

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Oldham
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is purpose-built for children and young people who have a learning or physical disability. Up to six children or young people may be accommodated at any time. The home provides two different services within the same building. Short breaks are available for young people over weekends and school holidays. Boarding placements are also available, so that during the school term the home provides care and accommodation to young people attending Churchill Park School or another accessible special school.

The home is run by Break, a registered charity, under contract to the Local Authority Children's Services.

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's needs and views are central to all aspects of the running of this home. Each young person has a comprehensive placement plan designed to meet their specific needs. The staff are creative and imaginative in ensuring young people are appropriately involved in their care plans and reviews, and where possible know the plans for their future. The young people make exceptional progress given their starting points and abilities. They grow in confidence and learn new skills. Consequently young people glow with pride at their achievements, such as when they make their first cup of tea or organise a fund raising event.

The quality of care in the home is outstanding. The manager and the staff team are ambitious and enthusiastic about the continuous progress that the young people make, and are not afraid to encourage new ventures. Progress is regularly reviewed and documented, to ensure all staff are kept up-to-date, although this is not always easily located on the child's file. Staff excel themselves in their willingness to learn new skills to facilitate communication with young people using non-verbal communication methods. Consequently all young people are able to express their likes and dislikes, and enable staff to make new plans to enhance the experience for

each young person and to extend their capabilities.

Leaders and the manager have rigorous systems in place to monitor progress and identify areas for further development. The manager utilises the skills and interests of all members of the team, and so they develop special areas of expertise and enjoy their responsibilities. Staff confirm that they are very well supported through good quality, regular supervision, and access to excellent training opportunities. All the staff team talk with genuine passion and enthusiasm about the young people and the progress that they make, consequently young people grow in confidence and self-esteem.

Comprehensive risk assessments set out strategies to keep young people safe. Young people say that the home is safe and fun. Staffing levels and high regard to health and safety ensure young people are kept safe. In addition, imaginative ideas such as teaching young people about fire safety through, for example, a trip to the fire station and involving a police liaison officer to help reinforce personal safety.

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 information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy relationships with their peers and the staff according to their abilities. They participate in a broad range of activities according to their individual interests and they are gently encouraged to try new things and experiences. Consequently young people make exceptional progress and grow in confidence and develop a positive self-view. Staff say about the young people 'now you wouldn't recognise him', and parents comment that resolving a stressful problem has enabled a young person to 'function better'. Staff help young people to manage their behaviour and to interact socially. Consequently young people are becoming less anxious, can interact in social situations and enjoy group activities.

Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle through eating a broad range of foods, maintaining high hygiene standards and undertaking some exercise. Young people are actively involved in influencing the menu, and they are encouraged to have fresh fruit and vegetables. Through imaginative strategies young people make healthy choices and start to eat a broad and varied diet.

All young people are in education and transport arrangements ensure that young people arrive safely and on time. There are very comprehensive communication systems between school and the home including written communication books, phone calls and visits by staff. Consequently young people's attendance is excellent, and they are enabled to make the most of the educational opportunities presented to them.

The home has been proactive in ascertaining the views and feeling of all the young people including using a range of communication methods to capture the views of non-verbal young people. Their imaginative strategies ensure that young people can express their likes and dislikes. This has given the young people tremendous confidence to express themselves. Consequently young people have chosen books, got involved in fund raising events, influenced the purchase of games and toys, and made suggestions for activities.

Young people gain independence skills, through individually designed plans to meet their own needs, and consequently make exceptional progress given their starting points. Where appropriate they are encouraged to do simple domestic tasks. This involves vacuum cleaning their room, help to do their laundry, doing simple cooking and prepare drinks. As a result young people learn take pride in themselves and their environment. When young people leave the home, they are very well supported by staff and transition workers, and so are able to make smooth and successful transitions.

Quality of care

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

Young people have very good relationships with the staff team. Staff have high aspirations and hopes for the young people and work well together to explore ways of helping young people to make progress. The enthusiastic staff team is continually exploring new ideas to enhance communication, such as 'smiley faces', 'talking mats' and 'spider diagrams', to facilitate young people's engagement in activities and to better understand their experiences. They are actively involved in fund raising activities, such as making cakes and putting on different events such as a 'pamper night', and get involved in the local community and its facilities. Parents comment that staff are proactive and imaginative in finding solutions to long standing problems. This makes a big difference to the young person and the family. Young people's achievements are celebrated through certificates, praise, smiles and hugs. Consequently, the exceptional care adds to young people's experiences, progress and development. Young people grow in confidence and are able to go out into the community and interact with others; for example young people having a haircut and paying for it, and going to the cinema.

Staff are extremely skilled at helping young people understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes, as this may not be good for them or others, and to help agree a compromise where possible. The staff team work well together to reinforce consistent messages which need to be frequently repeated to achieve

effect. Consequently young people generally understand and respect the rules and expectations, and sanctions are used extremely rarely.

The complaints procedure has been produced in various formats to assist young people to make a complaint. Young people say that they know how to make a complaint, but laugh and say that it is not necessary, as they are very happy. Parents are also aware of the procedure to be followed, and any concerns are quickly and thoroughly investigated and remedied.

All young people have very complex care needs. However, high quality planning ensures that short break episodes bring together young people who are friends and have similar interests and needs. The comprehensive placement plans detail the specific, individualised needs of the young person, and where appropriate any religious and cultural needs. Where possible young people are actively involved in the plans that concern them, and staff provide support. Staff regularly review the plans at team meetings and there is good documentary evidence. However, this is not always easy to locate information in a child's file. This is important should they wish to access the information now or in the future. The home has developed alternative means of sharing information, such as the use of memory books of photographs for young people, and parents are kept informed after each visit with a diary containing photographs. Parents said how informative these are, and are particularly beneficial for parents with alternative means of communication.

Each young person is treated as an individual, although some activities are sometimes for more than one young person, such as trips to the coast or bowling, to encourage social skills. However, there is a significant emphasis on meeting individual needs, such as a trip to a football match, or one-to-one time with a member of staff. All social workers said that staff take into consideration what the young people want to do, and provide a good variety of activities. They said that staff are very considerate of the needs and wishes of the young people and their families.

The home provides a very healthy environment, and staff consider all aspects of the young people's health. Medication is carefully checked on admission, at administration, and at discharge, to ensure accuracy. Staff work proactively with other agencies to meet the medical and psychological needs of the young people.

Staff actively support young people's education. Staff have regular contact with the schools; using home school diaries, attending meetings and social functions. They are particularly vigilant about ensuring consistent strategies are maintained to ensure young people enjoy school.

The home is well maintained and spacious, and there is a garden area. The location enables young people to easily walk to the shops and parks, and there are good public transport links. Young people are actively encouraged to personalise their bedrooms by choosing their own bedding, and displaying posters.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

All staff all receive training in child protection procedures, and have a good working knowledge of what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff. There are comprehensive individual risk assessments for each young person, which are reviewed in the light of new behaviours. Staffing levels are frequently high for most activities and situations. There have been no incidents of young people going missing, or coming to harm. The home is imaginative in ensuring that young people understand about how to keep themselves safe. For example they took young people on a visit to the Fire Station to learn about fire safety. They have arranged for a police liaison officer to call in on a regular basis to build up a rapport with the young people, to help them understand how the police can help and support them.

Staff provide very consistent boundaries, and continually reinforce these by praising young people's desired behaviour. Consequently young people generally behave well and understand the expectations. Sanction and physical restraint are very rare occurrences and regularly reviewed to assess effectiveness.

There has been some limited staff recruitment, although generally the staff team is well-established. The recruitment and selection process is thorough, and includes comprehensive checks to ensure that young people are always cared for by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. This ensures that all staff are suitable to work with young people and are kept safe from harm.

The environment is very well maintained and kept safe through a system of weekly and monthly internal safety checks and risk assessments. In addition, services such as electricity, electrical appliances and fire fighting equipment are regularly checked by the appropriate professional companies. Visitors to the home have their identification checked and they are signed in and out.

Leadership and management

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

The manager encourages the energy and enthusiasm of her staff, and consequently staff rise to the challenge of additional roles and responsibilities, and become experts in their chosen areas. For example, one staff member has a lead for alternative communication and another for devising the rota and monitoring medication. The manager works with her staff team to identify trends and issues of concern, and ensures time for reflective practice and development. Regulation 34 monitoring reports are an established element of the manager's comprehensive system of internal audits. There is a comprehensive action plan which is generated from ideas and suggestions from the staff team, parents' comments young people's feedback. All ideas, thoughts and suggestions are welcomed, and all contribute to further developing the service and making improvements. The registered person carries out monthly monitoring visits which always include some time spent with young people.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose, which is reviewed to reflect changes. It provides an accurate reflection of the home. Placing authorities are clear about the aims and objectives of the home, and what services and facilities it provides. Social workers say that the home is very 'child focused', and that 'staff are very conscientious in their work with the child and their family.' Young people understand the purpose of their placement in the home and say that the home is 'safe and fun, it is like another family; a big family, and it gives my mum a break'. Parents say that the home provides additional experiences and the staff tackle issues that have been insurmountable. They 'think out of the box' and come up with imaginative solutions.

There is a very good balance of male and female staff, and rotas are designed to meet the two different groups of service users' needs, and the particular skills and expertise required for each service. Staff receive excellent training, encompassing refresher training, professional development and specific skills-based training to meet the very special needs of the young people using this service. All staff are suitably qualified or working towards their qualification. The staff supervision structure ensures that all staff are supervised regularly, and staff say that they are very well supported. In addition, there are now a number of volunteers who support the work of the home. They bring additional skills and expertise, and have been subject to the same high levels of selection and checks as regular staff. The manager confirms that she is well supported by senior management. The home is financially very well resourced.

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.