

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Michelle Moss
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home offers accommodation for up to four children with a learning disability, specifically children with autism, of either gender. It provides up to 52 week placements as part of a co-educational arrangement. The property is detached and stands in its own grounds. There is an enclosed rear garden where the children can play safely. Premises are suitably adapted to support the children's needs. The home has space and rooms where the children can pursue their leisure interests and hobbies. Shops and supermarkets are accessible within the surrounding community.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This is the home's first full inspection since their registration. The visit was conducted unannounced and involved assessing all key standards across all Every Child Matters outcomes to help form a judgement on the provision of care. The home provides good outcomes for children across all the Every Child Matters outcomes. Care of children is designed to secure a consistent approach to promote their welfare and enhance their well-being. This is delivered through providing a wraparound service which is aimed at giving children individual support tailored to their unique needs. This approach is helping children make positive progress to levels where significant milestones are being made. Families have nothing but praise about the quality of care and have seen the extent of progress their child has made in a moderately short period of time. There are a couple of minor weaknesses identified as a result of this first inspection. These relate to shortfalls in training provided to ancillary staff and the quality of fitments within bathrooms. However, these shortfalls do not outweigh the strengths including the ambition of the organisation to improve in the interests of children's welfare.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable. This is the first inspection since registration.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are encouraged to stay healthy through active lifestyles, including going swimming, walking and attending sensory centres. Children equally have access to a comprehensive array of services to help ensure their physical and emotional health needs are fully met. All aspects of care are captured in an informative health plan,

which staff use as a resource to ensure children remain healthy and safe. Clear procedures are followed for the management, secure storage and administration of medication. This ensures children receive the correct medication important to their health. Members of staff involved in the care of medicines and who provide emergency first aid, all receive competence based training. This level of commitment to staff training helps children to have their physical well-being protected.

Staff are good at working alongside children to help them increase their knowledge of basic nutrition and to receive a balanced diet. The staff utilise their knowledge of alternative communication to help children make informed choices about meals and things they like to cook for themselves. This meaningful engagement enables children to make choices about food, including sustaining links with food relating to their heritage.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is a clear complaints procedure in place that helps families of children to be confident about raising concerns. For children, the procedure has been changed to a format that best matches their preferred method of communication. The staff team understand their responsibilities to safeguard children's welfare. There is a strong recognition of the importance to maintain vigilance, including staff being confident to apply the whistle blowing policy if required to ensure children stay protected. The vast majority of staff are trained in child protection which is periodically revisited through refresher courses to ensure they remain informed over changes in either the organisation and local areas procedures. However, this good practice does not include all ancillary workers. This hinders them from having the knowledge which they can apply to help protected children from abuse. There is a clear procedure and policy in place that can be used by staff in the event a child was to go missing. This includes having clear reporting procedures that mean the right professionals are informed to reflect the high level of vulnerability children display. The staff respect children's rights to privacy and show this level of respect in their daily practice.

The home's approach to behaviour management takes into consideration children's sensory differences and the impact this can have on their daily living, in particular their behaviour. The staff have a number of individual management strategies to help children. These include de-escalation, re-direction or using verbal and visual prompts to help children to self-manage their own behaviour without the need for direct physical intervention. There is a clear threshold for when physical intervention is used which is based on risk. A hierarchy of techniques for physical intervention is used when there is an immediate risk of harm. This takes into account the child's age and the seriousness of the situation at any given point. A clear log is made whenever physical intervention is necessary. This shows restraint is only applied for the minimum time possible and that minimum level of contact is made. For example, most restraints involve holding children's hands to reduce the extent of self harming. Staff are aware the importance of monitoring behaviour and the potential links with bullying. The high level of supervision of children helps to minimise any possible

triggers emerging which can result in children being effected by bullying type behaviour.

There are regular updated risk assessments for all aspects of safety. These assessments take into account children's daily activities and how they can impact on behaviour. These are carefully monitored by the organisation's behaviour support team who play a key role in regularly reviewing programmes and making any necessary changes in the interests of children. There is a comprehensive system in place to monitor, record, and prevent risks to health and safety at the home. For example, regular fire drills are held at different times to ensure children and staff remain familiar with safe evacuation procedures. The premises and grounds are equally subjected to inspection and assessment.

There is meticulous attention paid to recruitment to help ensure only suitable staff are appointed to work with children. Once new staff commence their employment, they are required to follow a structured induction followed by an ongoing training programme in which safeguarding is a key focus of a staff's personal development.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The home's aim is to provide a warm supportive atmosphere, which fosters a friendly and caring relationship with children. Families' experiences validate this is integral of day to day practice.

The staff play a key role in facilitating learning to help enhance children's development. The staff are good at acknowledging children's differences and apply their skills of alternative communication to help children experience meaningful engagement in their lives. All children are able to access a broad and balanced curriculum including a specific residential curriculum, which is tailored to their individual needs and abilities. There is some wonderful work done by staff to help children build up life skills to broaden their independence, self-esteem and confidence. This work is always set as part of a child's individual learning target set by the school. The target reflects a child's age, understanding and personal progress. For example, the staff team have done some fantastic work in building children's confidence to go to shops and engage with the general public. Children have equally had opportunities to build life skills, such as cooking and learning to dress independently. These various experiences are fed back to families so they can share their child's development and milestone achievements.

The staff team positively promote consultation and engagement of children through the wide range of communication aids available. For example, all staff use a full range of symbols, pictures and object reference to help children make informed decisions. There is not a single day that goes by where children do not have some planned activity. These activities take into account children's individual preferences and needs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are supported by staff who are consistent to providing child-centred care. The staff are knowledgeable about children. There is recognition that children are all unique including how their autism impacts on their daily lives. The blending of alternative communication into daily life helps children to make a positive contribution to things that directly effect them. For example, this helps with making decisions about activities and food. Children are enabled to sustain strong family links. Families are also afforded support and know advice and help is only ever a telephone call away. Families value receiving regular telephone contact and monthly reports. This helps them remain actively involved in their child's progress. Families are invited to meetings, such as their child's statutory review, and can contribute to key decisions. The home ensures in-depth reports are completed for all such meetings. These are done with the full involvement of the school. This holistic approach helps to keep key people including families well informed on their child's overall progress and achievements. As a result of the wrap around service, this gives children seamless support.

Admissions are always planned to ensure the specific needs of individual children can be assessed. Once a placement commences, a comprehensive placement plan is drawn together through a range of documents. These documents are then utilised and updated by staff to help map achievements and identify changes in needs. This includes all of children's health and welfare needs being identified including having recognition of their uniqueness that emerges from their autism and associated behavioural traits. The various documents also capture areas of need associated with cultural and religious requirements. However, there are slight weaknesses with some of the documents' duplication of information. This creates a level of risk whereby not all documents get updated in the same timeline and causes some inconsistencies within the placement plan.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home is based in the community and is close to local amenities including the school attended by children. The home is fully furnished to a good standard and reflects well the needs of children and their preferences. Nevertheless, bathing facilities are not at the same standard as other parts of the home. For example, some bath units have visually damaged areas. Children are supported to individualise their bedrooms to enrich their sense of identity. This is done in a child-centred way and reflects children's development and what level of visual and object stimulation they can manage. Excellent targeted support from having a wrap around service gives children wonderful opportunities to build up life skills that reflect their age and understanding.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Families are informed about the aim of the service through the home's Statement of Purpose. This enables families to know about the social and therapeutic support the home provides for children. This helps families in making initial decisions over the home's suitability to meet their child's needs.

The home ensures all new staff receive a structured induction which leads to a foundation of learning training programme. Key training includes autism awareness, epilepsy, safeguarding and administration of medication. All shifts start with handovers to aid staff to receive a briefing on the care of children. Staff confirmed good communication exists throughout the home and school, including having effective policies, regular training, supervision and meetings. Monthly visits are conducted by the organisation to internally monitor the quality of care. This rigorous assessment helps the Registered Manager identify where the care provision needs to further develop. This extends to providing a good level of support and challenge to drive forward improvement.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The staff team show a strong commitment towards appreciating and celebrating differences. This includes respecting all children uniqueness. Partnership and participation to those with parental responsibility is strong and gives families in particular an equal role in their child's life.

Children's individual case files are confidentially stored and are arranged in a manner that make them easily useable by staff. In addition, children have a range of information available to them that reflects their preferred method of communication, including care planning. Children are able to use these resources to enable them to make a positive contribution to their lives and to practise their rights.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure all interior parts of the home remain in a good state of structural repair (NMS 24(3))
- make sure any ancillary staff are offered training in the prevention of abuse, recognition of abuse, dealing with disclosures and the home's child protection procedures. (NMS 17(8))