

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 is an independent children's home that is part of a national organisation and provides accommodation for an associated residential special school.

The home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people aged nine to 17 years who have emotional, behavioural and educational difficulties. The home aims to offer high quality care to young people within a homely and caring environment. The home promotes individualised care as well as the importance of boundaries and routines for young people. The committed staff team work with young people, parents and relevant partners to provide a stable placement that promotes positive outcomes.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home is run effectively and has made good progress in a number of key areas, in particular meeting the needs of individual young people and reducing challenging behaviours. The young people are self-confident, communicative and respectful to other young people in the home as well as to staff and visitors. In addition, young people attend school and demonstrate an increased focus on learning though access to a broader range of educational support could enhance learning in the home. The staff team promotes young people's individual needs and are committed to help young people succeed. Young people are kept safe and their welfare is promoted.

Following this inspection there are three additional requirements and two recommendations, as outlined below.

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 details specific therapeutic techniques used in the home, and arrangements for their supervision (Regulation 4 (1) (26))	30/09/2011
16	ensure prompt referral to the local authority in whose area the	30/07/2011

(2001)	children's home is situated of any allegations or neglect affecting any child accommodated in the children's home (Regulation 16 (2) (b))	
18 (2001)	ensure that children make use of educational facilities appropriate for their age, including access to computers. Ensure that effective links are maintained with the school so that young people are helped by staff in the home to achieve their educational goals (Regulation 18 (a) (c))	29/09/2011
4 (2001)	complete the children's guide and supply it to each child accommodated in the home. (Regulation 4 (5))	30/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- update the home's policy regarding children going missing without permission to ensure that it is compatible with and has regard to Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures maintained and managed by the police or by the local authority for the area in which the home is based (NMS 5.6)
- ensure that the registered manager completes a recognised social work or a professional qualification relevant to working with children at least level 4 and a qualification in management at least at level 4. (NMS 14.2 (a) (b))

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Good progress is evident in a number of key areas, in particular, reducing challenging behaviours, attendance at school and young people's physical well-being. There is evidence of a significant improvement in the way in which self-confidence and a respect for others has developed.

Staff work as a team to provide young people with a supportive environment that has consistent boundaries and promotes taking responsibility for actions. This positive and encouraging approach is supporting demonstrable improvement in young people's sense of self-confidence particularly in a social context. The Statement of Purpose states that the home has a therapeutic approach. However, this is delivered through the school and the home itself is not a therapeutic setting. Young people are registered and engage with local health services. This contributes to normalising young people's lives and providing access to a wide range of services. This has helped address a number of problematic health issues, such as the dental concerns. Staff also work effectively with young people to develop skills to care for their own personal hygiene.

The educational needs of young people are well documented in their education plans. Attendance at school is good. Educational resources, such as books, are evident but there is no internet access to provide easy access to additional educational material. Young people would also benefit from further engagement of home staff in knowing the young person's educational targets and the provision of some support in the home environment with revision and homework.

The home has been accepted by the local residential community and there have been no complaints. The home works to utilise local facilities, such as youth clubs and park, to promote young people's inclusion in the local community.

Young people benefit from support to develop their independence living skills, such as shopping and cooking. Independent travel is encouraged and risk assessments are carried out to take into account young people's age and ability. The home mediates with the family and supports contact arrangements which help young people to maintain and build positive relationships with their family.

Young people benefit from living in a home which promotes taking responsibility for actions. As a result, progress can be seen in all other aspects of their lives. Young people grow in confidence which has a positive impact in how they manage disappointment and develop relationships.

Quality of care

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

Young people have appropriate and positive relationships with staff members that provide a caring and trusting environment in which young people can develop emotionally and physically. Staff use a number of methods to listen to and engage young people; this includes formal engagement in their care planning in addition to regular house meetings. Young people also say that the manager asks them when planning changes to the home and asks them what they think. More generally, the home uses opportunities, such as meal times, to listen to issues raised by young people. This approach contributes to young people developing respect for others and self. Staff listen to young people's views and respond in a constructive manner with reflective open questions to the young person to develop the young person's views and communication skills.

Young people with learning and communication difficulties are provided with time to express themselves. Alternative forms of communication, such as picture aids, are used to improve communication. Staff are alert to early signs of anxiety to indicate the onset of challenging behaviour. This has contributed to reducing the incidence of physical interventions.

Complaints are managed appropriately with feedback to the young people. Young people know how to make a complaint and are clear that if they have a concern they can tell a member of staff.

Young people's plan is individualised to meet their personal identity. Aims and objectives are outlined; progress is monitored and evaluated. Key working arrangements are in place and staff demonstrate a good understanding of young people's needs. All staff members are aware of the plan and the required targets and this contributes to gaining a consistent approach to the care and support provided. Staff produce progress reports to contribute to the young people's statutory reviews.

There is good communication between the staff group both in writing and verbally as a consequence staff are consistent in their approach to young people. Young people state that their views are taken into account and influence the development of their care plans. This contributes to young people's sense of being valued and raises their self esteem.

The staff team have a commitment to working to improve outcomes for young people to work with them in way that is individualist so that the young person feels their particular needs are being considered. Staff encourage young people to develop social skills outside of school and the home by promoting local activities. Young people's bedrooms are spacious and personalised to their individual tastes.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe. Risk assessments are carried out, reviewed and updated against a range of activities whilst enabling young people to try new activities, this protects young people from undue risk. Staff encourage positive behaviour by acting as role models and showing respect to other members of staff and to young people. The home has an individualised consequences and reward system that also encourages young people to take responsibility for their actions. Staff are consistent with boundaries, sanctions and a positive behaviour reward system. This approach, alongside having staff trained in de-escalation and appropriate physical intervention, has led to a reduction in the use of physical restraints.

The home works with young people to prevent young people being absent without permission and going missing. Risk assessment is undertaken on admission to identify young people's vulnerabilities. Collectively this aims to keep young people safe and there has been a reduction in young people attempting to leave the home without authorisation. However, the home's policy has not been updated with the new guidance on: When Children Go Missing from Home. Staff act to reduce bullying and when young people are identified as being vulnerable individualised approach is taken to protect the young person and to address issues with the person bullying. Staff have received safeguarding training and, whilst staff are aware of how and when to refer, there is some lack of clarity about who to refer to in the event of a disclosure, leading to a possible delay in the response from appropriate organisation.

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

No new staff has been recruited since the last inspection. However, to secure the welfare of young people, the manager is aware of the appropriate recruitment process and careful vetting process that should be undertaken.

Leadership and management

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

The staff and the young people have a strong and trusted relationship with the manager. Young people and the staff team benefit from positive management. The home's Statement of Purpose is generally accurate but includes information on therapeutic services that are not delivered from the home. Detail of the services available in the home is not accessible in an appropriate format for young people.

Young people receive care from a motivated, caring and supportive team. The manager audits significant events and utilises Regulation 34 checks as well as using feedback from young people and staff to identify necessary improvements. This analysis is used to inform the home's development plan, which is in draft format. The parent organisation provides a range of training opportunities which is greatly encouraged by a manager who is committed to continual improvement of services to improve outcomes for young people in the home.

Regular supervision and appraisal is in place for all staff with good record keeping. The manager plans to undertake further training this year to ensure knowledge and skills are up to date to support management of an effective team and to support positive outcomes for young people.

The requirements of the last inspection have been met by stopping the internal use of CCTV and through a consistent approach to behaviour management. The recommendations regarding ensuring all staff are implementing the bullying policy are met but the need to complete the children's guide is outstanding.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.