

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Dawn Bennett
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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 three 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 staff team work well in ensuring that young people achieve and develop while they are at the home. All young people move forwards in different aspects of their lives, such as health, independence, individual behaviour management or educational attainment. However, staff are not helping young people maximise educational achievements or minimise any underachievement outside of education.

The Registered Manager and staff team place a strong value on building positive relationships with young people. This successfully promotes a culture of openness and trust. Staff are very aware of and alert to any signs that indicate a young person is in any way at risk. They work with young people to help them understand the implications and dangers involved in any risk taking behaviours and make them aware of how to seek help. They proactively work with partnership agencies.

The Registered Manager is actively involved in the day-to-day operation and life of the home. There is a consistent staff team who are well informed and are skilled in meeting the needs of young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure children are helped by staff to achieve their educational goals and work with a child's education provider to maximise each child's achievement and to minimise any underachievement. This specifically relates to supporting children educationally outside of school with activities, homework and revision. (NMS 8.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are making progress in the home because of support and care from the staff team with whom they have established attachments. Young people are able to enjoy the company of positive male and female staff role models. One young person stated: 'My key worker is my favourite. We do little things together, like we go out for coffee or go shopping. They are not just staff here, they are really funny and really caring people. They don't treat me as a child in care.'

Young people develop and build upon appropriate contact with family members. They have friends through education and leisure activities who they socialise with on a regular basis. As a result they have good support networks and make progress in developing emotional resilience.

Young people's physical and emotional health is good. They receive support from health professionals and staff to understand the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices. Young people benefit from having access to therapists and from attending routine health appointments to support their emotional well-being and maintain their general health. Young people enjoy a wide range of exercise, including walking and fishing. They also enjoy a diverse range of healthy, nutritious meals, which reinforces this lifestyle. As a result of the healthy choices and wide range of opportunities young people receive at this home, they are experiencing personal successes, such as weight loss, that builds their self-esteem and sense of self.

Education has a high profile in the home with most young people making good individual progress and having good attendance. For those young people with histories of poor educational engagement, the home works effectively with schools to re-engage them. Outside of education there are some examples of staff using an interest expressed by young people as a learning opportunity. For example, a young person studying GCSE art and was taken on a trip to the Tate Gallery. However, the staff team and routine of the house does not systematically support them to develop their study skills or help them to further their educational attainment through additional educational opportunities outside of school.

Young people are confident, have fun and enjoy themselves. They are active members of the household. They are encouraged to develop as individuals. They also learn the values of communal living. They are involved in planning their bedrooms and the home's decor, their activities, menus and holidays.

Quality of care

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

Staff are motivated to provide an effective and committed service. Their success is demonstrated by the positive comments of young people and their good progress in a range of areas. Young people state: 'Staff have high expectations and they want me to do well.'

The staff team have good knowledge of each young person. Key carers spend a lot of time getting to know and supporting their young person. Stable relationships are built up through regular time spent together discussing topics and going out.

There are established procedures and practice for supporting young people to move into and leave the home. These provide staff with clear guidance and practical options that ensure the most appropriate and sensitive approach can be implemented for each individual young person depending upon their circumstance. Prior to arriving at a home, detailed information is gathered from the placing authority and previous placements. This information is used by staff to establish initial strong boundaries that ensure young people feel and are kept safe. These are regularly reviewed and modified through the constant review of young people's progress in relation to their placement plans.

Staff encourage young people to engage in a range of leisure pursuits that are both enjoyable and challenging. Some young people have benefited from individual opportunities to go on holiday with staff members, while others have enjoyed new activities.

The home environment is very good and the young people and staff are very proud of it. It is bright, welcoming and full of photos of happy memories of individual and group activities. Each young person's bedroom is individual and personal to them representing their interests. Young people are genuinely interested in developing their space and enjoy planning new ideas.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

This staff team are good at assessing and ensuring the need to safeguard young people while promoting their developing maturity and independence skills. Young people sometimes engage in risk-taking behaviour. However, they are actively encouraged to improve their awareness and understanding and how to keep themselves safe. They are encouraged to take a holistic overview of their life history, current lifestyle and the impact risky behaviour may have on their future. In particular, they are supported to develop self-esteem, pay attention to their aspirations and where applicable consider how alcohol, smoking and anti-social behaviour can impact on their health and emotional well-being in the future. Young people express positive views about the support and guidance they receive from staff and confirm they are encouraged to consider and take responsibility for their own behaviour and development.

Staying safe is promoted at all times through discussion and positive role modelling by staff. This is also balanced by good corporate parenting and proportionate risk assessments. For example, staff encourage young people to go out and socialise with friends.

Staff are skilled at managing the environment and individual's behaviours discretely. They use a wide range of tools to support young people to develop their communication, self-esteem, confidence and social skills. Fun activities and holidays are used as rewards and to provide positive opportunities to learn new skills and behaviours. Physical interventions are used but not for all young people and only as a last resort.

Staff have effective relationships with the local police, which are necessary in the event of a young person going missing or a major incident at the home. Such occasions are well-managed. Incidents in which young people put themselves at risk generally decline as their stays progress. One social worker confirmed that young people make 'good progress' in this area. Staff are proactive in supporting young people who are in crisis, for example, by making strenuous efforts to re-locate them if they go missing. Discussions occur afterwards between staff and young people to review the causes of these events, which serve to assure young people that their welfare is important. Social workers confirm that the communication with them by staff is excellent. Any issues are notified promptly to relevant agencies so that the most effective strategies are implemented.

A young person stated: 'The staff work really hard to keep you safe. They have boundaries. The staff here know what I have done. The staff team are fair but strict. They don't treat you as if you are a kid in care they treat you as a member of the family.'

The systems in place to keep young people and adults safe from the risk of fire and other potential hazards are robust. Staff carry out regular fire drills and checks on the fire equipment. Staff carry out a range of recorded risk assessments covering, for example, general health and safety matters.

Leadership and management

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

This home was last inspected in February 2013 and judged to be making good progress. No requirements or recommendations were made.

Since the last inspection the Registered Manager has handed in his notice and is due to leave at the end of January 2014. A new manager has been appointed and is in the process of submitting applications to Ofsted to become registered.

Young people are supported by a stable and committed team of staff who deliver consistent care and support. The commitment from staff is a strength of the

provision. Most staff absences are covered from the existing team who are already known by the young people. This practice ensures continuity of care for young people.

Staff are well supported through regular team meetings and by a Registered Manager who is available and approachable. Staff shift handovers are well planned to ensure all information is exchanged and shared. Staff members receive meaningful supervision which enables them to explore their learning needs and goals. All staff are well qualified and have access to a range of good quality training courses. As a result they are well informed and are skilled in meeting the needs of young people. A member of staff stated: 'I am now part of a very strong staff team. When you are surrounded by very good solid staff it gives you the opportunity to reflect and develop yourself. The management is very good and very strong and they are able to give very good guidance and support.'

On the whole, feedback from social workers about the home's communication with them was very positive. In particular they were positive about the proactive staff team, positive relationships between staff and young people, thorough written progress reports and prompt notifications of any incidents.

The registered person actively and regularly monitors the quality of care provided, including consultation with young people about their welfare. There are a range of quality assurance tools in place within the home that ensure regular monitoring of outcomes for young people and quality of care. The home's development plan is well established and looks at areas within the home that can be further developed to ensure standards and quality continue to be raised.

Records are secure and written to a good standard. Records of daily living are factually accurate and written in a style that is accessible to young people. This promotes transparency and openness.

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.