

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC062651
Inspection date	14 May 2009
Inspector	Dorrit Andrews
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	27 November 2008
--------------------------------	------------------

© Crown copyright 2009

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.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties, aged between 10 and 17 years.

The home is a detached bungalow. The accommodation includes a lounge, an open-plan kitchen, dining area and single bedrooms for young people. The home provides education and a separate school building is located in the grounds. There is a garden for the young people to use at the rear of the house. The home is situated in a village in a rural area, approximately six miles from the nearest town. A village shop is within walking distance of the home.

Four young people are currently living in the home and three of them participated in this inspection.

Summary

This announced integrated full inspection covered all of the National Minimum Standards. The inspection also looked at the action taken in response to recommendations made at the previous inspection.

All of the outcome areas were covered. Being Healthy, Enjoying and Achieving and Organisation have been judged as outstanding. Staying Safe, Positive Contribution and Economic Wellbeing have been judged as good.

Children are provided with a good level of care and the issues raised at the last inspection have been suitably addressed.

Overall, the records maintained are good and support the safeguarding of children's welfare. However, information in relation to menus and absent without leave straddles more than one record rather than a single point of reference. In addition, the record of recent fire drills does not include drills held at night. Recommendations have been raised in relation to these matters.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the Registered Person was asked to provide staff with training in the home's complaint procedure and to ensure that after the use of sanctions or physical restraint, children are encouraged to write or have their views recorded. Both of these recommendations have been met. Staff have received a briefing and been involved in team discussions regarding the handling of children's complaints. Children continue to be encouraged to discuss all incidents involving sanctions and the use of physical intervention and now have their views recorded by staff or in person if they wish. The steps taken by the Registered Person help to ensure that children's welfare is promoted.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children are provided with a balanced and varied diet and are able to help with shopping for food and preparing meals on a regular basis with staff. These tasks are greatly enjoyed by the children. Menus are compiled in consultation with children and they are encouraged to contribute their own ideas. Records of menus are maintained but any changes are recorded separately and not on the original menu sheet. Meal times are set up to be well organised, social occasions to develop children's social skills and to provide them with opportunities to expand their food preferences. Children report that they are able to make drinks, have access to fresh fruit throughout the day and always have a choice of good food.

The health care of children is promoted and they receive health care as necessary. Comprehensive health plans are compiled and detail external health services supporting individual needs. Good records are maintained evidencing that dentist, doctor and optician appointments are made as required and that there is good follow up regarding treatment. Where children are anxious and refuse treatment, staff continue in their efforts to arrange appointments and to allay any fears children may have. Such action is well documented.

Children are provided with age-appropriate guidance, advice and support regarding a range of health and welfare matters. These include, personal hygiene, diet, self-esteem, keeping safe, diet and sexuality. Staff positively encourage the discussion of children's issues and concerns through their daily contact with staff, at children's meetings and during weekly key worker sessions. Children report that they are able to speak to a member of staff of their choosing about any worries they may have.

Great emphasis is placed on children's engagement in regular exercise, interests and outdoor activities. Participation is encouraged and supported by staff through the use of the home's own environment and local amenities. Examples of activities chosen and currently engaged in by children include horse-riding and stable management, karting, swimming, cycling and football.

Written guidance is in place for staff regarding medication and health matters. Staff are also required to complete an induction covering the home's procedures and to attend external training in handling medication. Robust monitoring systems are in place to ensure that correct procedures are followed and that appropriate stock control and auditing are carried out. Medication is securely stored and there are good links with local health services.

All staff receive first aid training and refresher courses are accessed. Written permission is sought from those with parental responsibility regarding the administering of first aid and non-prescribed medication. Records are kept of accidents, treatment and medication; the sample of records examined are in good order.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Written guidance is in place for staff regarding privacy, confidentiality and safe care practices. Staff are sensitive to the individual circumstances of children and maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality. For example, not discussing children in front of others, knocking on bedroom doors and promoting children's private use of the telephone where appropriate.

Children are encouraged to raise any worries or concerns they may have at an early stage and are provided with details of the home's complaint procedure in their welcome pack. Appropriate records are maintained of complaints and children are responded to promptly and sensitively.

Children report that they are taken seriously, can talk to a member of staff of their choosing and are listened to. No complaints have been received by Ofsted in relation to the home.

Policies and procedures are in place to promote and safeguard the welfare of children and all staff receive appropriate child protection training. Opportunities for discussing safeguarding matters are made available in supervision sessions and at team meetings. Staff are aware of their duties and responsibilities and good links are maintained with other professionals concerned with safeguarding children and young people. Keeping safe issues are discussed with children including internet access and stranger danger and children say they feel safe living at the home.

Staff and children do not identify bullying as being a problem at the home and there is clear understanding that this is not tolerated. Individual risk assessments identify potential issues and staff are vigilant in their supervision of children. Open discussions with children are encouraged regarding any problems or tensions within the group.

Children who are absent from the home without permission are protected in accordance with written procedures and responded to positively on their return. Records are maintained of when incidents have occurred. However, some information, such as telephone calls and follow up is recorded separately rather than on one record.

Children are supported to develop socially acceptable behaviour through the encouragement of positive behaviour and the establishment of positive relationships with staff. Behaviour management training is provided to all staff, including de-escalation strategies and the use of physical intervention. Placement Plans and risk assessments identify behaviour management strategies, many of which have been discussed and agreed with the child. Great emphasis is placed on acknowledging children's achievements across a range of areas and award systems are in place to celebrate these.

Records are maintained and robustly monitored regarding sanctions and the use of physical intervention. Children can express their views in relation to such matters and have them recorded. Discussions with children evidence a clear understanding of house rules and expectations of behaviour. They consider the use of sanctions to be fair. Physical intervention is used as a last resort to protect children and others or to prevent serious damage to property.

Risk assessments are carried out in relation to the premises, grounds and activities and a system of review is in place. The fire detection system is tested regularly and fire evacuation drills take place at different times. However, a night time drill has not recently taken place. Fire safety training is provided for staff and a fire risk assessment is in place. The gas boiler and central heating system has recently been replaced and annual PAT testing of electrical equipment is undertaken. These measures contribute to children's safety.

Suitable procedures are in place for the recruitment and checking of staff. Records of visitors are maintained and proof of identification is requested where appropriate. These practices reduce potential risks to the welfare of children living at the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive an excellent level of individualised support in line with their needs and wishes, including support from external professionals. Staff encourage and support children to be

involved in discussions about their daily lives and plans for their future. A key worker system is in operation and children identify strongly with this. However, children can and do approach any member of staff with personal worries. They also have access to an independent advocate.

High importance is placed on key worker sessions. Time is allowed for one-to-one work within the duty rota and staffing levels reflect this. The work undertaken is primarily linked to Placement Plan objectives and is fully documented in consultation with children.

The involvement of all children in the life of the home is promoted and staff nurture positive friendships between children. The individuality of children is acknowledged and they are encouraged to pursue individual activities and interests outside of the home where possible. Staff also share their own interests with children and encourage them to try new things. These currently include riding, swimming, karting, visits to the cinema and meals out.

Staff are very positive in their approach to education and its value for children. Very active practical and emotional support is provided to children to encourage them to attend school. All children are in receipt of education and either attend on-site provision or mainstream school. Staff assist in the classrooms on site and there is very good communication between teaching and care staff regarding children's progress and behaviour. Time is set aside for homework each school day and good access is provided to the computers to support children with this task. Staff also offer assistance and encouragement.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have detailed placement plans which set out how their individual needs are to be met on a day-to-day basis. Sampled plans evidence consultation with children in the compilation and review of their Placement Plans.

Children are supported with their individual contact arrangements and these are appropriately recorded. Any restrictions on contact for the protection of the child are made clear.

Staff encourage children to contribute their ideas and suggestions in relation to the day-to-day running of the home. Examples of changes made as a result of listening to children include the development of a vegetable patch, the creation of a quiet area in the garden and the provision of outside play equipment. Children's views are also sought in relation to menus, activities and holidays. Parents and significant others are also consulted and their opinions sought regarding key decisions affecting children's lives.

Admissions to the home are planned with some placements occasionally being made at short notice. The needs of the child concerned and the likely effect of their admission on the existing group of children are taken into account before an admission decision is made. Children report that staff help them settle in and explain the day-to-day routine of the home. A welcome pack is provided and staff support children by going through key information with them. Memories of a child's stay are collated through achievement records and photographs and children are supported throughout the planning process for moving on.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The daily life of the home provides a range of opportunities for children, appropriate to their age, to develop knowledge and skills within an emotionally supportive environment. For example, helping to shop for food, clothes and toiletries, help with cooking and general tidying of their room. A rota is also in place for household chores which staff and children do together such as clearing the table after meals, washing up and putting away. Tasks within the home are shared between male and female members of staff and emphasis is placed on the nurturing role of both male and female staff; this promotes positive role modelling.

The home provides pleasant, domestic-style accommodation that is furnished and maintained to a good standard. A programme of redecoration is underway following the recent installation of a new heating system. The accommodation is clean and tidy and children's artwork and photographs are positively displayed. Each child has their own bedroom which they are encouraged to personalise with accessories, posters and personal effects. Some also choose to keep small pets such as fish or hamsters.

The large rear garden offers a patio and grassed areas, providing children with opportunities for 'free' play.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home's Statement of Purpose is made available to placing social workers and is regularly reviewed. Separate documentation is provided for children and contains useful information about the day to day routine of the home, expectations regarding behaviour and care provided.

Children are looked after by staff that are trained and competent to meet their needs. The Organisation is highly committed to staff development both through in-house and external training. Staff engage in a comprehensive induction and foundation programme upon joining the team. Topics covered include child protection, first aid, safe handling of medication, health and safety matters, and behaviour management. A high proportion of staff have completed the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) training Level 3 or have commenced their training. Furthermore, the manager has completed NVQ Level 4 and the Registered Manager's Award.

There is a clear management structure within the home and staff understand their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding the welfare of children placed under their care. Staffing levels are high to meet the individual needs of children and to sustain the programme of key worker sessions. Members of staff say they feel very well supported in their work and highlight the team's cohesion and management support as a strength.

Excellent efforts are made to achieve continuity of staffing at the home to provide children with consistency of care. Children are made aware of who is on duty throughout the day, which staff will be sleeping at the home overnight and who will be undertaking night-wake duties. Cover arrangements are in place for when staff or management are absent or on holiday and back up support is always available through an on-call system.

Robust systems are in place to monitor the care of children and the performance of the home. Copies of Regulation 33 visitor reports and Schedule 6 monitoring reports are held on file and made available for inspection. The manager's monthly monitoring reports are linked to other monitoring systems in operation and are used for evaluation purposes to strengthen good practice.

The provision of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff acknowledge the individuality of the children in their care and are fully committed to meeting their individual needs.

Children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. Each child has a case file which is securely stored and contains the information required. Files sampled are well organised and maintained and contain excellent examples of the focussed work undertaken with individual children.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
----------	--------	----------

Recommendations

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

- record any changes to food served on the menu record (NMS 10.4)
- include all actions taken by staff on the recording format for children absent without permission (NMS19.6)
- include the provision of a night time fire drill (NMS 26.8)