

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	09/07/2012
Inspector	Philip Cass
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	22/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately run service is part of a residential school. It provides care and accommodation for up to 38 young people with autism, Asperger's syndrome, or communication difficulties.

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 home provides a good standard of care to young people. Because health care services are good, young people enjoy very positive health outcomes. Young people make great strides towards developing good social skills. They also improve in self-confidence and are very positive about the future. Young people make exceptional progress in terms of educational attendance and achievement. They also enjoy positive and constructive relationships with the caring and dedicated staff. Management systems are effective and focus on continual improvement.

The home is required to avoid delays in the creation of care plans when young people are admitted to the home. It is also recommended that the home improves information provided to young people in the children's guide.

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
12 (2001)	prepare, before providing accommodation in a children's home for a child who is not looked after by a local authority, or as	13/08/2012

	soon as possible thereafter, a placement plan for the child. (Regulation 12 (1B))	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that the children's guide includes information on how children can find out about their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, and how to secure access to an independent advocate. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people develop significantly increased confidence and self-esteem as a result of their time at the home. High levels of participation in decision making forums means that young people gain improved social skills. As young people grow in confidence they make ambitious plans for the future.

Young people, who often experience great anxiety when faced with the prospect of change, are very well supported to move on from the home. Young people rarely move directly into independent living. Instead, staff gently encourage young people to have a staged transition into the nearby sixth-form centre. Individual transition arrangements are highly flexible and allow young people to come to terms with change at their own pace. Because young people feel that they are in control of the decision making processes, they look forward with confidence to the future.

Current residents return to the care of their families during school holidays. The home is very good at ensuring that the transition to and from family care is smooth and causes as little anxiety to young people as possible. Where young people struggle with changes to their routines, the home makes considerable efforts to support young people to cope. These efforts include making home visits and facilitating transport. Because the home communicates well with families and adheres to contact arrangements it is good at supporting young people to maintain links in their local community.

Health arrangements are very good. Health plans are detailed and medication administration systems are effective. In addition, young people have access to specialist health and therapeutic services. As a result young people make good progress in overcoming the barriers to success related to communication difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders.

Young people do very well at school. High levels of support and established morning routines mean that unauthorised absence is very low. Attendance levels often improve significantly as a result of moving to the home. Close links between care and

education staff mean that anxieties, concerns and problems can be quickly overcome. Good attendance levels contribute to the high levels of achievement at the school. Educational targets are set and regularly reviewed in light of progress. Because young people achieve these targets they thrive in the school environment.

Quality of care

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

The involvement of education and therapy staff in care planning means that care plans are comprehensive. Care needs are identified through a process of initial assessment. Keyworkers are pro-active in ensuring that identified needs are addressed in day-to-day arrangements. Needs relating to young people's cultural background and personal identity are identified well in care planning, and addressed confidently by all staff. When some young people are admitted there can be an unnecessary delay in creating their care plan. This means that staff may not be provided with full guidance and advice to meet the needs of young people when they initially move to the home.

Staff communicate well with young people and behaviour management strategies are effective. Staff are skilled at reinforcing positive behaviour through praise and reward. This means that sanctions are rarely used. Although young people sometimes disagree with decisions taken by staff, they appreciate that staff do their best to explain why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes at all times. One young person remarked that, 'staff are brilliant'. Young people are confident to express their wishes and feelings to staff and management. Because young people know that staff will take their views seriously, they learn to communicate effectively and maturely.

Young people take part in a wide range of activities that promote good health, social skills and confidence. As well as computer suites, play areas and sports facilities on site, young people have access to a swimming pool and climbing wall at the nearby sixth-form centre. Staff go to great lengths to support young people to engage in purposeful and meaningful activity. They negotiate effectively with young people to ensure a good balance between healthy activity and other pastimes.

The home is well decorated and well furnished. Young people are encouraged to participate in the selection of furniture and have a strong input into the decoration of communal areas. Because young people are actively involved in decision making processes about the home, the design and layout of communal areas reflects their tastes and wishes. Following consultation with young people a communal area is currently being developed into a cinema and games room. This further extends the leisure facilities available to young people and promotes the young people's sense of well-being.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe and secure in the home. They are confident to talk to staff if they have any worries or anxieties. Although there are bullying incidents, young people are confident that staff will take swift action to ensure that the impact of bullying is minimised. Close supervision further ensures that bullying is quickly identified and addressed. The safety of young people is further promoted because there are no incidents of young people going missing from the home.

Safeguarding practice is strong and effective. Clear safeguarding procedures are understood by all staff, including new starters. This ensures that the risk of young people being subjected to abuse is reduced. Staff are trained to be able to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and take appropriate action in response to these concerns. Investigations into allegations or suspicion of harm are handled fairly, quickly and consistently, in a way that provides effective protection for young people.

Recruitment practice is central to the way the home minimises the risk of abuse taking place. Staff are carefully vetted and application processes clearly deter unsuitable adults from applying for positions of trust at the home. The risk of harm to young people is also reduced by careful monitoring of visitors and contractors working at the home.

Health and safety requirements are a high priority for the home. Effective accident and near miss reporting mean that hazards are identified and removed promptly. Young people have detailed individual risk assessments. Because they are quickly updated when risk levels change, the home has a dynamic response to risk taking behaviour. Fire risk assessments are robust and adequately responded to. Routine checks on fire safety systems and regular fire evacuation drills mean that the risk of injury as a result of fire is minimised. Periodic testing of electrical systems further reduce the risk of fire. A recent five-star rating from environmental health inspectors demonstrates that food hygiene systems are well managed by the home's catering team.

Leadership and management

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

Staff feel well supported, and are well supported, by the enthusiastic and dedicated management team. All staff receive regular supervision that they find useful. Well organised on-call systems ensure that managers are available, and provide support, at times of crisis. Staff have the opportunity to contribute to care planning processes and work with the education and therapy teams as part of the key team system. Staff meetings are used effectively as a forum for staff to develop strategies to meet young people's evolving care needs.

Robust quality assurance processes mean that standards of care are carefully monitored. Any shortfalls are identified and promptly addressed by the management team. Quality assurance processes also effectively promote improvement. The home's development plan identifies a range of areas for improvement. It has led to

improvements in consultation systems, medication processes, training, recruitment, and leisure facilities in the home.

Young people, families, and placing authorities understand how to make a complaint. Because managers respond quickly and effectively to complaints they are resolved adequately. The home has a positive approach to complaints because they view the complaints process as an opportunity to learn lessons and improve service. Young people confirm that staff listen to their views and respond positively to suggestions for improvement.

Staff and managers benefit from a comprehensive programme of training. New staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards before starting the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma. As a result, staff are suitably qualified to undertake their role. In addition, staff receive training in a range of areas such as safeguarding, first aid, food hygiene and the administration of medication. This ensures that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide the services set out in the home's Statement of Purpose.

The home's aims and objectives are set out clearly in the Statement of Purpose. This means that families and placing authorities are provided with accurate information about the home. The children's guide is informative and helps young people understand the services available to them and the rules of the home. However, it does not contain some information which young people may find useful in relation to children's rights, advocacy and Independent Reviewing Officers.

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.