

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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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 home is part of a large private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home offers short, long-term and emergency placements. The home has an education facility in the house and the organisation operates a school on a separate site. Both education facilities are registered with the Department for Education.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children and young people are given positive opportunities to develop and progress while staying at this service. Effective frameworks to support children and young people's behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs are consistently implemented by staff. This clear framework for care, the positive relationships with children and young people and excellent liaison with outside agencies provides outstanding outcomes for children and young people.

Children and young people do well and improve in education. There is a strong ethos for children and young people to reach their potential and prepare for life as a young adult in society. Children and young people feel good about their progress. They feel more confident and look forward to opportunities to attend further education and get a job and live independently. Children and young people are provided with care that enables them to develop emotional maturity and resilience in preparation for their transition to adult life.

Promoting equality and diversity is a good feature of this service. Children and young people are consistently rewarded for their own individual achievements and development. They are treated with a high level of respect and clear efforts are made to ensure their individual needs, wishes, feelings and views are heard and included in the running of the service.

Safeguarding is promoted and facilitated with excellent inter-agency liaison. The implementation, close monitoring and working in partnership contribute to significant and improved safeguarding outcomes for all children and young people.

The management and staff team implement procedures and practices that are established and well monitored. The manager leads a dedicated and established staff team and has significantly improved the running of the home since the last inspection. There is a clear focus on quality assurance to maintain existing standards and strive for further improvements in the running of the service and outcomes for children and young people. However, the garden needs improving, as do

opportunities for children and young people to explore issues relating to puberty and adolescence.

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's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan; specifically with regard to young people awareness and education regarding puberty and adolescence (NMS 6.5)
- ensure all areas of the home are well maintained; with particular regard to the rear garden. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people make excellent progress while living at this home. They grow and develop due to a structured and clear behaviour management framework, coupled with strong and meaningful relationships with staff.

Some children and young people expressed an initial difficulty with the very clear and structured routines of the service when they first arrived. However, they all acknowledge how well they have done; with improved attendance at school and college, improved behaviour, not going missing from care, better ways to stay safe, getting on better with families and enjoying positive relationships. Children and young people particularly enjoy and value their positive and meaningful relationships with staff.

All children and young people say they receive effective support with attending and doing well at school. They are very proud of themselves, their achievements and changes in their behaviour. They acknowledge the significance of, and look forward to becoming, a valuable young adult in society. Parent's comments include 'has done brilliant at education; never went before and now just brilliant.' Children and young people are looking forward to obtaining good qualifications and preparing to work and live independently when they leave the home.

Children and young people are safely and proactively enabled to try different opportunities and develop new skills. They enjoy a wide variety of activities including working with horses, going to army cadets, ice skating, going to concerts and a variety of trips. Young people also have opportunities to develop independence skills including opportunities to budget, cook and have more free time. Young people develop in maturity, maintain trusting relationships and take more responsibility for their future as they move into young adulthood.

Children and young people thrive and grow in maturity because they are treated with respect and enabled to channel their individuality, skills and abilities into achievement and different opportunities. They grow in confidence, develop resilience and are more tolerant of others because there is a clear assessment and celebration of each child or young person's needs and individuality. Children and young people are given good opportunities to make sense of their backgrounds, experiences and their behaviours. They are cared for in an environment that identifies, develops and celebrates difference.

Children and young people enjoy good and improved health. They are encouraged to understand and be proactive about their own medical and health needs. Children and young people are enabled to develop an awareness of how emotional and mental wellbeing is integral to their health and they develop a positive sense of well-being and positive self-esteem. Children and young people also understand how lifestyle choices can impact on their health. They lead healthier lifestyles including balanced eating, exercise, the impact of medication on behaviour, cutting down on smoking, improving personal hygiene, understanding sexual health and the impact of drug use.

Children and young people can express their views, feelings and wishes because they are given time to talk to their key workers and staff, teachers and have other support networks. They are involved in their placements, their care planning and the running of the home. There are weekly house meetings, regular key worker sessions and children and young people contribute to a monthly summary of their progress.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people are looked after by a competent and well trained staff team. There are effective frameworks for care, education support and behaviour management. Children and young people are cared for and develop in confidence in a stable and nurturing environment. They thrive because staff implement clear expectations and boundaries, coupled with developing and maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships with children and young people.

Care and education planning, risk management procedures and behaviour management plans are comprehensive. Children and young people receive consistent care because their care planning is practically detailed and gives clarity to how staff are to support them. Written plans reflect the individuality and diversity of each young person. There is good assessment and review of plans and the participation of children and young people are part of this process. Staff provide good support to young people who are embarking on their transition to young adulthood and independent living.

Children and young people are supported by staff who have a clear commitment to promoting diversity and equality. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the

individual, social, economic, cultural and religious backgrounds of children and young people. Staff provide an environment where children and young people can express themselves and also explore and develop their awareness of diversity, tolerance and equality.

Children and young people's education is effectively supported with individual plans and strategies both in mainstream and in-house schools. There is an education room at the home and another school nearby that is owned by the provider. There are also close working relationships with the local authority education service, local schools and colleges. Children and young people learn and develop because education and care staff are committed to explore and provide creative and individual programmes for those children and young people who are less engaged with education. There are good routines in the house and expectations regarding homework. Staffing levels are arranged in order to promote education and opportunities for children and young people to enjoy a variety of activities and leisure opportunities.

Children and young people are supported by detailed health and medical assessments and healthcare plans. The service maintains close liaison with the local medical centre and other health support agencies in order to provide informed and appropriate care. The procedures for the safe and effective administration of medication are well managed by staff. Healthy eating is promoted and menus are balanced, taking into account children and young people's choices and a multi-cultural perspective.

Children and young people are provided with a variety of activities that encourage physical exercise, including visiting the local gym. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and awareness of health issues relating to children and young people's lifestyle choices. There are systems, such as key working sessions and sessions in education, to enable children and young people to understand their medical and health needs, but there is a lack of opportunity for younger children to explore and develop an awareness of puberty and adolescence.

Participation and consultation with children and young people is part of the care framework and running of the home. The weekly children and young people's meetings and regular key working contact are integral to including children and young people's views and wishes in the running of the home and their placement plans. The positive relationships and effective day to day organisation of the home demonstrate that all staff are consistently concerned with the welfare, education and progress of children and young people.

Information about how to complain is displayed in the house and contained in the children and young people's guide. Children and young people can also discuss their concerns in the weekly house meetings. Information about the external agencies children and young people can contact is also on display.

The house is generally well maintained and provides children and young people with a good environment to meet their needs. The standard of décor inside the house is good and staff make clear efforts to make the house comfortable and homely.

Children and young people's bedrooms are personalised and are due to be re-decorated with colours of their choice. There are good levels of privacy for children and young people; they have their own bedroom key and privacy locks for bathrooms. The rear garden is poorly presented, with few play opportunities for young people and there is damaged garden furniture.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people say they feel safe, secure and see significant improvements in their behaviour. They feel they have good relationships with staff and have no concerns about bullying. Children and young people are confident that staff will manage their concerns and they are encouraged to treat each other with respect. Young people's comments included 'we all look out for each other.'

Children and young people are cared for in a safe and secure environment. Levels of safety are effective because the robust and regularly reviewed policies and procedures are implemented by well trained and competent staff. Safeguarding strategies are clear and structured. There are significant improvements in children's and young people's behaviour, risk taking activities and going missing from care.

Attention to the supervision of children and young people is detailed and consistent. Staffing levels are allocated to ensure that all children and young people are supervised, kept safe and receive appropriate support. Risk assessments are in place and there are subsequent restrictions on children and young people having free time. Staff are fully aware of the going missing from the home and there are specific protocols included in each young person's placement care plan. Safeguarding regimes such as children and young people having restricted access to mobile phones, having to ask to use the home's phone and high levels of supervision both inside and outside the house are appropriate to their significant vulnerability. These arrangements are key to the children's and young people's placements and make significant and immediate improvements to their safety. These routines are open and transparent in the written information provided to children, young people, families and social workers prior to being placed at the home.

A key strength is that very vulnerable children and young people who previously placed themselves at significant risk, begin to understand the severity of previous experiences. They engage with ways to keep themselves safe and then begin to take responsibility for promoting their own safety and are motivated to change their behaviours.

Strategies to manage behaviours and safeguard children and young people focus on safety but also ensure they all have opportunities to reach their potential and achieve. Children and young people are actively discouraged from accessing risk taking activities and associations. They begin to make and then enjoy positive choices and lead safer lifestyles. Children and young people are enthusiastic about

the praise and rewards they receive for good behaviour and staff are enthusiastic about the achievements and progress of the children and young people.

Records and comments from children and young people show the sanctions used when things do not go so well for them are fair. Staff are trained in behaviour management, including physical intervention. Some serious incidents have required children and young people to be physically restrained. Staff and young people are clear that these actions are only taken as a last resort. Children and young people say staff support and talk to them after such incidents and this helps them understand and improve their behaviour. Staff maintain good and accountable records.

Children and young people are protected by an effective and robust recruitment process that includes a comprehensive check on all staff applying to work at this setting. Personnel records are maintained to a good standard. Visitors are checked, vetted and monitored.

All staff are aware of their own roles and responsibilities and other agencies involved in keeping children and young people safe. They receive training on safeguarding children and protocols for children and young people going missing from care. The manager and staff understand the need for effective links with the local safeguarding team and demonstrate excellent working partnerships with agencies, including the police, to keep children and young people safe.

Children and young people live in a safe environment. Health and safety is well managed. Safety and servicing checks are carried out as required. Children and young people know what to do in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

This service has addressed all the statutory requirements and recommendations from the last inspection and has continued to improve the quality of care to children and young people.

This home does very well in providing children and young people with a stable, safe and nurturing environment where there are good levels of care and support. There are clear policies and procedures, effective organisation of staff and effective implementation of behaviour and safeguarding strategies.

The staff team for this service is now established with good levels of experience and competency. Staffing levels are effective and are managed in keeping with the home's Statement of Purpose. Staff receive appropriate training including induction training which covers all mandatory areas such as safeguarding, behaviour management and first aid. Consistent and regular supervision provides staff with good opportunities to formally discuss their role, professional development and the impact on working with young people with challenging needs. Professional

development is supported by a comprehensive training programme.

The manager shows strong leadership qualities and ensures staff maintain clear boundaries coupled with respectful and meaningful relationships with children and young people. Staff spoken with gave positive comments about the management team, their own professional support and positive staff team communication processes. Staff are enthusiastic and work closely as a team. Daily briefings and regular staff meetings contribute to the effective and consistent running of the service.

Internal and external monitoring of the service identifies good practice, shortfalls and further areas for development. The manager regularly reviews care plans, risk assessments and daily recording. The service has a development plan to ensure all areas of the home develop and improve and facilitating the participation and consultation of children and young people. The clear commitment to improvement is demonstrated by the recent surveying of young people, parents and social workers regarding the running of the home and care provided. There is a clear commitment, energy and motivation to provide a care framework that enables young people to overcome significant obstacles and difficulties so they can achieve their full potential.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.