

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Heather Chaplin
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	2 December 2008
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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

The home is a large detached property situated about half a mile from a small village, in a semi-rural location but convenient for rail and motorway networks. There are ample sports and leisure facilities nearby.

On the ground floor, there is a large lounge with a conservatory facing the rear garden. There is a separate dining room, a large kitchen and utility room with laundry facilities, and a bathroom with a toilet and shower. There is also a small room used for recreation, with a pool table.

On the first floor there is a bathroom with toilet, bath and shower facilities, and large single bedrooms to accommodate up to three young people in their own rooms. There are facilities for staff sleeping in, and a staff office.

Outside, there are gardens all around the property, with a large gravel parking area and space to play. A large garage is currently used for tools storage.

Summary

This was a very positive inspection, which was announced because of the need to conduct a Suitable Person Interview with the acting manager during the same visit. One young person was present during the latter part of the inspection, and was very busy with a craft activity.

Three recommendations were made, none of which impact on the immediate safety or well-being of the young people.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Three actions were made at the last inspection. Since then, the home has been submitting the necessary notifications to Ofsted. The Statement of Purpose now contains the correct contact information for Ofsted, and although none of the staff yet holds National Vocational Qualification Level 3 (NVQ 3), an action plan is in place and all have now been enrolled.

A recommendation was made concerning the need for the manager to ensure that staff are administering medicines appropriately. This has been addressed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's dietary needs are very well met in this home. They receive an interesting and well balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Staff have a keen interest in cooking and encourage young people to help. In discussion, staff confirmed that they maintain good food hygiene practices, and ensure that food storage systems are safe.

Clear and comprehensive healthcare records enable staff to ensure that health needs are very well met. Young people are registered with local general practitioners, opticians and dentists, and any specialist medical treatment required is obtained. All visits to healthcare professionals

are well recorded. Help is also available to reduce smoking, and sexual health education is provided.

No medical consent forms are on file for either young person, and this is addressed under placement planning (Making a Positive Contribution).

Medicines are safely and securely stored in the home. Administration of medicines is well recorded and young people sign to confirm that they have received the medicine. Almost all staff have now completed their first aid training, and the remaining staff member has a date booked for the course. All staff receive training in administration of medicines during their induction period, and the manager has observed them administering medicines in order to ensure correct practice.

There is a controlled medicines book, but it is no longer in use, because there are no controlled medicines in the home. Staff have done well to support young people to reduce and eventually cease taking controlled medicines, in conjunction with medical advice. Although the outcomes for young people are safe, the home has not yet completed a risk assessment on the self-administration of skin creams. The manager said that this will be addressed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home has policies and procedures in place in relation to all aspects of Staying Safe.

Young people in the home have their own lockable bedrooms, and carry their own keys. They have access to a telephone in the home, and to mobiles when they go out on activities, when they may need to contact staff. There is plenty of space in the home to ensure that young people have sufficient privacy.

There is an effective complaints procedure in place, and the complaints book is well recorded. Young people feel well able to raise complaints. Those recorded have been fully investigated and acted on where necessary.

If child protection concerns arise, they are passed on appropriately to Social Services. Staff confirm that they have all received child protection training. The home has a paper copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures, which is also available to staff on the internet.

The relationship between the young people in the home generally works well and staff say that there is no bullying taking place, although there have been some incidents at school which have been addressed. The home is very well staffed and so in practice, young people are not left alone together.

Young people do occasionally abscond, and when this happens, it is managed very well. There is a full description of the young person, a detailed log of staff actions and any phone calls in relation to the incident are recorded. The home is working on establishing positive links with the local police to promote good joint working practices.

Notifications of serious incidents have been sent to Ofsted when appropriate; two have been received since the last inspection.

Young people are encouraged to behave appropriately through a system of sanctions and rewards. This appears to be working very well. Restraints are well recorded, and the company is changing to a new method of restraint. All staff have received training to ensure that restraints are carried out safely.

The home has two separate bathrooms in addition to an en suite bathroom in one of the staff bedrooms. Staff and young people may use the same facilities, but the National Minimum Standards permit this with homes for less than five children.

Risk assessments have been completed on the premises, gardens and risk of fire. Fire safety procedures are all carried out regularly through system checks and fire drills. All staff have been trained in fire safety during their induction. All other necessary checks on electrical and heating equipment have been carried out. The premises are safe and free from obvious hazards. There is a signing in procedure for visitors, and this was done for the inspector. However, senior managers have not always signed into the home. This poses no risk to young people, but it is good practice for all visitors to sign in and out of the premises.

Staff files were inspected at the head office on 18 June 2009. These files are very well ordered and contain all the information detailed in Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Gaps in employment history, references and any other issues are followed up in interview and recorded to ensure safe recruitment practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The home has a very effective key worker system in place. Initially a key worker is chosen for the young person, but once they have settled into the home, they are consulted about this and may change if they wish to do so. Key worker sessions take place regularly and are recorded. Some excellent work has been done with both young people, and considerable improvements in behaviour have taken place.

Because of the quality of the work undertaken, some young people have been able to manage their behaviour more effectively and reduce medication, as well as focus on specific projects. Staff have supported them to follow specific hobbies and interests, and have personally donated equipment to enable this to happen. Educational outcomes have improved considerably, and staff support the school very well in helping young people to stay in class and learn.

All school material is on file including reviews of the Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), and Personal Education Plan (PEP) notes. Recent PEP meetings have been held in school to ensure that young people's educational needs are being met.

Activities are constructive and varied. Both young people attend Army Cadets, and engage in much physical and sporting activity which also helps to keep them fit and healthy. Social skills are learned by going out for meals. Some young people have taken up woodworking, and their work is evident around the home. Indoor activities such as pool, DVD's and other games are also available, and the home has a computer for the young people to use.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The young people have comprehensive and regularly updated placement plans which provide all the detail necessary to enable staff to care for them well. Individual risk assessments can be easily accessed.

A signed medical consent form for one young person was seen and noted at the last inspection, but on this occasion it could not be located. There was no medical consent form in place for the other young person. There was evidence in both cases that missing paperwork, including these forms, had been actively sought from the placing authorities. The manager undertook to obtain written consent for medical treatment as soon as possible.

Both young people have regular reviews, held in the home, and minutes of the meetings are on their files to inform placement planning. They enjoy regular planned contact with their families, and staff support these arrangements very well.

New prospective residents are welcome to visit the home before they move in. The manager and the prospective key worker visit the young person in their existing placement at least twice, and give them information about the home. The move into the home is managed to ensure that the key worker is on duty at the time. Young people leaving the home are carefully prepared for the move. The home does take emergency admissions on occasion, and when this happens, it is not always possible for the young person to visit in advance of their move.

Young people are invited to attend regular house meetings, although they prefer to talk to staff informally and sometimes decline to attend. They receive regular one to one sessions with their key workers, and can speak to any member of staff on duty when they need to do so. They are also invited to attend daily hand-over meetings.

Staff have fostered very good relationships with the young people in the home, and this was apparent during the inspection. The progress made by some young people during their placement indicates that they have built trust and are responding positively to staff intervention and support.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Due to their age, young people in this home are not yet undertaking independence programmes. They participate in cooking and helping to clean their rooms, which helps them learn the necessary skills for managing in their own homes in the future.

Young people receive £6 to £7 per week in pocket money, which may be sanctioned and reduced, for example to pay for any damage done. They receive a clothing allowance of £25 per month from the company, but in practice if any essential clothing is required, it is purchased for them. Young people may buy personal requisites and have easy access to shops.

The home is very pleasantly situated just outside a small village, within easy reach of the motorway network and rail links. This provides convenient access for any visitors, for example parents and social workers attending reviews. There is a large city within a short drive, with many shopping, sporting and leisure facilities as well as educational resources.

The home is attractively decorated and furnished, with light and pleasant bedrooms, all of which have been personalised. The home is currently undergoing redecoration and the young

people are helping to choose the colours and fittings. There are spacious communal rooms, including a large lounge, conservatory and a recreation room with a pool table. There are ample laundry facilities and a garden which provides enough space for ball games and other activities. There is some minor damage to the fabric of the building at present, caused by the young people, and this is being addressed.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There have been numerous incidents of racial and gender-specific abuse against members of staff. This is well recorded and addressed appropriately at the time. Much of the racial and gender abuse is due to learned negative behaviours and a lack of knowledge of different ethnic groups. The staff work hard to redress this lack of information, and plan to work alongside a child therapist to explore the deeper traumatic issues that may have influenced some of these behaviours.

Different nationalities and ethnic groups are represented on the staff team, and there is a positive balance between men and women.

The home's Statement of Purpose meets all the requirements of Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. The Children's Guide to the home could be made available in different formats to meet a child's specific needs. It does not yet contain Ofsted's phone number, but this is widely available on posters throughout the home.

Staff in this home are well supported and records show that they receive regular supervision from the manager. Team meetings are held regularly.

The home has eight staff apart from the manager, none of whom holds NVQ Level 3. An action plan has been implemented to ensure that this is remedied as soon as practicable. All staff who have been in post for three months or longer are now enrolled to start on this award programme from January 2010.

There are currently three staff on duty in the home day and night, supported by the manager, who also does shifts to assist in management monitoring processes and to keep in touch with direct work with young people. Staffing levels for each young person are set through risk assessment and are appropriate to their needs.

Regulation 33 visits are conducted regularly and are well reported. Senior managers were present at the home for part of the inspection, and are very well aware of the day to day operational issues. There is evidence of effective monitoring in all the home's logs and other records. Not all the Regulation 33 visit reports were on file, although one was found on computer and the other missing report faxed from the head office during the inspection.

The manager and deputy manager monitor all the home's records every four days, and the manager conducts a complete audit at least fortnightly. He spends two full days in each of his two homes, including one 24-hour shift to work with the young people. He has good systems in place to help him monitor the two homes, and updates all risk assessments and house strategies monthly.

The manager is hoping to complete his NVQ Level 4 management qualification and Registered Manager's Award by the end of July 2009. In view of this good progress, the previous action has not been repeated.

Files are well ordered, and apart from the missing medical consent forms, all documentation required by Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 is present on both young people's files.

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
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that a risk assessment is in place for any young person who is self medicating (National Minimum Standard 13)
- ensure that all visitors to the home sign the visitors' book (National Minimum Standard 26)
- ensure that young people have a valid, signed medical consent form on file (National Minimum Standard 2)