

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Oldham
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is managed and run by the local authority. It provides residential care for up to six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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 **good**.

The standard of care in the home is good. The staff team know the children and young people very well and provide personalised, well planned care. Each child or young person has a clear, very detailed care plan, designed to meet their specific needs. Although generally this is followed through into the day-to-day care, with regard to cultural heritage this has not consistently occurred. However, overall the children and young people thrive in the home and make very good progress.

Children and young people say that they are well cared for; in particular they say that they like the staff and the activities and glow with pride when they succeed in the reward scheme. Some children and young people have homework but staff do not always ask them and they do not have a place to do their work. Children's and young people's health needs are generally very well met, but occasional weak recording when giving medication means that children's health needs are not always fully met.

Leaders and the manager have thorough systems in place to monitor progress, and are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Currently reports that identify trends and issues of concern are not being completed regularly or submitted to Ofsted. Social workers, parents and children have a good understanding of the purpose of the home but there is not an up-to-date Statement of Purpose available. Staff feel well supported through team meetings and informally but regular formal supervision is not in place for all staff.

Children and young people are kept safe through safe working practices, which are well risk assessed. Risk taking behaviour is significantly diminishing and young

people are learning to keep themselves safe. However, fire drills do not review the time taken to evacuate the building and any potential issues. However, overall, young people make significant progress in keeping themselves safe and avoiding dangers.

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
32 (2001)	Where the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies to the children's home the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it are complied with in respect of the home (Reg 32 (1A) (b))	28/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff meet children's individual needs as set out in the child's placement plan in particular in relation to cultural heritage (NMS 2.3)
- ensure that there is a clear and accurate written record of medication given to children (NMS 6.15)
- ensure that the children's home has an up-to-date Statement of Purpose available (NMS 13.1)
- ensure that children are helped by staff to achieve their educational goals. This includes providing support, facilities and opportunities as needed (NMS 8.4)
- ensure that staff are provided with regular supervision (NMS 19.4)
- ensure that Regulation 34 reports are completed at six monthly intervals and a copy of every report sent to HMCI within 28 days of completion (Statutory guidance Vol. para 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

All the children and young people say that they are happy in the home and have caring relationships with staff and others. They demonstrate this by their behaviour. For example, on a recent camping trip when a member of staff was cold young people found her a spare sleeping bag to keep her warm. The older young people show care and affection for the younger children and make sure they know how to keep themselves safe. In addition to showing care to others they are becoming more aware of themselves, improving their personal hygiene and reducing incidents of self-harm.

Children and young people's health is good. This is due to the healthy lifestyle that they all enjoy; with plenty of opportunities for sport and exercise and the encouragement of a good diet. When young people wish to stop their medication, staff support them to do this, in conjunction with medical advice. Staff successfully help young people manage their behaviour without medication. Young people are very proud of their success and their improving mental well-being.

Children and young people have ample opportunities to prepare for independence due to the fantastic opportunities that staff provide. These include formal awards and training; including first aid, food hygiene and a comprehensive life skills and independent living skills assessment and development programme. In addition children and young people are encouraged to cook, clean their rooms, do their laundry and help around the house. Consequently, young people talk with pride about their cooking skills, such as, their fabulous pasta bake. They are proud of their bedrooms and try to keep them tidy.

Helping young people to become involved in the wider community is a key strength of this home. Young people are involved in many activities including, charity races and events, pressure groups for children in care and volunteer work. Within the home, they enjoy working with visiting artists and produce lovely pieces of work for the home and for themselves. All this gives the children and young people great confidence, for instance to stand up in front of a large group and sing songs.

Where appropriate, children and young people benefit from contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Staff work very closely with others to facilitate and promote contact so that children and young people can have a meaningful relationship with those who are important to them.

Quality of care

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

The staff work well together and they work hard to ensure consistency in the care they provide. They know the children and young people very well and use their excellent working relationships to help children build relationships, learn respect and to develop confidence. For example, all the children and young people have been involved in a team building day, where they talked about and made house rules and played team games. This required co-operation and negotiation and was hugely successful. Consequently children and young people have established good house

rules and developed some firm friendships.

Children and young people significantly influence the day-to-day running of the home through meetings, meal-time conversations and discussions with key workers. This includes the opportunity to choose their bedroom, decorate it in the colour their choice and personalise it. They are actively involved in holidays, group activities, and individual interests and hobbies. A real strength of the staff team is enabling the children and young people to see this provision as their home.

Young people have clear, comprehensive care plans that set out their specific, individual needs. Care plans include information about disability, religious and cultural backgrounds. Although issues of cultural heritage are identified, key workers are not actively following up on issues; this leaves young people without the opportunity to explore their rich cultural heritage in more depth. There are well-being support plans and individual crisis management plans which are updated monthly. These address safety concerns, current issues, behavioural concerns and intervention strategies. Monthly summaries are sent to the social workers who say that they are kept informed through these and through regular e-mail and telephone contact. Children and young people all speak very highly of the home and are clear about their care plans and are actively involved in their reviews.

The home establishes excellent working relationships with the local community and other agencies. For example, there are regular monthly multi-agency meetings to keep everyone informed. These meetings help to establish good relationships and the sharing of strategies have helped the staff team consider how best to safeguard the young people.

When a child or young person is admitted, they are registered with the local health professionals and any on-going health needs and appointments are followed through. The home seeks the support of health professionals where appropriate. Consequently, children's health needs are very well met. For example, some young people with behavioural difficulties have successfully come off long-term medication with the support of staff and the medical professionals.

The medication administration system is generally robust, but some recording lacks clarity; which is detrimental to the health of the children and young people. All children and young people are encouraged to eat a healthy diet, and enjoy regular sports and activities, such as swimming, walking, horse-riding and football which keeps them fit and active.

Social workers speak very highly about the home. They acknowledge that despite a difficult period, significant improvements have occurred with a change in group dynamics. Children and young people are settled and have formed friendships. Social workers value the multi-agency meetings which enable key professionals to come together to work towards helping children and young people make progress. For example, young people do not get involved in criminal activity or put themselves at risk. They are settled; happier; have formed friendships and are more confident.

All children and young people are in education which is appropriate to their individual needs. Where young people may be having difficulties, staff work hard with the education provider and with others to look at alternative provision. This ensures that children and young people remain motivated to attend and to enjoy learning. Some children and young people have homework and others revise for exams. Currently the staff do not always actively support this and space to do this within the home has not been clearly identified to meet individual needs.

The home is close to the centre of the town which is well served by public transport. There are shops, parks and other facilities close by. It is very well maintained. Photographs and ornaments make the home look cosy and attractive. The layout is spacious, and there is a lovely garden with a patio area and an area for football. Young people are very proud of the home and happily bring their friends to visit.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff work very hard to keep children and young people safe in the home. Risk-taking behaviours have decreased and children and young people say that they feel safe. Staff work closely with other safeguarding agencies to devise and implement strategies that keep children and young people safe. Children or young people rarely go missing and this is a significant improvement for some young people. Consequently, children and young people are not putting themselves at risk, they value the good relationships they have made, and gain greater self-esteem and self-worth.

All staff receive safeguarding training, and their practice and knowledge is good. Staff are very clear about how they would deal with any issues of concern. There are comprehensive risk assessments for every young person, and these are regularly reviewed and updated. Any allegations of concern are swiftly investigated and decisions made to ensure that young people are cared for appropriately. There is occasional use of physical intervention by staff to prevent harm or injury. Minimum intervention is used on these occasions and there has been a recent decrease in incidents.

Sanctions are rarely used and staff regularly review their incentive schemes to ensure they remain meaningful and appropriate. Children and young people have personalised, simple and realistic targets to achieve within a short time frame. Children and young people talk excitedly about their rewards and strive hard to behave well to achieve their goals. These schemes work well because children and young people actively engage with the programme with big improvements seen in their behaviour.

The staff recruitment and selection process is rigorous. Comprehensive checks ensure that young people are cared for by appropriately experienced staff. There have been very few changes to the staff team since the last inspection which ensures a consistent team of staff who know children and young people well.

Overall, the environment is very well maintained, and kept safe through a system of internal safety checks and risk assessments. In addition, services such as electricity, electrical appliances and fire fighting equipment are regularly checked by the appropriate professional companies. Although fire drills are carried out regularly some minor recording omissions do not conform to current legislation. For instance it is not clear how long it takes children and young people to evacuate the building and whether any issues arose during the evacuation.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager is well established in her role and staff speak very highly of her and of the senior team.

The staff rota shows very good staffing levels. These give children and young people the opportunity to spend one-to-one time with a member of staff and facilitate them going to activities and clubs of their choice.

All staff receive the mandatory training requirements and there are some opportunities for attending specialist training, such as, working with autistic children. All staff are suitably qualified or working towards professional qualifications. The home is financially well resourced.

Staff are very clear about their roles. They say that they are very well supported in their role and they value the opportunity to be listened to and valued. However, not all staff receive regular supervision, this means that issues may be overlooked and training needs not identified. Team meetings are regular and well attended. They provide opportunities for staff to discuss and agree strategies of working, such as, how to encourage healthy eating

The responsible individual carries out comprehensive monthly quality assurance monitoring visits and the manager also has a system of internal audits. Checks and reviews completed under Regulation 34 include concerns about specific incidents and identify patterns and trends but have not been sent to Ofsted within the recommended timescales. The regulator is therefore not properly informed about the strategic oversight that is given to the home's operation.

The Statement of Purpose has not been revised for some time and therefore does not accurately reflect the current provision made, particularly with regard to staffing arrangements. Interested parties are therefore not properly informed about the skills, experience and qualifications offered by the staff team.

Any notifications are always notified appropriately to the relevant authorities, and appropriate action taken following an incident.

Despite some omissions the home is well managed and the senior management team

have an excellent grasp of how the home is operating; of its strengths and weaknesses and there is a development plan in place.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.