

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Steve Pearson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a private company and provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

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 excellent progress in all areas of their development after they come to live at this children's home.

They receive care which is personalised to meet the needs of each young person. Levels of staffing are appropriate to enable the team to meet young people's needs effectively. Relationships between the staff and young people are very positive and this results in young people behaving well and making such good progress.

The house is comfortable and the atmosphere is homely. Suitable arrangements are in place to enable young people to have a full say in how the home is run. However, the registered provider's arrangements to distribute Ofsted's pre-inspection surveys to young people and other important stakeholders are weak. This makes it more difficult to evaluate the quality of care before the start of the inspection.

The home is fully staffed by a permanent team of male and female residential care workers. Young people therefore benefit from good levels of consistency. The staff receive a broad range of training in important and relevant subjects. The Registered Manager is not yet fully qualified but is making progress towards this.

Young people generally behave well and the staff rarely need to physically intervene or issue punishments. There are some minor shortfalls in the recording of restraints and sanctions.

As a result of the current inspection there is one requirement and two recommendations.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of discipline a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include the time when the sanction was given, the names of any other staff present and the signature of the person making the record. (Regulation 17B (3))	10/01/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure all children can communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support. In particular this relates to enabling children to complete pre-inspection surveys sent to the registered provider by Ofsted (NMS 1.3)
- ensure that the Registered Manager gains a relevant management qualification within three years of their appointment. This means by 15 December 2014. (NMS 14.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make excellent progress as a result of the care they receive at this home. They gain self-esteem because the staff provide them with individualised care which meets their specific needs. They are encouraged and rewarded to succeed and this progress consolidates their feelings of achievement and motivation.

After admission to the home, all young people make excellent progress in their educational attendance and achievement. Those who have previously achieved little and who may have not gone school for a significant time, soon get into the habit of daily attendance. The registered provider has a school nearby which some young people attend. Others continue to attend the school they were attending prior to admission and some attend college or work placements. All young people present during the inspection showed they have made a dramatic improvement in their educational outcomes compared to before they came to live here. For example,

average school attendance levels are consistently between 90% and 100%. Additionally several young people are now studying for GCSE exams.

Young people also make good progress in achieving improved health. This includes improvements in self-care, dental and optical health and improvements in their emotional well-being.

Young people benefit significantly from contact with their family and friends because of the proactive approach of the Registered Manager and staff. Relationships which may have been strained prior to admission to the home improve over time. Parents receive helpful advice from the Registered Manager and staff where necessary and this support helps them in their relationships with their children. As a result young people's emotional well-being and behaviour improves.

After admission to the home, those young people who previously may have had a history of offending or going missing cease such behaviour and become more settled. They gain insight into their previous behaviour; they develop a more mature attitude and choose to behave more positively.

Quality of care

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

The staff enable the young people to have a full say in the running of the home and in the content of their care plans. There are regular young people's meetings and actions to be taken are recorded and checked on next time. This has resulted in changes, for example, to the meals provided and in the leisure activities. The registered provider's arrangements for distributing Ofsted's pre-inspection surveys to important stakeholders such as the young people, their parents and the staff are weak. This means it is more difficult for the regulator to get a clear understanding of what people think about the quality of care before the inspection. Effective advocacy arrangements are in place which enable young people to have their views taken up by an independent person.

Young people behave well and have very good relationships with the staff. One member of staff summed this up saying, 'we have a professional but relaxed approach.' In their surveys completed during the inspection, young people said, 'the quality of care is very good and one of the best things about the home is how well we get on with the staff.'

The staff provide a healthy environment and effective arrangements are in place to ensure young people's physical, emotional, dental and optical health. Young people and staff receive regular support from an assistant psychologist who provides advice and support on a range of matters relating to emotional health. The staff ensure young people eat a healthy diet and that there are plenty of opportunities for exercise.

Young people are able to take part in a wide range of activities, both within the

home and in the community. This helps them develop their social skills as well as helping them to be stimulated and entertained.

The Registered Manager and staff are proactive in promoting education. Young people receive rewards for attending school and they make good progress. The home has a computer and a range of books and the staff routinely help young people with homework and reading.

Young people's needs are clearly laid out in residential placement plans which are informative and up to date. Each young person has a key worker who monitors the plans to make sure they are relevant and complete. Young people are involved in the creation and maintenance of the plans. This enables the staff and placing authority to identify how they feel about the decisions made regarding their care. Consequently young people feel involved and more in control of their lives.

The Registered Manager and staff have close and effective working relationships with a wide range of external agencies. These provide young people with support in promoting their education, physical and emotional health and in meeting their needs relating to hobbies and leisure.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The Registered Manager and staff care for young people safely. In surveys completed during the inspection, young people said, 'we feel safe and there is no bullying because we all get on together.' Young people also confirmed that they know they can complete a complaint form if ever they want to.

The team are effective at promoting positive behaviour. Young people show a marked reduction in risk-taking behaviour after being admitted to the home. The staff very rarely need to restrain any young person and the use of sanctions is also infrequent. However, when sanctions are issued, the staff do not always record them in sufficient detail which means there is weakened accountability.

The staff receive regular and informative training about how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. They demonstrated at the inspection that they know and understand how to respond to such issues appropriately to ensure children's welfare is protected. The staff assess the hazards that may affect young people effectively. The risk assessment documentation for individual young people makes clear the significance of different hazards and how these are to be reduced.

Young people rarely go missing from the home and if they do they return quickly. An up to date protocol is in place which the staff follow if anyone does go absent. This reflects national guidance provided by the government and is also agreed with the local police.

The premises are safe. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. The staff also conduct regular tests of fire detection systems.

Appropriate recruitment arrangements are in place which help to ensure that staff employed to work with children are suitable. Recruitment decisions are strengthened because young people are involved in the selection process.

Leadership and management

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

At the previous inspection Ofsted judged that the overall effectiveness of the home was good and made five recommendations. The shortfalls have mostly been addressed. As a result young people are better-informed about the home because the children's guide now contains photographs; safety has improved because equipment checks are more frequent; and the skills and knowledge of the staff team has increased because they have all completed or are undertaking training to gain qualifications. The home has not completed one recommendation which Ofsted made at the previous inspection. This relates to the recording of sanctions and so this has now become a requirement.

The home is kept clean and well-maintained and any repairs are completed quickly. This helps young people to feel well cared-for.

Young people receive useful information about the home in a children's guide. This is given to them before admission and informs them about the home and how it operates. The home also has a comprehensive Statement of Purpose which describes the function and operation of the home in more detail.

The home is managed well by an experienced Registered Manager who is supported by two senior staff. The Registered Manager is appropriately qualified in caring for young people. She is not yet qualified in management although she is undertaking the relevant studies. The three-year deadline by when the Registered Manager must gain the management qualifications is twelve months away. These qualifications are necessary to equip her with the skills and knowledge to manage the children's home effectively.

The resources provided to the home are suitable. The staffing levels are appropriate to meet the needs of young people. For example, there are always two and often three members of staff present in the home. The young people know the staff well and there are no vacancies in the staff team.

The staff feel positive about the training they receive and they say it is relevant and supportive to the work they do with young people on a daily basis. All the staff are appropriately qualified to diploma level or they are currently undertaking these qualifications. They are supported by regular supervision which is recorded for clarity and accountability. New staff receive more frequent supervision to provide effective

oversight of their practice until they build up their experience and confidence.

The Registered Manager monitors the quality of care effectively in order to identify shortfalls and take any actions necessary. In line with legislation, an external person also visits the home once a month to assess the working practices of the home. They also make recommendations where necessary and check on completion of these actions at their next visit. The home therefore has a strong capacity for continuing improvement.

Records relating to young people are clear, comprehensive and up to date. These enable the staff to understand what the needs of young people are and to be clear about their own role in helping to meet these needs.

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.