

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	30/01/2013
Inspector	Heather Chaplin
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	11/07/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home, which is operated by a locally-based private company, provides care and accommodation for up to two young people who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The provider also operates other homes in the area. The company has a contract with another private care provider to provide education services through a small specialist school, situated approximately 20 miles away.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **good progress**.

The last full inspection was held on 11 September 2012, at which time the home was achieving good outcomes for children. No requirements or recommendations were made.

Young people remain settled in the home and continue to make good progress in comparison with their starting points. For example, young people have made positive attachments and are now much more confident in speaking with the whole staff team than they were when they first arrived in the home. This helps to ensure that young people always have someone on duty in whom they can confide.

Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle. They are involved in menu planning and participate in cooking varied and nutritious foods from a range of cultures. Once a week, young people help staff to purchase food and prepare a meal for the

household. This helps young people to develop independence skills and also provides enjoyable social occasions where food and culture can be explored.

Young people have exceptionally good school attendance, although some occasionally decline individual lessons. This has been identified as an issue and is being addressed. Young people have detailed education plans and are achieving very well, compared with their level of attainment when they arrived in the home. For example, one young person regularly achieves gold awards and excellent grades in school.

Young people are actively involved in the local community, to help them to make new friends and engage in activities that will stand them in good stead in their future lives. For example, they play golf and football regularly and are planning to take up drama and martial arts. Young people benefit from a very wide range of indoor and outdoor activities. For example, a skiing trip to Scotland is imminent and the daily routine often includes country walks, sledging in the snow and other home-based activities.

In addition to cooking meals, young people help with domestic tasks such as cleaning the car, changing their bedding and doing the laundry. Young people have not yet reached the age when a formal independence plan must be in place, but they are supported and encouraged to develop relevant skills before this life stage is reached.

Staff provide high-quality care which meets young people's needs very well. Young people get along well with each other and with the staff. They enjoy positive contact with their families to help them to retain important relationships and establish their identities in their home communities.

Young people continue to be consulted through day-to-day interactions with staff, regular key-worker sessions and house meetings. This means that young people are able to have a say in their daily routines and choice of activities. Young people are well aware of how to make a complaint and there is a robust system for doing so, but there have been no complaints since the last inspection.

Staff ensure that placement planning is detailed and thorough, with young people's health, leisure, dietary, cultural and religious needs clearly identified. For example, placement plans detail any medication and treatment required for specific medical conditions. Medication is kept securely to help keep young people safe from the risk of unauthorised access to medicines. Risk assessments are appropriately reviewed and updated to ensure that they reflect young people's current needs.

The home provides a calm, clean, well maintained and homely environment. It remains nicely decorated and well furnished. The home has received some additional decoration since the last inspection and young people have chosen colours and put pictures up in their rooms. This helps them to take a pride in their surroundings and to reinforce their sense of personal identity.

Young people continue to be kept safe in this home. Physical interventions are rare, but staff are well trained to respond to any serious incidents safely. Some young people were involved in numerous incidents in previous placements, but incidents are now very rare. Staff attribute this change to their positive, calm approach and ability to defuse situations before they escalate.

Staff are well aware of the risks presented by bullying and this is not currently an issue in this home. One young person was very well supported following an alleged incident of racial abuse in school.

There have been no child protection concerns raised since the last inspection. Staff have received appropriate training in how to respond to any young person making an allegation. This helps to ensure that young people making allegations are responded to in a sensitive and supportive manner.

The home's Registered Manager resigned and left the company on 8 January 2013. This was duly notified to Ofsted, as required by regulation. The company is taking active steps to recruit to this post. In the meantime, one of the company's most experienced managers is now the interim manager of the home. The staff feel very well supported in their work with young people and confirm that their supervision and appraisal meetings take place regularly.

The senior manager is using her current 'hands-on' role positively, to help identify areas for improvement.

Consequently, the home has a detailed development plan. Developments since the last inspection include staff training. For example, all but one member of staff now holds a relevant qualification at level 3. The remaining member of staff is working towards this qualification. This helps to ensure that young people are cared for by qualified and skilled staff.

The interim manager praised her staff by saying that the home has a very strong, consistent and experienced team. Staff get on well together and present a united team to ensure that young people receive consistent messages. She describes a home where young people thrive on the high quality care provided. The staff's practical skills with young people are supported by clear paperwork and good relationships with placing social workers. The manager said that, 'Staff always put themselves out to help young people.'

For future development, the manager said that she wishes to build on making the already good documentation easier to use for young people and social workers. She seeks to achieve greater consistency and detail in shift handover notes, to provide more information about young people's changing needs.

The home also strives for continuing improvement by seeking feedback from placing authorities, young people and social workers. For example, the manager sends three-monthly quality assurance questionnaires to social workers and parents. This helps to ensure full participation in feedback and in the home's development.

The interim manager is now aware that Regulation 34 six-monthly summary reports

are not yet being submitted to Ofsted. The service's managers have discussed this in a team meeting and have plans to submit reports to Ofsted twice annually in future.

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 there is a system in place to review the quality of care through six-monthly summaries of the Regulation 34 reports, providing for consultation with children, parents and placing authorities and identifying any trends or issues of concern. The registered person should send a copy of each six-monthly report to Ofsted within 28 days of completion. (Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations, Volume 5: Children's Homes, paragraph 3.14)

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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection*.