

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maureen Hamer
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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

This home is located in a rural area but close to community services. It is an independent residential home that meets the needs of pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties between the ages of nine to 18 years. It operates within the Priory Coxlease School Children's Homes which is part of the Priory Group Education Services. It provides accommodation for young people who attend the local associated residential special school.

The home aims to provide a homely caring environment. Its focus is on building trusting relations and aims to provide each young person the opportunity to develop their maximum potential through the delivery of an extended curriculum that is based on education and care.

Young people are provided with single bedrooms and communal space which includes a large kitchen/diner and two other reception areas. One of the young people's rooms has the facilities of a self-contained bed-sit which can be used to support preparation for independent living.

There were five young people accommodated at the time of inspection.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make satisfactory progress. There have been some changes to the staff group that has led to some inconsistencies in quality of care. Individualised care plans are in place and staff do promote young people's welfare and importantly young people say that they trust the staff, feel they are treated fairly and feel safe.

There are areas for improvement from this visit including ensuring that there is a consistent experienced staff group to provide quality of care that promotes positive outcomes for each young person. Specific actions and recommendations are identified in the following section.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
4 (2001)	ensure that the Statement of Purpose only contains the services that the home provides rather than services provided at the school, such as therapy (Regulation 4 (1))	31/08/2011
16 (2001)	review the procedure to be followed when any child accommodated in a children's home is absent without permission has regard to any relevant local authority or police protocols on missing children and follows Runaway Children's guidance (Regulation 16 (4) (b))	30/11/2011
16 (2001)	ensure that persons working at the home to report any concerns about the welfare or safety of a child accommodated there to appropriate person (Regulation 16 (2) (F))	14/07/2011
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purposes. All records must be in formats that can not be amended at a later date. (Regulation 17 (B) (3)(4) Volume 5 statutory guidance, paragraph 2.91)	14/07/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff to understand the application of the behaviour policy particularly when to use physical interventions (NMS 3.3)
- maintain risk assessments to ensure all young people are kept safe (NMS 4.4)
- maintain sufficient levels of staff that are experienced to fulfil the home's Statement of Purpose and able to meet all the needs of young people resident in the home (NMS 17.1)
- maintain young people's privacy in their bedrooms and by the locks on bathrooms doors not being accessible to being opened by other young people. (NMS 3.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting point. They benefit from living in a home where, staff encourage young people to reflect on their behaviour and to take responsibility for their actions. Through this approach young people begin to develop a positive self-view and respect for others. Within this environment young people develop trusting relationships and self-confidence.

Access to therapy is provided to young people from within the school setting. There is no formal ongoing consultation or communication between the home and school therapy services; this lack of partnership working reduces the ability of the home to provide an integrated and consistent approach to behaviour management.

The expected educational progress and attendance at school is satisfactory and takes into account any lack of schooling prior to admission. Education plans are comprehensive and young people's review meetings are well attended. Between formal review meetings young people's progress is monitored informally between the home staff and school staff; this does not maximise opportunities to effectively support the young person. The staff at the home promote education, but there is a lack of educational resources available in the home.

Young people's health needs are identified and staff access services from within the school setting and from the local National Health Services addressed to address health issues. The home promotes healthy lifestyles and discourages smoking and the intake of high sugar and fat foods. Young people are engaged to work towards developing a healthy choice of menu options.

Young people benefit from support to develop their independence living skills, such as, doing laundry, shopping and preparing meals and money management. The home and young people work hard to ensure appropriate contact is maintained with family.

Quality of care

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

The quality of service available to young people is satisfactory. They enjoy appropriate and positive relationships with staff members and when spoken to young people said they: 'Like and trust all the staff'. Young people are clear that their views and wishes are taken into account. House meetings are irregular but young people and staff say that issues are raised as and when they arise through casual conversation for example over mealtimes. Young people stated that their views were listened to and acted upon. They said they knew how to make a complaint and had access to an independent advocate on the school site. Staff work with partners to advocate on behalf of young people. At times this role is frustrated, for example, relating to gaining access back to the educational setting and contributes to negative outcomes for young people.

At the time of inspection the home had a relaxed and homely atmosphere and the young people were sociable and welcoming. Whilst the home aims to establish firm boundaries and utilises positive behaviour management strategies, staff changes and vacancies impact negatively on effective communication between staff for example lack of consistency with sanctions.

Young people's bedrooms are spacious and personalised to their individual tastes. However, not all bedrooms have the same level of privacy, with some bedroom doors not having locks and bathroom doors that can be unlocked from the outside; this does not fully promote privacy of young people. The open plan kitchen and dining room means staff and young people can socialise, cook and eat together and provides good opportunity for socialising.

Placement plans demonstrate an individualised approach to the needs assessment, for example, regarding their ethnic origin. However, evaluation is sometimes lacking. The home operates a system of having one key worker for all the young people living in the home. Whilst the member of staff demonstrates a good understanding of the young people's plans and progress, the plans did not always demonstrate comprehensive risk assessments. Whilst the plan is regularly reviewed, some information about progress was missing. The home produces regular progress reports and when there is drift in a young person's plan staff actively engage with partners to address outstanding issues.

Safe recording of medication is in place but a medical consent form was not available on one file. A nurse is available at the school site, young people are also registered with and attend local National Health Services providing broader access to universal services.

Young people are encouraged to develop leisure interests including accessing internet cafes, youth clubs or going to the cinema that broaden their outlook and enable contact with friends.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe and that they can talk to the staff . Risk assessments are satisfactory with some omissions. However, the staff do demonstrate a good knowledge of young people's vulnerability.

There have been incidents of young people going missing without authority and on occasion the police have been involved and young people have been kept safe. The manager was unsure as to whether the protocols were compliant with the new guidance on children going missing. Issues related to bullying are addressed by staff that are clear on the home's policy and procedures to follow. The home has a safeguarding policy and staff are aware of how to access information to inform their decision. However, some staff are unclear as to when a disclosure warrants reporting showing some potential for delay in reporting.

The home encourages young people to take responsibility for their own actions and has had some success in working with young people to develop positive behaviour. There are low levels of restraints recorded and staff successfully use de-escalation techniques. Young people stated that they thought they were treated fairly. The log books are comprehensive and record the effectiveness and young people's views of the incident. A new system of reporting physical interventions has been put in place that leads to the log book leaving the premises; the bound log book should remain on the premises at all times. All staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques, but not all staff are clear regarding not infringing young people's liberty.

Young people benefit from living in a home which provides physical safety and security. Fire safety checks are up to date. Regular fire drills are carried out. Risk assessments are in place for the building. Electrical and gas appliances are regularly checked and maintained.

The home can evidence a careful vetting and robust selection process being undertaken. The staff personnel files are kept on the main campus. However, a template is maintained that shows appropriate sources of information have been sought prior to staff working with young people.

Leadership and management

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

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

There have been some changes to staffing which has impacted on capacity to deliver consistent and individualised care. Nonetheless, staff have succeeded in providing a stable environment in which young people feel safe. The staff and the young people have a strong and trusted relationship with the manager. The home has one key worker for all young people who has a good knowledge of young people's needs and progress, however, if the key worker is not available there is vulnerability to the continuity of knowledge regarding the young people and to providing appropriate individualised care.

Young people receive care from a motivated, caring and supportive team. However, there is a need for staff to develop knowledge and experience to improve outcomes for all young people. Supervision is carried out regularly and performance is monitored.

The home's Statement of Purpose states that the home provides therapy; this service is not available in the home.

Regulation 33 visits and Regulation 34 reports are regularly completed to a good level and demonstrate an ambition to continually improve. Significant events relating to children in the home are notified to the appropriate authorities. The manager works to develop good relationships with partners to the benefit of young people, though there is occasional frustration with some key partners.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.