

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Deborah White
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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 children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children who have autism and learning disabilities. The home is operated by a private provider.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children receive exceptional personalised individual care that meets their needs. Relationships with staff are positive and based on mutual respect. Children are consulted and supported to express their wishes and feelings. Children are safe and feel secure in a homely environment. Educational outcomes are outstanding and children enjoy a range of meaningful activities. Staff are committed and motivated to provide good outcomes for children and effective management ensures good, consistent care.

There are some weaknesses that have resulted in two recommendations being made. The registered person has not adequately risk assessed the impact on children of having a young adult living at the home and regular staff handovers are not undertaken to facilitate communication between shifts.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's safety and welfare is promoted by identifying the impact of any young adult living at the home on any children living at the home (NMS 4.1)
- ensure handovers are held and that they include the planning of spending time with individual children. (NMS 17.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children are emotionally resilient, confident and happy living in the children's home. Each child's individuality is recognised and respected and all children are seen as unique individuals who have hopes and aspirations. Comprehensive child-centred placement plans fully identify individual needs and how these will be met to ensure children can develop and achieve positive outcomes in their lives. Children relate

extremely well to the staff team and have developed positive meaningful relationships that make them feel cared for and secure. Children are given choices in their lives to promote their rights and to allow them to express their feelings and wishes. A social worker said, 'I have no concerns at all about the home. My child has made fantastic progress. My child's parents are very happy with the care and feel supported by the staff.'

Children are enabled to communicate to the best of their ability and their views, wishes and choices are taken into account. Children have access to a range of communication aids and staff are able to effectively pick up on non-verbal cues where children cannot always verbalise their thoughts and wishes. Children benefit from appropriate, age-related physical contact with staff to help them develop and understand positive tactile interactions. Children respond well to physical comfort to help them overcome any feelings of distress.

Children's health needs are very well met to enable them to lead a healthy lifestyle. A healthy diet helps children to grow and develop and lots of physical exercise promotes good feelings of well-being. All children access the healthcare services they need. Robust healthcare plans ensure staff know how each individual child can reach their maximum optimum for positive health outcomes.

School attendance is exemplary. Children have a 100% attendance and love going to school. Each child achieves to the best of their ability and are proud to have certificates of achievement displayed in the home. Children also benefit from attending a range of after school clubs that provide additional fun activities and the opportunity to socialise with their friends and peers.

Children are fully involved within their local community to invite and maintain inclusion with family, friends and neighbours. Children enjoy good local relationships and take part in lots of community based activities. This gives each child a feeling of belonging and acceptance within their home and local environment. Children have very good contact with family, friends and people that are important to them. This ensures meaningful relationships are maintained and children can relate to their individual backgrounds and personal identity. A social worker said, 'Staff are very flexible to meet my child's contact needs and the parents have a very positive relationship with the home.'

Children are fully supported to make the transition from childhood into adulthood. Children are supported to engage and understand some of the complexities around growing up and are enabled to learn and develop independence skills. Each child has a detailed life story book, complete with lots of photographs, which they can take when they leave to have happy reminders of important times and milestones in their lives.

Quality of care

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

Staff actively pursue and promote positive relationships to enable children to thrive and form lasting bonds with the adults who care for them. Staff consult with children to ascertain their views and wishes and where children are unable to communicate staff involve parents in important decisions. There is information made available to children and parents about advocacy services and staff support children who have an independent visitor. There have been no complaints and lots of recorded compliments show staff are valued and appreciated by parents, social workers and other visiting professionals.

Individual placement plans are very good. Each child has a well organised case file that fully portrays their needs and how these will be met. Children's positive outcomes are identified and celebrated. Regular progress reports inform parents and social workers of each child's development. Placement plans are written in a clear detailed format so that each staff member is able to read and understand the sometimes complex needs of the children. Photographs are included throughout each placement plan to personalise the care each child receives.

Staff consistently promote equality and diversity in all areas of practice. Great care is taken to ensure each child's cultural needs are met and staff facilitate children to follow their cultural customs and beliefs. There is a wealth of information about each child's cultural background and staff are very well informed about children's religious and spiritual needs.

Good health and well-being is an important feature at the home. Children are supported by a professional multi-disciplinary team, employed by the organisation, to provide holistic specialist care. Staff regularly liaise with community agencies to ensure children have access to all the services they need to progress and attain good outcomes. A wide range of activities gives children opportunities to experience new and exciting leisure pursuits. This increases children's confidence and sense of achievement.

Children live in a homely environment that meets their needs. The home is furnished and decorated to a high standard and is clean and tidy throughout. Each child's bedroom is personalised to reflect their personality and there is ample space for quiet times and private meetings. A social worker said, 'My child is very settled. The home has a nice feeling and a good atmosphere. It is very homely.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children are safe and feel secure in their environment. Where restrictions are in place, to safeguard children, these are recorded in placement plans and explained in the home's Statement of Purpose. The provider has recently initiated internal safeguarding visits to ensure staff are compliant with the organisation's safeguarding procedures. The provider liaises regularly with local safeguarding agencies to proactively monitor children's safety. A local authority representative said, 'we meet with the providers and have agreements in place to monitor children's safety. The

organisation is open and transparent and promotes good safeguarding outcomes for children.'

Bullying is not identified as an issue at the home. High staffing ratios ensure children are supervised and observed at all times. General countering bullying risk assessments are in place that identify potential bullying situations but there are no specific risk assessments to explore the possible impact of bullying where young adults are accommodated with children. There have been no incidents where children have gone missing.

Good behaviour is underpinned by individual comprehensive behaviour management plans. Staff are aware of triggers that may lead to inappropriate behaviours and avoid situations that may be distressing to children. Staff demonstrate positive role models and provide a stress free restful environment that enables children to feel settled and calm. Restraints are rarely used and only as a last resort. All restraints are recorded so the registered person can regularly monitor physical interventions and any discrepancies are openly challenged by the Registered Manager to ensure safe practice.

Children live in a safe environment that meets their needs. All utilities are regularly checked and serviced and ongoing health and safety audits reduce identified environmental risks. All known activities are risk assessed to safeguard children and ongoing individual risk management strategies enables children to take appropriate realistic risks in all aspects of daily living.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively managed to provide a stable environment for children. Services are improved and developed in line with the children's needs to promote positive outcomes. The Registered Manager recognises the home's strengths and actively addresses any identified shortfalls. Regular monitoring evaluates care practices and consultation with children and parents gives them a voice in how the home operates.

The statutory requirement and recommendations from the last inspection are met to ensure the home is managed in line with the Statement of Purpose. There are adequate resources available to provide a good standard of care for the children and to maintain a quality environment. Children are able to easily access their personal allowances and there are identified budgets for activities and holidays.

Children are cared for by staff who have the qualifications, skills and experience to meet their needs. All statutory training is up-to-date and additional autism specific training ensures staff understand each child's individual management plan. A member of staff said, 'I love working here, it is more than a job to me. The staff team are supportive and moral is very good.' There are sufficient numbers of staff on duty and staff rotas show shifts overlap to allow for staff to meet and communicate,

however, formal handovers do not take place to pass on important information including the planning of spending time with individual children.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.