

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Deirdra Keating
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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 is privately owned and provides placements for children on behalf of local authorities. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children of either gender. Children are between the ages of 11 and 17 years. The home offers care and accommodation for children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children make good progress in relation to their individual starting points. They are all relatively new to the service and thrive on the extremely good individualised care. The staff team are highly experienced and well established. Children's views are important to staff and sought in a variety of ways that enable all children to make their individual preferences known. Children report that they are delighted with the home and care that they receive. The strong relationships that they have with staff are key to this. Children are kept safe with high levels of supervision, guidance and clear boundaries. This also helps promote feelings of security and stability. The home is managed well, but requires more internal monitoring to drive improvement.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
30 (2001)	ensure that the registered person notifies without delay any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5. (Regulation 30)	26/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the level of delegation promotes effective procedures for monitoring

and record keeping, this is in relation to the management of both homes overseen by one manager (NMS 21.1 21.4)

- ensure that the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home. (NMS 21.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children are all very new to the home. Despite this, they have responded very well to the high quality nurturing environment. Children's wishes are respected and acted upon, where possible. Social workers report that this has been of key importance for children that they have placed. For example, some children have continued with activities and clubs that they have previously attended, despite long journeys for staff. This has provided continuity and enabled them to keep their friendships groups. Children enjoy a variety of local outings, such as going to the circus. They develop their confidence and skill as they recreate this at the home by putting on a circus show for staff. Children are animated as they physically exert themselves outside in the fresh air. The grounds provide ample room to play hide and seek, ball games, build dens, and observe nature. The healthy outdoor lifestyle has helped children build good evening routines in order to prepare for the school day. Some children find school and academic work difficult. However, they know the expectations the home has and like to achieve in the point reward system. Children regularly attend school and make good progress in relation to their individual starting points and educational history.

Children are making friends and building links in the local community. These are through the local school and the second home owned by the service. Placements there are very settled and provide good role models to children at the home. These friendships are important to children who talk about how much they have enjoyed activities with children from the other home. Contact arrangements work well; children are supported to see their families and significant adults. Families are welcomed to the home, where agreed by social workers, and staff are hospitable and welcoming. This helps children know their families are valued and accepted.

Children are helpful around the house and willingly join in with domestic chores. They clear plates, wipe tables, iron their clothes and make light snacks. Staff are with them at all times and some of these tasks are voluntary. Children feel a sense of belonging and value in themselves through participating in the household routines. They are expected to clean their rooms once a week and staff work with them to make this successful. Overall, children are developing many skills that will benefit them in their adult lives.

Quality of care

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

Staff provide extremely high quality care and have established close and constructive relationships with children. Placements are new, however, staff have successfully helped children settle in and adjust. Staff ensure the environment is safe and respectful by providing clear boundaries and expectations of agreed behaviour. Staff are imaginative and resourceful in finding ways to deal with challenges. They consistently review their practice, especially following incidents where physical and psychological interventions have been required.

Staff have high aspirations for all children and help them attain and achieve well in school. Superb links with a small independent school means that children integrate into classes where their individual needs and learning styles are met. Staff take children to existing schools further afield and social workers report that this is beneficial for children. Staff ensure that routines on weekdays are conducive to good attendance in school. They have detailed individual routines for each child which are consistently followed. Staff and children understand the value and importance of these and this places children's overall wellbeing at the centre of practice. Clear placement plans also detail care requirements and ensure that individual dietary and medical needs are met. Specialist therapeutic interventions are sought and provided for children who present with behavioural difficulties. Staff work with a range of outside professionals to ensure that children's psychological health needs are addressed with appropriate interventions.

A consistent approach and clear behavioural policy means that staff and children understand the rules of the home. Staff are gentle, calm and clear and this helps children understand why at times staff cannot condone their behaviours or sanction their requests. A complaints procedure is in place and children have asserted their right to complain. There is a telephone for children's sole use and mobile telephone credit is supplied where agreed by social workers.

Staff are exceptionally good role models, they enthusiastically bring a range of different skills and specialities to the home. These support the different interests and abilities that children have. Staff are adept at using the natural resources surrounding the home and locality. These include exploring the natural environment, playing sport, cooking and playing games. Children are taken to the beach, use the local woods and camp in the grounds of the home. These activities are thoroughly enjoyed by children and made safe by staff who children say are fun, lively and spontaneous.

The home is located in a rural area and blends into the rural landscape as a country style home. It is surrounded by woods and fields and is close to the sea. This promotes a peaceful and natural environment where children can spend long periods of time outside. The home has recently opened and the inside of the house has been completely refurbished to an exceptionally high standard. There are extensive and well kept grounds including ample room for den building workshops, a trampoline and vegetable patch. Staff work hard to keep the home spotlessly clean and well maintained. This promotes a well looked after cosy and welcoming home. The comfortable plush environment helps children relax and feel their worth.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There is a calm atmosphere in the house, children are relaxed and report that they feel safe. Rooms are locked, although children say that their personal belongings are fine when left around the house. Risk management plans for each child translate well into careful allocation of bedrooms and high levels of supervision. This protects children from potential harm. Good use of risk assessment means that children can take reasonable risks and lead active outdoor lives.

The safeguarding procedures are understood by staff and implemented well in practice. Staff undertake regular child protection training delivered by the manager. The manager is the designated child protection coordinator and staff are all aware of the procedures to follow in the event of an allegation or disclosure from a child. Investigations are undertaken following guidelines and placing authorities are informed. Staff recruited are safe, suitable and rigorously checked, this ensures that children's safety and welfare are protected.

Staff promote positive behaviour and at times use physical restraint. These generally relate to individuals who have found it hard to settle and have tested staff out to see if the boundaries will be reinforced. Recording of restraint is good and mediation is provided afterwards between staff and children. This helps children develop their emotional language and reflect calmly on incidents. Key to this process is that staff reflect on their interventions. Children are all relatively young and at times require physical interventions to ensure their safety and those around them.

Children's safety is given high priority. The environment is safe; a full refurbishment has resulted in a well maintained property where all appliances and systems have been newly installed. This includes fire prevention equipment. Children understand how to exit safely following a fire evacuation practice.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed well by an experienced Registered Manager and business partner who are fully involved in the day-to-day running of the home. They have built on the successes of their first childcare service to open for the second children's home. Staff who are familiar with the ethos and aims, have transferred to the new home. The management team are highly child focused and have emphasis on ensuring that staff's practice is consistent with policies and children's individual placement plans. Managers work shifts including some weekend cover. While this has its benefits, it has left some management monitoring tasks uncompleted. There are also records that require a more detailed oversight and format which the manager has not monitored thoroughly. This could potentially compromise children's welfare. Independent monitoring reports are carried out monthly as required, although the home is in the very early stages of operation.

The managers and staff strive hard to promote the best outcomes for children. There is strong ambition and drive to develop the home further and ensure care is of the highest quality. Development plans include this, although the current focus is to settle newly placed children. Managers are aware that there are gaps in some monitoring and clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses of the service to date. Placing authorities know the providers and social workers report that they are very keen to place children at the home. Managers are extremely careful to ensure they can meet the individual needs of each child. This is given the utmost priority when considering any new placements and has resulted in a calm and settled house.

One of the key strengths of the home is the experienced management team and high calibre of staff employed. The majority of staff have qualified social worker or teacher status. Other staff have vocational qualifications to level three and also undertake a very good range of mandatory training courses. Professional development of staff is fostered well and consequently staff are motivated and positive. This gives young people good role models and consistent informed support.

There is a secure office for the safe storage of children's records. These are concisely updated and contribute very well to staff's understanding of individualised care. Any incidents are investigated and appropriate action is taken. However, on one occasion Ofsted was not notified of a significant event, although the placing authority and social workers have been informed.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.