

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Christina Maddison
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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

The home provides accommodation for up to two young people of either sex, aged between 10 and 17 years, who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is a detached property set in a rural location with easy access to a large town and its extensive leisure and shopping facilities.

The company provides education through contracted services from another private provider, who operates a small specialist school approximately 20 miles away.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are supported by an extremely caring and committed manager and staff team who work very hard to ensure positive outcomes for all of the young people in their care. This is achieved through a consistent approach to managing behaviour and encouraging young people to be aware of, and learn from, the consequences of their actions and behaviour.

Educational achievement and attendance is a strength of the home. Young people are given every encouragement to engage with education and have received good results in a short time in relation to their starting points.

Young people are very happy living at the home. They said, 'This is the best place I have ever lived in, I give it ten out of ten'. Young people also said that they really liked the manager and staff and could not think of anything that they could do better. Placing authorities were very positive about the outcomes that young people are achieving since arriving at the home. One said, 'we are extremely pleased with the swift response to any queries and the professional manner of the staff.'

The manager is committed to compliance with regulations and has been proactive in meeting recommendations from the previous inspection. There is a commitment to improving and evaluating the quality of care given to young people. However, the views of young people about sanctions given to them for inappropriate behaviour, although recorded in their files, are not documented in the record of sanctions.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where any sanctions are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from individualised support that helps them to grow in confidence and make very good progress from their starting point. The key worker system helps young people to focus on their goals and discuss any concerns that they may have. Staff are aware of young people's talents and interests and help them to nurture these. Constructive use is made of leisure time. Young people take part in a number of activities in the community and enjoy regular holidays.

Young people enjoy good health and the home ensures that young people's health care needs are met, including matters relating to emotional and psychological needs.

The educational achievement is very good in relation to their starting points. For example, young people have full attendance at school and are achieving well in academic subjects. The organisation recognises that mainstream school may not always be appropriate. In these circumstances, the organisation is able to secure a place at an independent school. Staff help young people with any homework and read to them to continue their learning at the home. Young people's files contain all the necessary educational information, including a statement of special educational needs.

Young people are fully supported to maintain contact with their family, friends and significant others. This means that young people still feel involved with the community and culture where they previously lived and have maintained links that will continue if the young person eventually moves back when they are older. Young people's views are sought in relation to the day-to-day running of the home and young people feel that their views and opinions are valued by staff.

Outcomes for young people who have left the home have generally been positive and young people have successfully made the transition to independent living. The staff and manager maintain contact with most of these young people. Staff encourage all young people, even if they are too young to have a formal pathway plan for independent living, to be as independent as possible in their daily living tasks and take responsibility for their actions.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive in a nurturing and supportive environment. The Every Child Matters outcome areas form the basis of the very thorough and comprehensive care planning system. Young people's care plans clearly identify the care needs of young

people and how the staff are to meet them. Constant and consistent monitoring enables staff to evaluate the progress of young people on a monthly basis. Young people are fully involved in this process and contribute to reviews. This process helps them to take responsibility for their behaviour, progress and, consequently, this raises their self-esteem and self worth. Cultural and needs relating to individual ethnicity are fully taken into account in the care planning process. This means that young people feel valued and cared for regardless of their cultural or ethnic background and their needs are fully met.

Young people's files provide a very good record of staff intervention. Staff empower young people through their open and transparent ways of working. Young people said that the staff always listen to them and encourage them to take responsibility for their own behaviour. There is a culture of promoting young people's rights and consultation with young people about all daily living activities in the home. For example, young people are fully involved in activity planning, the reward system and menu planning.

Staff undertake a proactive role in helping young people to keep in contact with their family. For example, this involves staff supporting young people on weekend visits to their families, who live a considerable distance away from the home. A thorough assessment of young people is undertaken prior to their admission to the home, to ensure that their needs are able to be met at the service. Young people said that they were invited to tea visits and an overnight stay prior to coming to the home. There is a good record of successful transitions from the home into appropriate accommodation when young people leave the home.

Young people live in a quiet rural area and have easy access to a nearby large town. Young people said they liked living at the home and really liked their bedrooms that they had personalised to reflect their interests. Young people can relax in the lounge and watch television or play a game of pool. There are numerous board games and books. Young people have internet access that is subject to safeguards. This ensures that young people do not access inappropriate sites. The service development plan addresses maintenance issues and the home is very clean, comfortable and well maintained. Young people said that they liked playing football in the large garden. One young person has their own vegetable garden. This helps them to feel a sense of responsibility for the garden and to learn about growing food.

Staff promote a healthy lifestyle. Young people are helped and encouraged to plan healthy menus and eat healthy snacks. Cultural needs are taken into account and young people are encouraged to cook foods to reflect their diverse ethnic cultures.

Young people's health care needs are fully met. Staff have a very good knowledge of individual health care needs that are documented in health care plans. The home has robust systems for the management of medicines. This ensures that young people get their medication at the appropriate times. Emotional health care needs are fully assessed and a plan is put in place to meet these, with referrals to appropriate health care professionals and therapists. This ensures that the young people obtain the help that they need to achieve positive outcomes.

Young people said that an excellent range of activities is on offer in the home. For example, young people said they had been fishing, on an adventure holiday, to the cinema and been supported to join a tennis club and attend horse riding lessons. This ensures that young people's energies are channelled in a positive way and helps them to build their self-esteem through learning new skills.

Relationships between young people and staff are amiable, full of appropriate humour and constructive. Young people said 'The staff are cool and brilliant'. Young people said that bullying is not an issue at the home, everyone gets on most of the time and staff help if there is a disagreement. They have not had to make a complaint. Young people are making very good progress and are very happy.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are good arrangements in place at the home to keep young people safe. Young people are not absent without authority and there are no issues with bullying. Staff receive regular training to ensure that they are able to fully safeguard the young people in their care and are fully aware of the procedures they should take if there are any safeguarding concerns.

Staff actively encourage and promote positive behaviour. Staff consistently maintain a reward system that encourages positive behaviour. Occasionally staff sanction young people for inappropriate behaviour. Young people fully understand why they have been sanctioned and think that this is fair. Sanctions are recorded as being fully discussed and recorded with staff in key worker sessions but are not recorded in the sanctions log. This oversight does not have an impact on young people, their safety, or understanding of why a sanction has been imposed. Staff are fully trained in safe restraint but there has not been a need to use this for a considerable time. Staff are clear that it would only ever be used as a last resort to ensure the safety of staff or the young person.

The service is aware of the need to have a robust risk management system. Risk assessments are in place for individual young people, the building and any activities. Young people's individual guidelines highlight behaviour management issues and how staff are to manage these safely.

There are regular checks of the fire alarm and staff and young people regularly take part in fire drills. Young people said they were confident they knew what to do in the event of a fire to ensure their safety. There are robust procedures and checks in place to ensure the health and safety of young people in the home.

Young people benefit from a stable and consistent staff team. There have been no new appointments since the previous inspection. The home has a robust recruitment policy to ensure the safety of the young people. Staff confirmed that they had been appropriately checked before starting work at the home. Any visitors to the home are

monitored by staff and a visitors book is maintained to ensure only appropriate people are admitted to the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home meets the aims and objectives in their statement of purpose. Staff succeed in providing a stable and structured environment for the young people.

There is a strong commitment to anti-discriminatory practice at the home. Staff understand any cultural or religious needs and fully meet these. For example, staff encourage young people to cook food from their culture and regularly ask the young people if they wish to attend religious services in the area. There are high aspirations for the young people at the home and staff encourage them to fulfil their potential. For example, the staff are encouraged by the manager to find out young people's talents or interests and then action is taken to realise these, such as playing tennis or horse riding.

The staff team are very well supported by the organisation and the manager. Staff undertake training in a variety of topics that will ensure they are able to meet the diverse needs of the young people who they are working with. This is an organisation that encourages learning and areas of expertise among staff, who then cascade this to other staff. This enables them to share knowledge and learning and stimulates interest and motivation in the staff team. Staff receive an annual appraisal from the manager to ensure that their practice is fully supporting the care needs of young people.

The manager ensures that there are an appropriate number of staff on duty at all times to meet the needs of the young people. High staffing ratios mean that diverse individual care needs are able to be met at all times. If required, due to sickness or annual leave, staff are available from the organisation's other homes to ensure continuity and consistency for the young people.

Young people benefit from very effective management. There are various systems to monitor the quality of care. This includes monthly monitoring visits by a designated person, in accordance with the regulations. The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses in the home and has a thorough development plan in place. Compliance with previous inspection recommendations is good. The sanctions book is now numbered to ensure that there can be no alterations to the record of sanctions. Young people's views about sanctions imposed are now recorded but, due to a staff oversight, not in the record of sanctions and so this recommendation is repeated.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.