

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Anne Bannister
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately run home is registered to accommodate three children or young people of either gender. It is registered to provide care for young people who may have behavioural or emotional difficulties. Lengths of stay may be short, medium or long term.

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 **adequate**.

Young people who live at the home are happy and well cared. The home provides a supportive environment in which young people can live. Members of staff are both lively and enthusiastic and provide young people with consistent levels of care. The relationships between staff and young people are friendly, warm and based on mutual respect. Young people speak fondly of staff, are able to share good humour with them and are at ease in their presence. Staff work hard to ensure that all young people are kept safe and free from harm.

Feedback from professionals and parents is positive. Their communication with the home ensures that they are kept well informed of both of the progress and any issues for young people. The placing authorities indicate that they are impressed with the care provided and the significant progress young people have made since admission.

Care staff have a good knowledge of the needs of the young people they are caring for. However, new care plans recently introduced fail to demonstrate how staff are promoting the quality of care that is enabling young people to achieve positive outcomes.

The home is well managed although there are some shortfalls in the home's record keeping and external monitoring. While staff actively promote the safety and welfare of young people, appropriate risk assessments are not always in place to demonstrate actions have been taken to minimise any risks. All safeguarding

concerns are reported to the appropriate agency to ensure matters are assessed by a person who is independent of the home. However, the home has failed to notify Ofsted when such referrals are made. External monitoring by the parent organisation has failed to identify the shortfalls in practice found during this inspection.

The home has taken positive steps to address one of the two previous recommendations raised at the last inspection. As a result of this inspection, Ofsted has made four requirements and two recommendations which address these reported shortfalls.

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
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there. In particular care plans must identify young people's assessed needs, how they will be met and by whom (Regulation 11(1a))	21/12/2012
23 (2001)	ensure any activities in which children participate are so far as practicable free from hazards to their health and safety In particular risk assessments must be in place to evidence how the home promote the safety and welfare of all young people in their care (Regulation 29 (b))	21/12/2012
29 (2001)	ensure a record of every fire drill or fire alarm test conducted, with details of any deficiency in either the procedure or the equipment concerned, together with details of any steps taken to remedy the deficiency (Regulation 29 Schedule 4 (6))	21/12/2012
30 (2001)	ensure that if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. In particular full details of safeguarding referrals made to the local authority must be notified to Ofsted (Regulation 30(1))	21/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that Regulation 34 reports are completed at six monthly intervals, sent to

Ofsted within 28 days of its completion and that they identify any trends and issues of concern arising from monitoring of matters set out in Schedule 6 . In particular such reports need to be evaluative rather than descriptive (Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14).

- ensure the home works collaboratively with the young person's social worker or personal adviser in implementing pathway plans. In particular it needs to be clear which areas of the pathway plan the home is helping the young person to action (NMS 12.2.)
- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. In particular this relates to the need to review the effectiveness of monthly monitoring in the home. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people confirm that staff are helping them to make progress with their educational achievements and to develop healthy lifestyles and positive ways of managing their behaviours. Placing authorities are positive about the progress young people are making in the home. Each young person's individuality is acknowledged and respected by the staff team, who work hard to develop young people's self-esteem and sense of well-being. A young person stated: 'This is the best care home I have been in. Staff listen to you and will have a laugh with you but they also let you know the boundaries and if you keep to them everything is OK. If you have a complaint you don't need to make it formal; it's dealt with as soon as you raise it.' A parent commented that there has been a massive improvement in their child's behaviour: 'It's the best place he's ever been in.'

Young people's opinions, both as individuals and as a group, are routinely sought and taken into account when developing all aspects of the care provided. This encourages them to take responsibility for decisions which affect their lives and their well-being. Young people are supported and are confident about accessing advocates to act on their behalf when they believe placing authorities are not hearing their voice when making plans for their future care. A young person said 'Staff here helped me get into mainstream school; my authority wanted to send me to a special school. I now enjoy school and am working towards GCSEs.'

Young people's identified physical and emotional health needs are being addressed. When young people need specialist health care or support, staff act as advocates to ensure they receive the services they require. Healthy lifestyles are promoted and young people are aware of the impact of healthy eating and exercise in promoting a sense of well-being. Young people are encouraged to help plan and prepare meals alongside staff, encouraging the development of skills which will promote their independence.

The education of young people living at the home is both promoted and actively

supported by all staff. All young people of compulsory school age are involved in formal education and their regular attendance is encouraged. As a consequence, their actual attendance is good. Regular school attendance and the opportunity to learn new things are helping young people to achieve their full educational potential.

Young people are encouraged to become involved in the local community and further afield. Examples of this include trips to the gym, meeting friends in the local community, and a summer holiday to a local caravan park.

Quality of care

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

Staff work hard to promote the physical and emotional health care needs of young people. They provide a safe and secure environment where young people flourish and develop. Incidents where young people put themselves at risk have reduced significantly over time as young people have developed their own coping mechanisms. Where they are able, young people attend to their own primary health care needs. This helps to develop their independence and to prepare them for adulthood.

Relationships between members of staff and young people are observed to be very caring, warm and friendly. Members of staff take pride in trying to provide an environment in which young people can be happy and flourish. Young people are very positive about the care provided and their relationships with staff. All indicated that it was 'a good' or an 'an OK place to live'. Staff spoken to are positive about their relationships with young people, who they feel make good progress and appear happy living at the home.

The assessment of the individual needs of young people is carried out by placing authorities prior to young people moving into the home. Since the previous inspection the home has revised its own care plans which detail how they are meeting the needs of young people. Unfortunately, the home's revised plans do not provide sufficient, in-depth detail of each young person's specific needs, how they are to be met and by whom. In discussion it was clear that young people's needs, and how they are being addressed are clearly known to the staff team. Unfortunately they were not clearly stated in the new care planning documents, which are judged to be less effective than previous plans maintained by the home. They have become theoretical rather than a practical resource which advises both staff and young people.

Young people preparing to move on from the home have pathway plans in place. Young people are supported well by the staff during this period of transition. However, the home's care plans do not clearly indicate which aspects of the pathway plan staff are supporting young people to achieve.

Young people are involved in the running of the home. Young people are able to discuss how the home is run and to help identify any improvements that can be

made. Young people know that their opinions are listened to and that they can influence change within the home. Within the home there is a culture of promoting each young person's rights and in ensuring they are able to participate in a wide range of activities. This helps young people to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Young people live in a comfortable and pleasant environment. The home is in a residential area in a village close to the city centre. Each young person has their own bedroom and they are encouraged to make them as comfortable and personal as possible. Young people have access to a computer and computer gaming equipment. There is a television in the lounge where young people can relax. The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people can socialise and enjoy a meal together. Young people speak positively about the accommodation provided and are keen to show how they have personalised their own rooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that the home is a safe place in which to live. Staff practice promotes a safe, caring environment where the promotion of young people's welfare is key in all decision-making. Young people know the measures staff will take to keep them safe, and understand why they have risk assessments to help them recognise and manage some of their own behaviour. This helps young people to consider how their actions impact, not only on others, but on their own safety as well. The home has good, positive links with the local police and community support officers. Young people who go missing are protected and there is no bullying in the home.

Staff know what the home's safeguarding procedures are and receive regular training to help keep their knowledge and skills up to date. Detailed records are kept so that all safeguarding concerns can be closely monitored and the welfare of young people protected. There has been one safeguarding referral since the previous inspection, and while all protocols have been appropriately followed to protect young people, the home failed to make a notification of this referral to Ofsted as required.

Young people live in a home where a culture of positive behaviour is promoted and where staff prefer to use their skills and competencies to encourage young people through reward systems, by listening to them and by diverting their attention to more appropriate behaviour. Young people are supported to take responsibility for their actions, and punitive measures such as sanctions and restraint are only used as a very last resort. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and to understand how their behaviour affects others.

The home's manager ensures that safety checks needed within the home are undertaken to ensure the safety of young people, visitors and members of staff. The manager also ensures that appropriate and regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting are carried out. Young people understand the fire evacuation process and practise fire drills. Full written records

are maintained by the home's manager. However, there is no evidence that when young people failed to respond to a night-time fire drill the implications of their behaviours have been raised with them. Risk assessments are available with regard to the general building and also in relation to the majority of activities young people may participate in. However, there are no risk assessments in place relating to a holiday taken over the summer or in respect of young people who have regular overnight stays at friends' houses. As a result there is no evidence to confirm that the risks young people may present when engaged in such activities are adequately assessed. To date, failure to adequately risk assess such activities has not impacted detrimentally on young people.

Young people benefit from a friendly, stable staff team. There have been three new appointments since the last inspection. The home operates a thorough, detailed and robust recruitment policy. This helps to ensure young people are looked after by suitable people and are protected from potential abuse. Visitors to the home are asked to identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitors' book.

Leadership and management

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

Young people are receiving care from an experienced, caring staff team who are led by an enthusiastic, child-centred manager. The manager aims to continue to support the improvement of the service and ensures staff have access to a training programme that equips them with the skills they require to address young people's identified needs. The staff team work well together and understand the responsibilities and expectations of their roles. They feel well supported by their manager, both on an informal daily basis and through formal supervision. Staff feel positive about working at the home and feel they can talk to the manager about any concerns they may have. Regular staff meetings ensure consistency in addressing young people's identified needs. A social worker commented: 'I can't fault the staff team. They provide a high quality of care, are very committed to the young people they care for and are very good at communicating with professionals and carers'.

Young people are cared for by a qualified staff team, who are committed to ensuring the best outcomes for young people in all aspects of their lives. Regular training, supervision and staff appraisal ensure the workforce are competent and have the right knowledge and skills to do a good job. Staffing levels are good and meet the needs of the young people. There is no use of agency staff as regular bank staff are used to cover any staffing shortfalls. This practice ensures consistency of care for young people.

Two recommendations were made following the last inspection. One has been met and the home now clearly contributes to the development of young people's Pathway Plans. The outstanding recommendation relates to the content of reports following the internal monitoring of the home in line with Regulation 34.

The systems in place to monitor the quality of care, include the Registered Manager's

monthly monitoring checks and his twice yearly Regulation 34 reports. Whilst the Regulation 34 reports provides a overview of the care provided during the previous six months, it fails to evaluate and analyse the data provided in order to update and add to the home's development plan. The need to make this report more evaluative was the recommendation from the last inspection which has not been addressed.

In addition to the Registered Manager's monitoring checks unannounced monitoring visits are undertaken on a monthly basis by the company's representative. A written record of the visit and its findings are provided to the organisation and Ofsted. The findings of each visit are shared with the Registered Manager to ensure that the quality of service is maintained and if necessary, improved for young people. However, both quality monitoring reports have failed to pick up significant shortfalls identified in this report. This means that they are not as robust as they should be.

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.