

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Deborah White
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home provides care and accommodation for four children who have autism and learning disabilities. The home is operated by a private provider.

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 **good**.

Young people make good progress overall in relation to their starting points on admission to the home. They benefit from being cared for by a consistent and competent team of staff who have a good understanding of their needs.

Care plans are individualised and tailored to reflect the specific needs of young people and staff work consistently to make sure that young people's assessed needs are met. Young people themselves report that they are well looked after and relatives and professionals are very positive about the quality of care that is given to young people.

Young people enjoy good health. Their health needs are identified and services put in place to make sure they are met. Staff work hard to support all young people to achieve in education and young people make good progress overall in this regard. Young people are encouraged to take part in a range of activities in order to broaden their experiences and develop their social skills. They are fully supported to gain the knowledge and skills they will need for future independence.

Young people are cared for safely and they report that they feel safe in the home. The arrangements for managing and responding to unauthorised absences are robust, ensuring that young people are protected as far as possible if they go missing from the home. Young people respond positively to the way staff work with them and behave well towards one another and staff.

The home is managed effectively. The manager provides good support to staff and monitors the quality of care that is given to young people and the progress they

make. He demonstrates a clear commitment to the continuous improvement of the service for the benefit of young people.

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 are supported to maintain family contact, including visits to the child's home (NMS 9.1)
- ensure children in the home are regularly involved in contributing to the monitoring of the home (NMS 21.1)
- ensure new staff undertake the relevant workforce development induction standards, commencing within 7 days of their employment and being completed within six months (NMS 18.3).

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Children are settled, relaxed and very happy living at this children's home. They are confident and outgoing, which shows they have good self-esteem and well-being. Children are able to relate to the staff and have very positive relationships. This helps children feel nurtured and cared about.

The resident group have good peer relationships and socialise together as a 'family'. All children are included in the resident group and have developed a genuine affection for each other. A social worker said, 'Relationships are very good, staff are committed and work hard to form positive bonds.'

All children have 100% school attendance and are achieving beyond expectations. All children have thrived in school and have developed new skills. Children enjoy school and are keen to attend. They have good relationships with their teachers and school friends. A teacher said, 'My child is doing so well. They have progressed so much; they are like a different child. My child is so happy; they used to be very quiet and withdrawn. It is so good to see how well they have done.'

Children's health needs are met and they have access to all the services they need to live a healthy life. They have access to the specialist services they need, which ensures they receive the best possible care. Meals are healthy and children have lots of fresh air and exercise. Children look healthy and happy.

There is a wide range of activities and children see activities as a good thing at the home. Individual and group pastimes are encouraged which help children be self-reliant and to socialise. Children attend a lot of community activities and are

welcomed into their locality. There are lots of lovely photographs displayed to remind children of good times and happy memories. A parent said, 'My child goes twice a week to a dance class and they absolutely love it.'

Children have good contact with friends, family and other people who are important to them. Parents feel the home is welcoming and enjoy visiting. Children have photographs of people important to them, which offers them comfort. Children are supported to have positive contact and generally all practical arrangements, such as transport, is provided. This is important as some children have difficulties travelling. However, there have been occasions where a child has not had their home visits due to there not being a staff driver on duty.

There are lots of opportunities for children to learn independence skills to prepare them for adulthood. The children are enjoying becoming more independent and are proud of their achievements. A parent said, 'I cannot believe how much my child has learned at the home. They were unable to anything for themselves before they came here and now my child is doing things I would never have thought possible.'

Quality of care

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

Staff have formed very good relationships with each child, and staff put the children at the centre of their practice. Children are seen as individuals and unique. There is mutual respect and a genuine affection for all the children that makes children feel wanted and emotionally secure. Staff communicate very well with the children and have learned to recognise individual non-verbal behaviours where children are unable to vocalise their feelings.

Placement and care plans at the home are good. All children have a detailed assessment of their needs that is undertaken by a professional multi-disciplinary team. This ensures children receive the specialist care they need to progress and achieve. Staff support children to access external and specialist services where appropriate and actively work with other support agencies. There are very good relationships with school and teachers to provide good, consistent care. A teacher said, 'We have a good relationship with the home and communicate every day. This works well and supports each child.'

Children have their religious and cultural needs met by knowledgeable staff. Children's spiritual wellbeing is important and staff have learned and developed skills in this area of care. A visiting professional said, 'The home provides excellent care for two of my children. This is one of the best homes for meeting children's cultural needs.'

Children live in high standard accommodation that meets their needs. The home is spacious and the internal furnishings and décor is very good. Staff work hard to make the environment comfortable and homely. The home is spotlessly clean and well maintained. All utilities are regularly checked and serviced to ensure children are

safe and warm. The garden is well stocked with outdoor play equipment and is safe and secure.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children are and feel safe. There is no bullying and no children have gone missing. Staff know the children's potential risk areas and robust risk assessments show risks to children are minimised. Staff receive regular child protection training, to keep children safe, and the home regularly liaises with the local authority safeguarding officer to seek advice and guidance. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) said, 'I have no concerns about this home and feel children are safe.' All parents spoken to feel their children are safe.

Behaviour is managed positively and in line with each child's bespoke behaviour management plan. Staff are familiar with possible triggers that may upset each child and work hard to maintain a calm environment. Any challenging behaviour is managed in a professional way and children are always treated with dignity.

Children live in a safe environment. Regular health and safety, and fire safety, checks are carried out to keep children, staff and visitors safe. All staff have safety checks carried out before they start working at the home and all visitors are checked and vetted. This protects children from potential abusers.

Leadership and management

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

Leadership and management at the home are good. Leaders and managers know their roles and are responsible and accountable. Staff feel the home is very well managed and one staff member describes the Registered Manager as being 'the heartbeat of the home.' Staff feel leaders and managers are approachable and report that staff morale is good. This provides children with a stable environment.

The home has demonstrated progress and improvement by meeting the requirement and recommendation for improvement raised at the last inspection. All children's records are now stored securely and the home have provided to Ofsted a quality assurance monitoring report in line with Regulation 34.. Development plans show the home is working at improving services and outcomes for children, and the Registered Manager is clear about the home's strengths and weaknesses.

There are good monitoring systems that regularly check practice at the home. The person who monitors the conduct of the home in line with Regulation 33 has formed good relationships with parents and regularly ascertains their views. Placing social workers are consulted and feedback is positive. The Registered Manager checks all safeguarding records and day-to-day childcare practices in line with Regulation 34. There is some consultation evident in the Regulation 34 reports but this does not

show children have been asked their views on how the home operates to ensure their thoughts are taken into account.

Staff receive regular formal supervision to identify their strengths and areas of development. Staff feel supported and that they can talk to the Registered Manager if they have any worries. Staff receive the training they need to meet the needs of the children and staffing levels are good.

New starters receive a full corporate induction, which prepares and equips them to look after the children with autism and new staff feel supported and valued. There is an induction programme specifically for the home and the children living there to help new staff familiarise themselves with the home. However, not all new staff have commenced the prescribed children's homes induction standards as set out by the Department for Education.

Children's records are well organised and tell the story of how it is for each child to live at the home. The home is good at notifying Ofsted of significant events which allows for monitoring of the home's practice between inspection visits.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.