviour is very good. Staff have a very good understanding of the times and factors that contribute to children becoming upset. This includes working very well with children's schools and parents to develop consistent and well-thought-out behaviour management strategies that reduce children's anxieties and frustrations. The focus of these strategies is on praising positive behaviour and staff put them into practice effectively to support children. This positive and effective approach means that staff only use physical restraint very rarely and only as a permissible form of control, for example, to prevent young people from being injured. Staff follow up each incident sensitively with the child involved and keep detailed records. The manager monitors and reviews each incident of restraint effectively.

Children live in a physically safe environment. They are protected from any hazards by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills with children, to ensure the premises are safe and children know what to do in case of an emergency. External agencies undertake health and safety inspections to ensure that all equipment, including aids to children's mobility, is in good working order.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is very thorough to make sure children are protected. The manager carefully ensures that staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of individual children. Also there are

suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised to protect children.

Leadership and management

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

Children come to stay in a home that is effectively and efficiently managed in their best interests. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose, and parents and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides. The provider and manager effectively monitor the quality of care and identify areas for improvement. The changes necessary to improve the service always take place, improving the quality of care and support children receive.

The home shows a capacity for continued improvement based on its performance over the last two years and the development of extremely positive outcomes for children. The requirement made at the last inspection has been fully addressed; the safety of trampoline has been fully assessed to ensure it is safe for children to use.

The manager and staff clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering exceptional childcare practice tailored to the individual and personal needs of the children they look after. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the excellent progress children are making. Children are looked after by very competent and suitably qualified staff who provide children with a high level of care and support. The skills within the staff team match children's needs exceptionally well. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of children in the best possible way.

Staff are well supported by the manager. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the high expectations for providing excellent childcare practice. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always available and helpful and they receive one-to-one supervision regularly. In addition, team meetings take place every month. These allow the whole staff team to discuss the running of the home and to look at ways to improve the service they offer, to reflect on children's progress and how best to support them.

Children's written records are securely stored and provide a clear and detailed picture of children's needs and the support they require during their stay at the home. The records also provide a narrative for children's daily lives, experiences and progress. Records are thoroughly written; these provide an insight and understanding of children's lives and contribute to the planning for children's future.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.