

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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 is a registered children's home as it accommodates young people for more than 295 days a year. The school is part of a larger organisation. It accommodates up to 56 young people with autism, Asperger's syndrome, or communication difficulties, between the ages of eight and 18 years. Young people are accommodated in three residential houses of which only one currently provides care for 52 weeks a year. The others only provide residential care for 38 weeks a year.

There are currently 13 young people living on these houses of which nine took part in the inspection process.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this full unannounced inspection all key standards were inspected.

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. Staff work closely with a wide range of professionals in order to meet the full range of young people's needs. The senior management team have a strong commitment and focus on improvement. A parent said: 'I am very pleased with the work you have done and working towards with my son and it is just amazing to see how far he has come.' No actions or recommendations have been made at this inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The manager has made substantial progress towards meeting the actions and recommendations made at the previous inspection. The manager was asked to ensure placement plans are consistent with the placing authority plans. All plans have been reviewed to ensure consistency. The manager was asked to ensure all complaints were responded to within 28 days, to keep young people informed of progress and ensure records are comprehensive. The manager responds to all complaints quickly, ensures young people are appropriately kept informed of progress and records are comprehensive. Complaints are seen as positive and enable the service to improve. The manager was asked to ensure all young people who are absent without authority are reported to the placing authority. Since the last inspection, there has been one incident of a young person going missing. This was

managed well and the young person was not missing for long. However, there are a number of occasions when young people walk off the site without permission. These young people are followed by staff who know where they are at all times. These incidents are properly recorded and reported to the relevant agencies. The manager was asked to ensure that parents are informed of any incident involving their child as soon as possible. There are good systems in place to ensure this now occurs. The manager was asked to ensure risk assessments provide good information for staff. All risk assessments have now been reviewed and a new format is in place which provides better information to staff. Training has also been provided for staff about reducing risks to ensure the safety of young people.

The manager was asked to ensure all staff receive regular supervision where records are signed by the staff concerned. Staff said they feel well supported and receive regular supervision. Supervision is planned a month in advance and a copy of the dates is sent to the manager to enable her to have good oversight. The manager was asked to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of staff working in the home. The manager has produced a minimum staffing sheet for each house to ensure all house managers know what their staffing levels are. Rotas show there are appropriate staffing levels in each house. The manager was asked to ensure the register for each child includes the statutory provision they are accommodated under. The register now clearly states this. The manager was asked to ensure Regulation 33 and 34 reports are completed and actions addressed. All house managers have a copy of the reports and house manager's meetings go through the actions. The manager was asked to submit her application as Registered Manager. She has now submitted her application and is waiting on an interview.

The manager was also asked to carry out a number of good practice recommendations. A number of these related to the actions above and have already been addressed. Recommendations that have not already been covered above are to ensure records of restraint are comprehensive and that behaviour management is viewed in a progressive manner to ensure young people learn socially acceptable behaviour. The manager has introduced new books with regard to recording physical intervention. These are comprehensive. Incidents are reviewed within a safeguarding forum to ensure appropriate action is taken.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff are focused and committed to ensuring a good quality provision for health care for young people living at this school. Staff are proactive and responsive to the emotional and health care needs of the young people. All young people are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians. However, this may be in their home town as most young people who live on-site only reside during term-time. A variety of healthcare professionals including an educational psychologist, nurses, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists are employed by the school to ensure young people receive an holistic healthcare package. Each young person has a satisfactory health plan which is up-to-date and, although is based on a

medical model, provides staff with good information about each young person.

The safe handling of medication is well managed in each of the houses. Staff receive training in the safe handling of medication and only those staff who have completed the training can administer medication. Medication is given to young people in private and 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.

Staff know what the young people like and do not like to eat. Menus are planned in consultation with young people as well as a nutritionalist to ensure they are healthy and nutritious. Cultural preferences and specialist diets are catered for. Young people are encouraged to shop for and prepare meals. They are also provided with opportunities to complete work experience in the main site kitchen. The school have been awarded the Healthy Schools Award and five stars for food safety from the local authority. Care staff have completed the food handling course. Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The safety of young people is a priority at this school. Young people say they feel safe living at the school. The senior management team have implemented new safeguarding systems which have enhanced the safeguarding of young people at this school and ensures it remains a priority. Staff are committed to keeping young people safe and are competent in their knowledge of protecting them. A member of staff said, 'We put every effort into ensuring students are safe and well.' Staff receive training on safeguarding young people as part of their induction and then at regular intervals. They have a good knowledge of the bullying policy, ensuring that a zero tolerance policy is in place and opportunities for bullying to occur are reduced. Bullying behaviour is discussed regularly. Young people rarely go missing from this school. Staff know the procedures to follow if young people do go missing. Good staffing levels, staff competence and good risk assessments ensure young people are kept safe.

Concerns raised by parents and young people are swiftly acted upon and resolved where possible. Young people and parents are kept informed of the progress being made with regards to their complaints. Recently the school have employed an independent social worker to advocate on behalf of young people and parents to ensure they are heard fairly. Young people know how to make a complaint and are happy to do so. Senior managers look at complaints positively, as a means of further improving the service they provide. Staff are given training on empowerment which encourages them to professionally challenge any staff member at the school including those in management.

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; for example, they knock on bedroom doors and wait for a response before entering; young people can discuss matters with staff in private and all medication is given in private. 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 focuses on de-escalation techniques but includes physical intervention. Physical intervention is used as a 'very last resort' as one member of staff put it. Physical intervention is a rare occurrence on the houses. The behaviour management plans are comprehensive and compiled in a multi-disciplinary forum. Consequences are applied fairly and appropriately. Young people know what the rules are and what happens if they break the rules. Physical intervention and consequences are well documented and monitored for patterns and trends. All safeguarding incidents are discussed at management level to ensure a consistent and constructive response to inappropriate behaviour. Staff effectively manage challenging behaviour in a calm and professional manner ensuring the safety of young people.

Young people are protected by good vetting procedures and monitoring of visitors. Safety checks are completed and staff only commence employment when they have a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau disclosure and at least two satisfactory references. All visitors sign into the main building and must show identification. Visitors also have to sign into each of the houses.

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. Care and teaching staff work closely together to ensure consistency of practice and to enhance the quality of care provided. Religious and cultural preferences are well supported.

Individual support is detailed in each young person's care plan. Observations and discussions with staff demonstrate that staff ensure each young person's individual needs are fully addressed. Young people are encouraged to value their own culture, language and religion by a diverse staff team. The practical individual support is reflected in the variety of planning documentation that is in place. This includes identifying any religious and cultural needs a young person may have. The staff know the young people well and are knowledgeable about their individual needs and the implications this has for their care. A parent said, 'Thank you to everyone who

has supported my son on the house. We really appreciate all the help and support that he receives.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff provide a good standard of care for young people and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. A satisfactory care plan is in place for each young person supported by plans by the therapy department. A keycare team for each young person meets on a half-termly basis to review the care provided. Keycare teams consist of care, education and therapy staff. Parents are also invited. Parents and social workers are consulted about the care plans and subsequent reviews. Statutory reviews take place within the required timescale and include the views of the young person.

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

Staff encourage and support young people in maintaining contact with parents and everyone else who is significant to them. Young people who have long distances to travel to home said they speak to parents and grandparents on a daily basis and visit home regularly.

Young people are given the opportunity to make choices and decisions on a daily basis. 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 include personal hygiene, cooking, shopping, budgeting and cleaning. Each young person's care 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. 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. 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 parental guide and a new young person's guide is about to be launched after consultation with young people about its content & look. The commitment to promoting equality and diversity is explicit throughout this information.

Staff training is supported by the organisation. An annual programme covers mandatory training which all staff are expected to undertake. New staff complete a comprehensive induction which follows the Children's Development and Workforce Council standards. Staff complete a National Vocational Qualification level 3 in the Care of Children and Young People or Health and Social Care after they have completed their probation period.

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 hand-over meetings ensure that each shift is appropriately planned and issues arising from earlier are competently communicated. Staff said they feel well supported by each other and the management team at all levels.

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

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 in-depth knowledge of the young people they are working with to ensure their needs are consistently addressed.

The manager is currently undergoing the registration process with Ofsted. It is clear, however, that the senior management team ensures effective monitoring of the school. Reports from the manager and the Regulation 33 visitor are discussed at house managers' meetings to ensure consistent practice and that recommended actions have been completed. Daily and weekly safeguarding meetings ensure safeguarding young people remains a priority for the school. The head teacher stated that recent safeguarding visits from several local authorities have said that all young people said they feel safe and wanted to stay at the school.