

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Brian Mcquoid
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is for six young people aged between 11 and 17 years old. The home is run by a national organisation, providing a range of services, including education. The home provides care and accommodation for young people with a diagnosis of autism and associated syndromes, who also have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The young people may attend the provider's school nearby.

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**.

The overall effectiveness of the service is really good with some outstanding aspects. Young people receive very good quality care which is highly personalised and meets their needs extremely effectively. The home provides a child centred environment within which young people feel safe and where they enjoy positive and productive relationships with the staff caring for them. Seeking the views of young people is an integral aspect of how the home operates and they are consulted as much as possible about matters affecting them. Parents and placing social workers have a very high regard for the service. They visit the home regularly and are fully involved in the planning of care for the young people. 'Excellent care' and 'he is making big steps' were just two of the many positive comments received. Staff at the home successfully promote positive outcomes for young people and they make considerable progress in different areas of their lives. The manager of the home provides outstanding leadership of the service and demonstrates tremendous enthusiasm and commitment to continually improving the quality of care provided. Rigorous monitoring is being utilised highly effectively, to drive forward improvements designed to benefit young people and maximise their potential. There are no breaches of regulation and all of the national minimum standards are being met.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Outcomes for young people at the home are outstanding. They have exceptional school attendance and make significant progress in areas of their lives. This includes being able to spend quality time with parents for the first time over a long period, having increased confidence, showing much improved social skills and behaviour, and acquiring and developing new life-skills. Young people have developed strong relationships with staff and friendships with other young people at the home. 'Absolutely fantastic' was how one parent described the relationship her child had with her key worker. One young person has maintained a friendship and regularly spends time with another young person who moved on from the home earlier in the year. Relationships with their parents and families have also improved remarkably for young people. Staff have provided fantastic support to facilitate this process, which has included being available nearby during home visits. Parents and placing social workers without exception commented extremely positively about how young people were doing at the home, including two who had arrived just a few months prior to this inspection and had settled in really quickly.

Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles. They benefit greatly from the close working relationships the home has with external health professionals and the specialist services linked to the school they attend. Young people are involved in planning for their care as much as possible and they are routinely consulted about matters affecting them. Choice is provided in their daily lives and a life-skills programme is successfully promoting and maximising their ability to be independent. Helping to decorate their own rooms in a colour of their choice is an example of this. There are excellent relationships with the local community which benefit young people and they have contributed to community events being held. Local community facilities are accessed frequently by young people. They routinely participate in a wide range of recreational activities both within the home and in the local and wider community. During this inspection, two young people returned from a three-day adventure park holiday and two others were getting ready for a two-day break in the New Forest. Vegetables have been grown successfully by young people in the home's garden this summer, when they also attended a local street party.

Quality of care

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

Young people at the home receive a very good quality of care that is highly effective in meeting their individual needs. They enjoy positive and fruitful relationships with the staff caring for them, and gain much from social interaction with their peers within the home and with their friends who visit. Comprehensive care plans support the delivery of personalised care, with parents and placing authorities being fully involved and young people as much as possible. Statutory reviews take place at the required intervals with staff producing detailed reports and young people and their parents participating in the process. Review reports for all young people commented very positively about the home and the care young people were receiving and the progress they were making. Parents and placing social workers think highly of the care provided to young people, commenting that they are made to feel very welcome

during their regular visits. Parents are able to enjoy activities with their children, both within the home and in the community, with support from staff as necessary. Cooking a meal in the home and going swimming at a local pool are examples of this.

The home provides an environment for young people which is maintained to a very high standard, made as homely as possible and is well suited for its purpose. Young people are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and there is good provision to meet their physical and emotional health needs. There is an established and positive working relationship with the local surgery where young people are registered. All of their routine health needs are being well met. Positive links with external specialist services enable the specific health needs of young people to be successfully addressed. Individual case records showed extremely positive feedback from a consultant paediatrician about how the home was working with one young person.

School attendance for all young people at the home is excellent. They all attend the provider's school nearby and are transported to and from school by care staff who also work regularly within the classroom. Links with the school are extremely good and help to ensure a consistency of approach to working with individual young people. There is collaborative planning and joint reviewing which benefits young people. Also, close working relationships with the school's therapy team who visit the home regularly to meet with staff to discuss and review the work being carried out with each young person.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There is good provision at the home for ensuring the safety and well-being of young people at all times. Young people feel safe and parents and placing social workers are extremely confident that young people are being safely cared for. Staffing levels provide supervision appropriate to the needs of each young person and help to ensure they are suitably protected from harm. Bullying is not an issue within the home and staff take controlled risks to enhance young people's personal development. Walking to the local shop independently is one example of this. There have been no incidents of a young person going missing since the home opened in 2010. There is a positive culture at the home within which young people make real progress in relation to their behaviour. 'My son has come a million miles from where he started' commented one parent. Staff know each young person extensively and successfully promote their positive behaviours while skilfully preventing those which could be challenging. The use of restraint is at an extremely low level and at the time of this inspection sanctions were not being used within the home.

The home provides a safe and suitably secure physical environment for young people and there is good provision for the management of risk. Individual care plans identify strategies for managing the risks associated with each young person and staff have an acute awareness of their specific areas of vulnerability. Safeguarding training is provided for all staff and the home has established links with the local safeguarding

children board. There have been no child protection concerns at the home since the previous inspection.

Arrangements for addressing all health and safety matters within the home are good. There are regular checks of the physical environment and written risk assessments in place for the premises and all activities undertaken by young people, both within the home and in the community. All health and safety checks and tests are up-to-date, including those relating to fire safety. All young people have individual fire evacuation plans and fire drills are being held regularly. Recruitment procedures provide the necessary safeguards for the welfare of young people and are being effectively implemented.

Leadership and management

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

Leadership and management of the service is outstanding. The home has a Registered Manager who is highly experienced and extremely well qualified. Requirements and recommendations from the previous full inspection in October 2011 have all been addressed satisfactorily and the home was judged to be making good progress in March 2012. There have been two complaints received by the home in the year prior to this inspection and both have been addressed thoroughly and satisfactorily resolved. Excellent information about the home is provided in accessible formats for young people, parents and placing authorities, and the home is clearly meeting its stated aims and objectives as outlined in its Statement of Purpose. The home is adequately resourced and the physical environment is being maintained to a very high standard. One young person's room was being re-decorated as they wished during this inspection, while they were away on a holiday with staff. The home has a good relationship with the local community, with young people and staff being involved in street parties to recognise national celebrations.

Levels of staffing at the home effectively ensure the safety and well-being of young people and meet their individual needs at all times. Staffing arrangements include two night-waking staff and some young people being staffed on a two-to-one basis. Young people benefit from excellent consistency of staffing and the home does not use any agency workers. Staff receive excellent support which includes regular supervision and appraisal, and training which enables them to work highly effectively with the young people they care for. The home's manager has an infectious enthusiasm which permeates the home and communicates high expectations to the staff group. Close and rigorous monitoring of individual young people's care, and the home's overall operation, is used to inform both short term action plans and the home's longer term development plan. Established operational systems are implemented effectively to ensure the home runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Up-to-date policies and procedures support and promote good practice. The appropriate authorities are notified of any significant event relating to any young person in the home, and staff actions exceed regulatory requirements.

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.