

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Helen Walker
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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 privately run children's home. The home provides care and accommodation for four young people with learning disabilities. Premises are suitably adapted to support the young people's needs.

The organisation responsible for the home also operates an independent 52 week residential school.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people have made good progress in the home from their starting points. Young people receive a good level of care and benefit from a stable and committed staff team. Young people enjoy positive relationships with the staff team and with each other. Young people are happy in the company of staff and readily approach them. Parents and professionals consider young people are kept safe and are well looked after.

Staff actively promote young people's education and their access to health services. Young people's school attendance is consistently high and individual education programme's significantly support young people's learning. Communication between young people and staff is a particular strength of the home. Staff use a range of skills and systems to enable a consistent and regular level of consultation with young people.

The manager provides effective leadership of the home and staff receive good management support in their work with young people. However, minor breaches in fire safety regulations raised by the local fire and rescue authority have yet to be fully complied with. Not all young people have social work support or an independent advocate to ensure their views are fully represented. Additionally, some young people with more specific health and behaviour needs have yet to access specialist support. Further areas for development include; staff first aid training and better housekeeping arrangements in the home.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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)	ensure the requirements made under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 are complied with; in particular that there is regular maintenance of fire doors and the fire risk assessment is relevant and up to date. (Regulation 32 (1A))	05/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- provide children with access to independent advice and support from adults who they can contact directly and in private about problems or concerns, which is appropriate to their age and understanding (NMS 1.5)
- ensure young people with specific health and behaviour management needs have access to psychological support (NMS 6.1 and Volume 5, statutory guidance paragraph 2.49)
- ensure that the home provides a homely environment which is well maintained, in particular, that soap is available at hand washbasins and that young people's bedding is clean and in good order (NMS 10.3)
- ensure at least one person on duty has a suitable first aid qualification, in particular, that this is a current qualification. (NMS 6.7 and Volume 5, statutory guidance paragraph 2.50)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have effective support from staff to achieve to their potential. Young people benefit from staffing levels that meet their individual assessed needs. Staff encourage young people to lead a healthy lifestyle and involve them in food choice with an emphasis on healthy eating. Young people living in this home are settled and make progress in their self-care skills which take account of their diverse needs and abilities. For example, some young people can now pour a cold drink into a beaker, fasten buttons and are able to brush their teeth without the need for significant staff support.

Young people make good progress with their educational attainment which is fully supported by exceptional attendance levels at the provider's registered school. Young people engage in a variety of interests and have many leisure trips and participate in activities which increase their confidence and self-esteem. Staff involve and encourage young people to participate in physical activities to benefit their well-being. For example some young people attend local dance classes. Young people also enjoy looking after the pet rabbit.

Young people have access to health services to enable them to enjoy good health. The provider employs a registered nurse who maintains strong links with other specialist health professionals so that appropriate services are sought for young people. One parent said, 'my child is properly looked after' and 'staff are great with my child.'

Staff help young people to make sense of contact arrangement by using appropriate communication tools, such as pictures and computer software. This enables young people to maintain links to those important to them and retain their family heritage and culture. One parent said 'contact arrangements are really good.'

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a caring environment and are well looked after by staff. Young people have very positive relationships with staff. Young people using this service have minimal verbal communication; however, staff have a very good understanding of their individual needs and support them to make their views known. Young people have a say in how the home is run, for example, young people who dislike noise have had support from staff to swap bedrooms to a quieter part of the house.

Young people have a range of communication aids, such as electronic devices which help them to communicate more effectively with staff. Young people's communication is also supported by regular contact with the speech and language therapist and the sensory therapist.

Staff fully recognise young people's wishes such as when they want to have quiet time, go for a walk or want to play in the garden. Young people present as very happy with staff and readily approach and communicate with them. Young people have contact with family and some young people have advocates. However, not all young people have an independent advocate to support them or raise issues on their behalf. A clear complaints procedure helps families and young people raise concerns. For young people, this is in a format that best matches their preferred method of communication.

Young people are encouraged to lead a healthy life style and there is very good access to services to support and meet their health needs. Young people's interests and activities are thoroughly promoted by staff. A broad range of activities are accessible to young people, for example, regular local walks and arranged evenings to a soft play centre.

Young people have a placement plan which is specific to their individual needs and is drawn up with input from the social worker, independent reviewing officer and as appropriate the young person's parent. Parents feel staff involve them and keep them up-to-date about their child's progress. Staff are well informed and follow placement plans to improve care outcomes for young people. However, some young

people have specific health and behaviour management needs, in particular those relating to enuresis and encopresis. Advice and guidance from professionals, such as the clinical psychologist or incontinence advisor, has yet to be considered to further support staff in their work with young people.

Young people attend the provider's school which sustains education 52-weeks of the year. Care staff are integral to young people's education; they accompany and supervise them in the classroom setting during the school day. This provides young people with consistency and continuity of care throughout their day and on return to the home. A parent said they are pleased with their child's educational progress and that staff involve them in decisions about their child's education.

Young people live in homely accommodation which provides them with a comfortable and pleasant environment. To the rear of the house is a large enclosed garden for safe play. Staff support young people to make their bedrooms homely and personalise them with pictures, photographs and toys. Bedding in a young person's bedroom was found to be stained and unpleasant. The manager confirmed this would be replaced with new bedding. Soap is not available at all hand washbasins which means young people and staff cannot effectively wash their hands and remove germs. The home is well located with easy access to local amenities and public transport.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are looked after by staff who understand safeguarding procedures and receive child protection training to help ensure young people are kept safe. Staff use a range of risk assessments to assist them in their work to help keep young people safe, these are relevant to activities in and outside of the home. Parents say they feel their child is 'very safe' living in this home. Staff are confident to raise any issue of concern and understand the provider's whistle blowing procedure. This helps to ensure young people's well-being is further protected.

Young people have not been missing from the home. Young people are properly supervised by staff who provide a consistent level of support. However, staff are aware of the police protocol to follow in the event of a young person missing from the home. Bullying is not an issue at this time. Staff are vigilant to maintain a high level of supervision and risk assessments help them to be fully aware to counter incidents of bullying.

Young people's positive behaviours are promoted through their individual care and education plans. The provider employs a behaviour support team who guide and support staff and this improves outcomes for young people.

Staff have training in the use of physical intervention and refresher training is undertaken to ensure they have the necessary information and skills to use this. Physical intervention is used only as a last resort in order keep young people and

others safe. Young people's welfare has been significantly improved through staff's very positive work with the provider's behaviour support team and health professionals. This work has led to a significant reduction in the use of physical intervention and a calmer home environment. Sanctions are not used in the home which takes account of young people's individuality. Young people have spontaneous praise for their achievements, such as making a choice about their preferred activity.

The local fire and rescue authority have recently raised minor breaches regarding fire safety in the home. The manager has addressed the majority of the concerns but issues such as the update of the fire risk assessment for fire safety in the home have yet to be implemented.

Regular fire evacuation drills of the home involve staff and the young people. This helps to ensure young people are familiar with the noise of the fire alarm and action to take in the event of a fire. The provider follows a robust selection and vetting process to establish staff suitability to work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

A Statement of Purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the home which are met and made known to those with an interest in the home. The three recommendations made at the last inspection are met. Water outlets in the home are regulated so that hot water is at a suitable temperature for young people and not too hot. Restraints in the home are fully evaluated to ensure these are not excessive and only carried out for the safety of the young people and others. Robust arrangements relating to communication systems enable young people to have the support of people independent of the home to enable them to raise complaints.

The manager provides good leadership and is effective in his management of the home. Staff understand the diverse needs of the young people and significantly promote young people's welfare through care practice and a range of opportunities. The home is suitably resourced and employs a sufficient number of staff for the needs of the young people. The staff team present as competent and caring in their work with young people.

Young people were seen to be comfortable with staff and able to approach them without hesitation. Professionals and parents comment on the very good level of communication the staff have with them. They consider staff keep them well-informed about young people's care and progress. A social worker said the staff are 'very proactive to manage young people's behaviours properly and involve specialists as necessary.'

Young people have many opportunities to make their views known and staff are sensitive to their needs. For example, some young people have difficulty coping with lots of noise at mealtimes. These young people now eat at different times or in a different room whilst staff are mindful to continue to promote appropriate

socialisation with their peer group. Additionally, the views of young people are obtained through various means and include the use of picture cards, symbols and handheld electronic devices. Staff are proactive to ensure young people's individuality is recognised. For example, young people's cultural heritage is reflected in the use of picture cards which mirror the colour of young people's skin. Parents and social workers confirm they are regularly asked for their views about how the service is meeting the needs of the young people.

The provider ensures independent monthly visits to the home involve the young people. Reports from the visit detail areas of good practice and raise issues for improvement in the home. The manager responds to the report to address any actions raised.

Staff have good support and supervision from the management team which assists them in their work and professional development. There are regular staff meetings and very thorough duty handover sessions between staff. Therefore, the communication systems are robust and staff are well-informed of any changes to young people's care needs and routines.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.