

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC062288
Inspection date	11/09/2012
Inspector	David Morgan
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	28/02/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is part of a large organisation operated by a private company. The home provides care for up to four young people of either gender who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or a learning disability.

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 last inspection found that the service was making good progress and made no requirements or recommendations. Since then further improvements have been made to the property. Also, improvements have been made to the managerial arrangements. This commitment to ongoing practice development means that the service continues to provide a good service overall. External professionals describe it as a 'warm and caring home' that has 'helpful and committed staff'. Some consider the outcomes for their young people to be 'fantastic'.

There is a high degree of continuity and consistency in the staff team. This helps to ensure good communication between staff members and clear boundaries for young people. Young people enjoy excellent and productive relationships with staff. They feel that 'the staff are the best thing about the home.' The safety and development of young people is given top priority and are clearly effective. Young people feel that staff look after them and keep them safe. Risk taking behaviour reduces over time and the opportunities that young people have increase as a result. In particular, they are able to benefit from the same educational opportunities and successes as their peers.

Leadership and management are effective and opportunities are taken to make improvements, for example, regarding the new meetings of senior staff, and involving young people in a young people's council. This report identifies further areas in which improvements may take place.

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
4 (2001)	ensure the Statement of Purpose includes the following particulars: whether the home accommodates children who are disabled, have special needs or any other special characteristics. (Regulation 4(1) schedule 1(8)(b))	22/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home fully implements a written education policy that promotes and values children's education. This is with regard to promoting social diversity (NMS 8.5)
- apply the emergency escape plan so that all staff and children are familiar with it and have practised so they know what to do in an emergency. This is with regard to fire drills being unannounced (NMS 10.9)
- ensure the home contributes to the development of each child's care plan, including the pathway plan for eligible care leavers. This is with regard to compiling procedures that promote transitions to independence and adult life (NMS 12.2)
- ensure that there is a good quality learning and development programme and that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting, and training keeps staff up to date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the home. This is with regard to providing staff with training about learning disability and the latest Ofsted inspection framework (NMS 18.1)
- ensure each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child. This is with regard to these requirements being measurable, attainable and addressed in a timely way. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy a spacious and well-presented home in which the care is

delivered in an engaging and considered way. As a result young people establish sound relationships with staff and learn about their circumstances. Their lifestyles become healthier, safer, and they benefit from the extensive opportunities that are provided. In tandem with this, they maintain strong links with their families and friends, which is an important contribution to their emotional well-being.

Particular success is achieved in education. Young people are engaged in examination subjects appropriate to their abilities. Training opportunities are obtained that meet their individual needs. This process leads to good social opportunities that help young people to engage positively with the local community. Employment opportunities are also obtained that are appropriate to their ages. These activities help young people feel confident in their skills and their futures.

Young people's independence skills are encouraged and facilitated in a systematic way, for example, in getting part-time work opportunities. Also, those that are preparing for independence are provided with their own budgets and fridges. This means they achieve reasonable levels of skills in a wide range of areas. The challenges of the home's rural location are met and young people learn to use public transport safely. On the other hand, the procedures for assessing and promoting independence are somewhat under-developed, especially for young people with learning disabilities. This means that less progress than possible is made.

Quality of care

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

Staff ensure there is a pleasant and positive atmosphere in the home. Young people are actively engaged in constructive activities and individual programmes that help to ensure they also have sufficient free time. Summer holidays and other activities are arranged by staff according to the interests of individual young people. The views of young people are obtained in a variety of ways and they know that they make a difference. Staff take young people's views seriously and provide written responses to serious comments.

The health of young people receives close and prompt attention. Staff ensure that young people understand how to protect and promote their own good health. For example, young people learn to engage health professionals independently and any acute issues are thoroughly investigated. Staff engage young people in regular discussions about sexual health and the hazards of alcohol and drug misuse. As a result, instances of risk-taking behaviour reduce and young people take greater individual responsibility.

The needs of individual young people are addressed clearly, including any issues arising from their cultural backgrounds or religious needs. Staff obtain up-to-date information on any issues raised by young people. However, although social issues, such as sexuality or ageism, are addressed positively when they arise, there is limited coordinated promotion of social diversity. This means that young people learn less about society than is possible.

Each young person has individual targets clearly set out in their files. These are extensive, up to date and are addressed effectively. However, there is a lack of precision. For example, targets are not always sufficiently specific or measurable and this leads to some delay and insufficient progress. This problem is exacerbated when young people's needs are complex. On the other hand, staff effectively engage young people in one-to-one discussions that are most important to them, including behavioural issues. The property itself is helpful in this regard, providing a variety of rooms for privacy and extensive gardens for relaxation.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff ensure that young people enjoy a high standard of safety and speak regularly to a variety of adults. This allows them to raise concerns promptly. Risks are assessed and reviewed with colleagues in other agencies and appropriate planning occurs. Young people are engaged in this process, which leads to substantial reductions in negative behaviours in most cases. Instances of bullying are minimal. Staff understand and apply safeguarding procedures well with suitable engagement of, for example, the police when young people are missing. Instances of young people being absent without authority or missing reduce significantly over time.

Positive behaviour is rewarded in a variety of ways, from praise to financial benefits. Any such measures are carefully monitored and adapted to achieve success with individual young people. Staff receive regular refresher training and senior staff ensure that their competence is maintained. For example, the manager ensures that skills are rehearsed even when they are not currently required.

Appropriate consideration is given to the different learning abilities of young people. As a result, strategies vary with each young person so that risks are kept to an acceptable level. Risk levels are reviewed regularly. This means, for example, that young people know what the boundaries are and can enjoy their free time safely.

Physical safety is maintained in the home through regular checks and servicing of equipment. Maintenance is of a high standard. Fire safety measures are also thorough. However, fire drills are not unannounced. This means that such exercises train staff less effectively for emergencies.

Leadership and management

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

The manager now oversees two homes. There are effective systems in place to ensure that high standards of leadership are provided. Improvements are made on a regular basis and any concerns are addressed promptly with clear feedback to the person concerned. Senior staff are familiar with the strengths and developmental needs of their teams and take steps to develop skills. Recently, for example,

opportunities have been taken to increase the amount of delegation to staff so they can develop their skills. Because of the substantial capacity amongst his senior staff teams, the manager is reviewing ways of taking this further.

Monitoring by the manager is regular, extensive and takes into account the views of stakeholders. There is clear evidence of monitoring and development planning leading to improvements. However, there remain substantial untapped opportunities to use external sources in developing the service further. For example, senior personnel are insufficiently familiar with the new inspection framework. Also, although there is a carefully monitored training programme, staff are not fully familiar with the nature of learning disability as this is not included in the programme. Staff are able to describe the good progress that young people make whilst in their care.

The Statement of Purpose is routinely reviewed too. However, it does not reflect the fact that the service is registered to take children and young people who have a learning disability. This is important information for placing officers who want to match young people as effectively as possible. However, the policies it describes, such as those to support and develop staff through supervision meetings and appraisals are adhered to well.

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.