

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Trevor Hall
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is part of a large private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate up to three young people, who have educational and behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people experience outstanding care because staff provide consistency, stability and a safe nurturing environment. As a result, young people achieve excellent personal growth. The home works exceptionally hard to ensure young people receive effective healthcare, assessment, treatment and support that reflect their particular needs. The home is particularly resourceful in managing a clear framework for behaviour while celebrating and encouraging appropriate individuality. Young people's behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs are effectively supported. Highly personalised placement plans effectively capture all these aspects of young people's care. Priority is given to helping young people develop their sense of self-worth and to help them to maximise their educational and personal development. Young people's diverse needs are met because they are supported by an experienced and well trained staff team.

Safeguarding young people's welfare is placed at the highest priority in terms of both the health and safety of the environment and promoting their physical and mental well-being. Very effective internal and external monitoring processes provide continuous quality assurance which helps to maintain the home's outstanding standard of care and assists in promoting the on-going development and improvement of the service.

The excellent, trusting and sincere relationships observed between young people and staff are based on mutual respect and honesty. Young people receive excellent on going care and support from a care team that are dedicated, hard-working and committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for them. The home has an

energetic, motivated and well qualified manager, who leads by example and is ambitious to achieve the best possible outcomes for the young people in his care. Rigorous monitoring of care delivery, through well-maintained recording systems ensures that both strengths and weaknesses are identified and effective remedial action is taken.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people clearly benefit from the security and structure that exists within this home. Boundaries are consistent and help to give young people a feeling of security without denying them their individuality. They enjoy positive relationships with the staff group, based upon mutual respect and positive regard; this helps them to improve their self-image and build up their emotional resilience. The extremely competent staff team have successfully created a nurturing environment that has well-defined boundaries, but remains both homely and supportive.

Staff are sensitive and understanding when young people talk about their life experiences and family relationships. Staff work very well together to address young people's individual needs and promote their physical and emotional well-being. There is a strong emphasis on developing trusting, honest relationships so young people can talk freely about their experiences and be realistic about their future aspirations.

Clear policies and procedures effectively applied by a highly trained staff team effectively safeguard young people's health. Vigilant checking in and dispensing of medication ensures accurate and up-to-date records, which evidences safe practice. Excellent care planning supported by up-to-date and accurate assessments of risk ensures that staff have access to good up-to-date information about the young people in their care.

Care files contain health information and details of each young person's General Practitioner, dentist, optician and specific external specialists. Young people live in a very healthy environment where their individual health needs are identified and services provided to meet them. Staff support and encourage young people to access external health professionals in line with their individual needs. Young people benefit from an informed, coordinated and planned approach to meeting their needs, which includes successful partnerships with other health services and support agencies. Staff actively engage young people in a range of health related topics to help them learn about healthy lifestyles and potential risks to their health. Records of appointments with health professionals are clearly maintained, ensuring the physical, emotional and mental health needs of young people are well met. Staff support young people to take charge of their own health care to better prepare them, for adulthood.

Young people are successfully encouraged to express their feelings and emotions. The home promotes a positive ethos that fully embraces diversity and difference; as a result, young people learn to appreciate the significance of differing values and

cultures and to have respect for other people. This ethos also promotes positive behaviours, assists young people to understand the consequences of their actions, and encourages alternative and more acceptable responses.

The management and staff of the home, promote appropriate pride in high levels of educational attendance and attainment, while recognising the difficulties that young people have experienced in sustaining education placements prior to living at the home. Highly committed staff support young people's education and liaise regularly and effectively with the schools they attend, this ensures that young people achieve positive outcomes. Young people speak positively of their education and the support and encouragement they receive.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff, based on mutual respect, which enables them to form meaningful and sustainable attachments. They benefit from individualised programmes of care, in line with their identified needs. This care and support is provided by both the staff in the home and independent specialists, such as clinical psychologists and, where appropriate members of the local child and adolescent mental health team. Care plans are comprehensive and clearly identify areas for development based upon young people's individual skills, interests and abilities. Staff display very good communication skills and young people confirm that they feel listened to and fully involved in the planning of their care.

The staff group provides the right balance between nurturing and enabling young people to develop appropriate self-reliance. Young people have their individual cultural, religious, language and racial needs effectively identified and addressed. They have regular meetings with their key worker to discuss progress and any issues of concern. Young people state that staff are approachable and acknowledge their rights and truly value their contributions.

Staff place the care and well-being of young people at the centre of their practice. The staff team are very knowledgeable and aware of each young person's character, identity and background. They consistently include young people in the planning of their support and care arrangements, which are recorded in regularly updated placement plans. Where young people struggle or are not confident about expressing themselves, staff actively work to improve their self-esteem, to encourage self-expression and promote active engagement. Young people are fully involved in the running of the home as their individual preferences and choices are reflected in day-to-day routines. Young people feel listened to and that they have a say in how the home is organised. Consultation is embedded into everyday practice, which has resulted in a very familiar and comfortable environment for young people. Staff and managers have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities, advocating vigorously, when necessary, to ensure young people's views and needs are known and actively promoted.

Young people know how to make a formal complaint if they are not happy about something, although this has not been necessary for some time. They also have access to a children's rights and advocacy service if they wish to discuss any matters outside of the home. Young people meet with staff regularly as a group and in one-to-one meetings to talk about how the home is running and sort out any issues raised, quickly and informally. Young people are confident that any complaint made will be addressed quickly and fairly.

Young people are able to plan their leisure and free time in a way that matches their individual choices and preferences. Staff make great efforts to strike the right balance between young people spending time away from the house with their own friends and their participation in activities with peers and staff. Staff are very conscious of the importance some young people place on being able to establish their independence and their own relationships and friendships. Equally, staff are also very conscious of young people who struggle to make friends outside of the home and are always looking at ways to boost their confidence, social skills and increase their opportunities. Where risks become apparent for young people, staff work intensely with placing social worker's and young people to determine how risks can be best managed and reduced.

Young people are provided with living accommodation that is spacious, very comfortable, well-furnished and decorated. They have good quality furniture in their bedrooms and ample storage for personal clothes and belongings. Young people are involved in helping staff to keep their home clean and tidy. The home is in a rural location but close to a large town and many recreational and leisure facilities. The home enjoys good links to local facilities. The home also has a vehicle that means that young people have convenient transport for activities, shopping and contact visits with family. The use of public transport is also encouraged to help young people become more independent and less reliant on staff using the home's car.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they feel very safe living in this home. The home has a set of very comprehensive individualised assessments of risk for the young people in residence. These cover aspects of their potential behaviour, the environment and the activities they wish to undertake. Risk assessments are proactive, identifying potential risks and providing effective strategies to help to minimise these. Staff regularly talk to young people about keeping themselves safe. They help young people identify and be aware of risks and the protective factors and behaviours necessary to promote their safety and well-being.

Staff, guided by other relevant professionals, work hard to enable young people to moderate and improve their behaviour. Young people confirm that the use of sanctions is minimal, fair and consistent. There is an emphasis on recognising and rewarding positive behaviours, rather than purely punishing those behaviours

identified as being unacceptable. This enables young people to develop more socially acceptable behaviour and better prepares them to interact positively with the wider community. Young people understand that the boundaries in place are there to ensure their safety. They are invited to sign all records relating to the use of sanctions, which helps them develop understanding and responsibility.

Young people confirm that the use of physical interventions are very infrequent, only being used as a last resort, by staff, to ensure safety for all. The resolutions of most incidents are through the skilful application of staff support and the sensitive use of conflict resolution techniques. The home's manager monitors each intervention, ensuring that the intervention is necessary, applied correctly and comprehensively recorded. He also ensures that young people are aware of their right to complain, receive any medical attention if required or requested and that social workers and, where appropriate, parents are fully informed. No physical interventions have taken place since the home's last inspection.

The location of this home enables staff to manage unauthorised absence extremely well. Staff know what to do if young people are away from the home without permission and they use individual assessments to guide their practice and reporting procedures. Young people's age, vulnerability and established levels of independence help staff to determine their actions, which sometimes involves working in partnership with outside agencies. Established protocols and positive relationships with the local police complement the home's excellent practice. No episodes of young people being missing from care have occurred since the home's last inspection. Staff remain aware of the potential reasons why young people may go missing, however, and use this insight to assist young people in managing their feelings and frustrations in a more productive manner, which deters young people from running off and placing themselves at risk.

The home has a good range of detailed policies and procedures covering aspects such as prevention of bullying, the processing of complaints, safeguarding young people and behaviour management. These policies and procedures are applied consistently, by a comprehensively trained staff team that receive regular updates to their training that ensures young people are effectively protected from and abuse. The regular and effective monitoring of the home's records and staff practice, by the home's Registered Manager ensures that young people receive safe care in line with their individual needs.

Staff receive regular and wide-ranging training in safeguarding. As a result, they demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the action they should take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Effective working with external partners, such as the Local Authority Designated Officer, ensures the continued development of staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection practice.

Young people's protection is further supported by safe recruitment, selection and vetting practices for all new staff. The home has a clearly defined vetting system in place that ensures all necessary checks are completed and are acceptable prior to

any staff member starting work in the home.

The home has a vigorous health and safety regime, which ensures that all fire precautions, drills and equipment servicing are conducted routinely, consistently and within timescales set by the relevant regulations. Good staffing levels further help to keep young people safe and reduce any risk of harm. There are effective systems in place to monitor and maintain good standards of health and safety. This includes ensuring domestic services and equipment are checked and serviced regularly and are in good working order. The home's environment is free from unnecessary hazards or risks. Young people live in a home where their health and safety is fully protected.

Leadership and management

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

The home's Registered Manager is suitably qualified and experienced and provides excellent leadership and support to the staff group. This ensures that the changing needs of young people are consistently met and that they are provided with outstanding care tailored to address their individual needs. Staff are very committed to the care of young people and this approach is sustained because of strong and clear leadership from the Registered Manager. Young people's potential is maximised because managers and staff have high expectations regarding their progress and achievement. Open and honest dialogue helps young people learn from their mistakes. Consequently, young people make significant changes in the way they react to others and in the choices that they make. The promotion of equality and diversity is exceedingly good. There is strong, visible leadership which promotes high quality care and positive outcomes for young people.

The home has a clear accessible and comprehensive Statement of Purpose and young person's guide giving young people, their families and placing authorities' comprehensive information about the services offered by the home. Staff rotas are flexible enough to ensure that the changing needs and circumstances of young people are consistently met. Staff shortages are managed well and changes are kept to a minimum. The team work hard to minimise the impact of any changes experienced by young people. The Registered Manager has a clear commitment to providing consistent care that helps young people sustain attachments with staff they know well.

All staff members comment positively about the manager's commitment, child-centred approach, staff support and clear monitoring processes. Clear lines of accountability in the home has enabled a stable, consistent and structured environment to be established. Staff duty rotas confirm that the home keeps sufficient staff on duty at all times. The home has a very good system for dealing effectively with young people's complaints. Young people confirmed their awareness of the home's complaints system and stated they would use it with confidence. Since the home was last inspected no complaints have been received.

Staff receive excellent support and guidance through a clear management structure. This structure is successful at meeting the service's aims to foster social awareness and mutual respect within the home and wider community. It achieves this by encouraging a happy and caring atmosphere in an extremely professional and motivating environment. Consistent and regular supervision, coupled with team meetings, provide staff with excellent opportunities to discuss their role, their professional development and the impact of working with children with complex needs has upon them.

Staff are provided with quality induction and further training, support and resources and therefore understand the developmental needs of young people. The excellent training covers all mandatory areas such as safeguarding, behaviour management and first aid, as well as any specific training indicated by the needs of individual young people. The staff team work proactively to help young people to achieve positive outcomes, overcome barriers and to enhance their well-being.

Good staff communication ensures that staff are consistent in the care they provide, which ensures young people's individual needs are well met. Young people take an active part in the running of the home and they are encouraged to make their views known, through discussions with staff and by attending house meetings. Staff ensure that a safe, secure and nurturing environment is maintained which assists young people to make real progress and to fulfil their individual potential.

The manager has established rigorous internal quality assurance monitoring systems. It is clear that he checks all reporting systems regularly and comments if any record fails to meet either the home's policies and procedures or national regulations. Regular internal monitoring reports are produced which help the home to develop its practice and ensure that young people are receiving the care and support they need. Regular visits from various representatives of the provider organisation take place to provide additional quality assurance mechanisms these involve consulting young people wherever possible. There is a comprehensive service development plan in place, which is also linked to wider corporate aims.

Records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and would contribute significantly to the young people's understanding of their life in care, if they choose to access these documents. The registered person notifies the appropriate authorities about all significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home.

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.