

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stella Lovie
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	06/12/2011
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home offers care and accommodation for children and young people of both genders who have severe learning disabilities.

The private organisation responsible also operates an independent 52 week school. It is co-educational and caters for pupils and students from the age of seven to 19-years-old.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **inadequate** progress.

The home was judged to be good at the full inspection in December 2011. There were two requirements made, both of which have been met. There were four recommendations made, only one of which has been met.

Children and young people receive a reasonable level of care that helps to promote improved outcomes for most of them. Some children and young people have been helped successfully to transfer to more independent provision in accordance with their age and ability. Most of the children and young people are making progress in communication skills and in access to the community. This is helping them develop their self confidence.

Staff continue to use communication aids and to sensitively attribute meaning to behaviours that the children and young people exhibit. Through these means,

children and young people are able to make choices about daily living aspects of their individual care. However, they are still limited in opportunity to communicate wishes and feelings in respect of their emotional needs, and do not contribute directly to their statutory reviews. Children and young people are also not enabled sufficiently to understand that they have rights, including the right to complain. Staff say that the children and young people are in their own worlds and are not able to understand the concept of rights. The current Children's Guide contains inaccurate information about how to make a complaint. This means potentially that children and young people's voices are not fully heard and their independence is not promoted as much as it should be. Additionally, children and young people continue to have very limited access to independent advocacy services. This is particularly significant for those children and young people with little external family support.

Children and young people continue to enjoy positive and warm relationships with staff. These promote trust and help the children and young people to manage their behaviours as constructively as possible. However, the level of restraint used in the home is still high in response to extremely challenging behaviour. The physical intervention records have been amended to reflect the correct criteria for undertaking a physical intervention but the recording is still occasionally inaccurate. The physical intervention records also do not adequately address the need for considering medical assistance, or the need to obtain the children and young people's views about the restraint.

Staff are generally well trained in being able to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people in their care. Additional training and guidance has been provided in relation to the use of specialist therapies which help children and young people cope more effectively with their stress and anxiety. Nevertheless, it is still the case that not all the staff have attained a minimum level of qualification in childcare, or are in process of working towards the qualification. This may impact on their ability to deliver consistently a high quality of care to the children and young people.

The quality assurance processes in the home are thorough and robust. The Regulation 33 reports in particular are very helpful in maintaining a strong focus on the individual children and young people's achievements and development needs. In recent months though, the supervision of staff has been inconsistent in frequency. This is a significant shortfall in light of the fact that some staff have been intimidated by children and young people's extremely challenging behaviour. It means that staff have not always been sufficiently supported and guided to fulfil their roles and provide a high quality service to the children and young people.

There is a wide age range within the current group of children and young people in the home. This results in some conflict of needs. The home has only one communal area for the children and young people, and access to this can be restricted when there are episodes of extremely challenging behaviour. Children and young people consequently spend a lot of time in their bedrooms when not out in the community or at school. Staff are in process of considering alternative ways of managing tensions within the group of children and young people in order to minimise the negative impact.

Staff have still not undertaken specific training in relation to recognition, prevention and countering of bullying. This potentially impacts adversely on the safety and well-being of the children and young people, especially in light of the diverse needs within the group and the high levels of challenging behaviour.

Overall there remain a number of areas for improvement in practice and progress is judged therefore to be inadequate.

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
24 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are enabled to make a complaint or representation, with particular regard to each child being supported to understand their right to complain. (Regulation 24 (6) (a))	25/05/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children have access to independent advice and support from adults which is appropriate to their age and understanding and that children know their rights to advocacy (NMS 1.5)
- ensure that staff in the home are trained to recognise and deal with any indications or incidents of bullying, to act proactively and intervene positively (NMS 3.12)
- ensure that where there has been physical restraint, children's homes must always be able to call on medical assistance as required and children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner; in particular, the restraint records show this opportunity has been given (NMS 3.16)
- ensure that all children are given the opportunity to discuss incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by, with a relevant adult (NMS 3.17)
- ensure that where any restraint has been used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)

- ensure that the Children's Guide includes how children can find out their rights and how a child can contact Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern, with particular regard to ensuring that the information provided is accurate (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification or be working towards it within six months of confirmation of employment (NMS 18.5)
- ensure that staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)
- ensure that children are assisted to obtain the support of an independent advocate to help them in providing their views, wishes and feelings to statutory reviews. (NMS 25.7)

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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection (March 2011)*.