

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joanne Vyas
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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.

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

This is a school that accommodates young people for more than 295 days a year and therefore is registered as a children's home. The home is part of a larger organisation. It accommodates up to 88 young people with autism, asperger's syndrome, or who have communication difficulties between the ages of eight and 18 years. The registration covers three separate sites, two of which are also schools.

Summary

This is a good service. Young people's welfare is enhanced by the positive relationships that exist between staff and young people. There is a strong focus on meeting the needs of each individual young person, including supporting and encouraging them to value their cultural and religious backgrounds. The promotion of equality and diversity is good throughout the standards inspected. Care staff work within a multi-disciplinary team in order to meet the full range of young people's needs. A young person said what the home does best is, 'helping at school and trips, looking after me, making sure I go to school on time and cooking good meals.'

The Registered Manager has a strong commitment and focus on improvement. However, minor improvements can be made: to care plans to ensure they fully address the needs of each young person; to record all meals as served to ensure all young people are eating a healthy and balanced diet; to ensure the central log book for recording physical intervention is fully completed; to ensure care staff contribute effectively to all reviews of care for young people; to ensure all staff are provided with one to one support by their line manager as required in National Minimum Standard 28.2; to ensure care staff complete a daily log of events; and that the Registered Manager completes the Regulation 34 monitoring.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The Registered Manager has complied with most of the recommendations that were made at the previous inspection. Sanctions are fully recorded in a central log. The home has managed to achieve a relative period of stability within the staff team. They also have a good bank system in place to cover staff absence, and some staff have been on a team building day that staff reported as being worth while and should be repeated for all staff. However, the central record for recording physical intervention is not always fully completed and most staff do not receive one to one support from their line manager as required in the standards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. A young person said, 'We have fruit and vegetables on the house unit and a choice of healthy meals.' Staff know what the young people like and do not like to eat. They also actively encourage young people to try new foods. Young people have mixed views about the quality of food that is available but most agreed that the food has improved since the school took over the catering contract. They also said that they would like to have salt when chips are on the menu. This is something the management team are considering ensuring it does not impact on healthy eating.

Cultural preferences are catered for and themed meals are part of the menu, for example, food from a particular country will be offered and the dining room decorated accordingly. Young people are encouraged to shop for and prepare meals, which young people said they particularly enjoy. Currently, meals are not recorded in all areas, as served, to ensure all young people are eating healthy and nutritious meals.

Staff are focussed and committed to ensuring a good quality provision for health care for young people living at this home. Staff are proactive and responsive to the emotional and physical health care needs of the young people, although these are not fully discussed within the young person's healthcare plan. All young people are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians. The care of young people is planned within a multi-disciplinary forum, including a qualified nurse, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists, ensuring young people receive a holistic healthcare package. A young person said, 'The staff look after me and phone my mum to tell her I'm poorly or they might take me to the doctors.'

The safe handling of medication is well-managed in this home. The home mostly use prescribed medication. Staff receive training in the safe handling of medication and have to undergo a competency assessment before they can administer medication. Two staff always prepare and administer medication. Medication is accurately recorded, received and disposed of appropriately. The medication cupboards are secure. All accidents are recorded and first aid is given as appropriate. All staff are trained in first aid and renew their training as required.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The safety and rights of both staff and young people are protected. Staff are concerned about keeping young people safe and are competent in their knowledge of protecting them. All staff, including domestic, catering and maintenance staff, receive training on safeguarding young people as part of their induction, and then at regular intervals. Most young people say they feel safe living at the home, but some young people have a perception of feeling unsafe. Staff are working with the young people to explore these feelings.

Staff have a good knowledge of the bullying policy. Young people agreed that staff sort out situations where bullying has occurred. They also said that staff discuss bullying and accepting differences in people as part of their house meetings and key care sessions. Incidents of young people going missing from the home are well managed. Young people are also provided with an identification card should they become lost, which gives the contact details for the school. Good staffing levels, staff competence and comprehensive risk assessments ensure young people are kept safe.

Any concerns raised by parents or young people are appropriately and swiftly resolved. Young people are fully aware of the complaints procedure and grumbles are addressed through student councils, house meetings and key care sessions. Young people said there are staff they can talk to if they are unhappy.

The privacy of young people is respected by staff. The living arrangements provide space where they can relax and easily find privacy away from others if they wish. Staff ensure the privacy and dignity of the young people, such as by knocking on bedroom doors and waiting for a response, before entering. All records are kept confidentially. Young people's issues are not discussed openly.

Staff view young people positively and young people are relaxed around staff. Staff are given training, which includes de-escalation as well as physical intervention. There is a minimal amount of physical intervention carried out in this home. Staff said that if behaviour escalates, they use techniques to distract and defuse situations and divert attention away, using physical intervention as a last resort. Physical intervention is comprehensively recorded on incident records but not always within the central log. For example, it is not always in a numbered book or includes the time of the incident, the duration of the restraint and the reason for the restraint. This makes monitoring difficult to ensure physical intervention is effective and carried out properly and for the right reasons. The behaviour management plans are comprehensive. Sanctions are applied fairly and appropriately. Young people believe the rules are fair and understand what the consequences are if the rules are broken. Staff effectively manage challenging behaviour in a calm and professional manner.

Young people are protected by robust recruitment procedures and monitoring of visitors. Safety checks are completed and staff only commence employment when they have a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure and three satisfactory references. All visitors sign into the building and must show identification.

The home has comprehensive risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds including fire and young people's behaviour and activities. These assessments have taken into account the daily activities in and outside the home. All staff are given fire safety training and fire drills are carried out regularly. Fire safety equipment is checked as appropriate and a detailed record kept. Young people are protected by robust health and safety procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for young people. It is an intrinsic part of life at the home. Care, therapy and teaching staff work closely together to ensure consistency of practice and to enhance the quality of care provided. A teacher said, 'Care and education support each other well.'

Individual support is not comprehensively detailed in each young person's care plan, but staff have an in-depth knowledge of the young people in their care. Observations and discussions with staff demonstrate that they ensure each young person's individual needs are fully addressed. All staff and some young people are provided with training in equality and diversity. A social worker said, 'The service has taken into account individuality and the needs of the young people to provide appropriate support.' Young people are encouraged to value their own culture, language and religion. However, practical individual support is not fully reflected in the planning documentation that is in place. This includes identifying any religious and cultural needs a young person may have and the implications this may have for their care.

Staff provide a variety of activities for young people including trips out to local places of interest, theme parks and a variety of clubs including cadets. They also have various activities within the home such as computers, games, books, arts and crafts. Outdoor play areas provide a safe space for young people to run around, as well as good quality play equipment. All activities are well planned, risk assessed and carried out to ensure the young people are able to enjoy the activity safely. Young people are able to pursue their particular interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported by competent staff to engage in leisure and educational activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The statement of purpose clearly sets out the home's admission policy. Young people are supported during the admission process and when leaving the home. Staff carefully consider group dynamics when admitting a new young person.

Staff provide a high standard of care to young people and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. A comprehensive assessment of need and risk assessments are in place for each young person. A multi-disciplinary approach is taken towards care planning, in particular behaviour management and healthcare planning. However, care plans are not comprehensive as they do not fully address cultural, religious, language and racial needs, as well as emotional and physical health care needs. Young people are encouraged to complete a About Me book, which gives brief information about them. Although there is lots of information within the care plans, this can be repetitive and not presented in a way that is easily accessible.

Meetings occur every term for each young person between key care workers, teaching and therapy staff to inform care planning reviews. Staff said this works well as it ensures an holistic approach. Parents are consulted about the care plans and subsequent reviews. Any changes to the care plans are effectively communicated to the team. A record is made each day for each young person documenting their mood, activities, behaviour and other relevant information.

Statutory reviews take place within the required timescale. Most young people are placed by an education authority, therefore, statutory looked after children reviews do not occur. Key care staff do not currently write a report for statutory reviews other than the annual review, which has a focus on education rather than welfare. Key care reports would demonstrate that they contribute effectively to all reviews on the progress of each young person and any difficulties within the placement. Young people are supported to attend their reviews.

Staff encourage and support young people in maintaining contact with parents and everyone else who is significant to them. Staff facilitate contact with parents by phone, email or whatever means a parent prefers. A parent said that communication has improved significantly so far this term. The home sends out a newsletter every term and the organisation also sends out one four times a year to ensure parents are kept informed of changes and what's going on around the organisation. Parents also have a parents' consultation group who they can contact with any concerns.

Young people are given the opportunity to make choices and decisions. They recognise that staff are supportive in helping and guiding them towards making positive decisions for themselves. Young people are relaxed in the company of staff and are quick to approach them with any issues they may have.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff encourage young people to carry out a variety of tasks independently or with support. These range from personal hygiene to cooking, shopping and cleaning. Each young person's placement plan clearly identifies independence work young people are encouraged to carry

out. Staff provide a consistent and committed approach to enabling young people's successful transition into adulthood.

Young people live in a homely environment with good quality furnishings. There is a large amount of communal space. The young people have good facilities. Their bedrooms are personalised to ensure they meet their individual needs and communal areas are personalised with photographs of young people and their work that has been completed in school. Young people said their beds are uncomfortable. The Registered Manager said that she is currently applying for funding to replace all the mattresses with memory foam to ensure the young people have comfortable beds. The home is clean, tidy and well-maintained.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a clear, up-to-date statement of purpose that reflects the practice and functions of the home. Parents are provided with a comprehensive admissions pack and staff provide each young person with a guide to the home when they first arrive. This ensures that young people understand the ethos of the home, the rules and the type of activities they can expect to be involved in.

Staff training is supported by the organisation. An annual programme covers mandatory training that all staff are expected to undertake. All staff are expected to complete a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Health and Social Care (Children's Pathway) after completing their comprehensive induction programme.

There are good staffing levels to meet the needs of young people. A record of staff shifts is maintained on the home's rota and this shows there is a balance of gender and cultural backgrounds of staff wherever this is possible. Staff handover meetings ensure that each shift is appropriately planned and issues arising from earlier are competently communicated.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Evidence supports a commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Young people receive an individual service in the home which is designed to meet their personal needs. All staff have an in-depth knowledge of the young people they are working with to ensure their needs are consistently met.

It is clear that the Registered Manager ensures effective monitoring of the home. However, this is not evidenced by regular signing of records or a report in respect of any review carried out by them with regards to improving the quality of care provided. A senior member of the organisation visits the home on a monthly basis and reports on the conduct of the home.

Young people's records are kept in good order and reflect most of the information necessary for staff to care and support them throughout the placement.

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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
32	maintain in the children's home the records specified in schedule 4 and ensure they are kept up to date. This specifically refers to a daily log of events (Regulation 29).	31 October 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a record of meals as served (NMS 10.4)
- ensure the physical and emotional health needs of each child are identified and there is a clear, written health plan in place for all identified needs (NMS 12.1)
- ensure a record of the use of restraint is kept in a separate dedicated bound and numbered book and includes all required information, this refers to the book being numbered and time of restraint always being recorded as well as the reason the restraint took place (NMS 22.9)
- ensure the care plan for each child fully addresses their cultural, religious, language and racial needs and how they will be met (NMS 2.1)
- ensure the home's staff, including where appropriate the child's key worker, contribute effectively to all reviews on the progress and any difficulties of the child in the placement (NMS 3.5)
- ensure that all staff receive one to one supervision from a senior member of staff each month and new staff receive one to one supervision at least fortnightly during the first six months of their employment (NMS 28.2)
- ensure there are systems in place to monitor the performance of the home against its statement of purpose as set out in Schedule 6 and that the registered person monitors and signs the home's records at least once a month, and produces a report of their review to identify any patterns or issues requiring action (NMS 33.1)