

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael Williams
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Date of last inspection	4 January 2010
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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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 is in a rural location. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children of either sex, from 12 to under 18 years, with emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties. Young people may stay beyond the age of 18 provided the home reduces the number of children accordingly and cares mainly for children.

The provider operates an independent school on the site that is registered with the Department for Children, Schools and Families. This school was monitored by Ofsted in November 2009. The provider runs another children's home nearby and the two homes share a staff team and many activities.

At the time of this inspection, four children and one young adult were accommodated and present.

Summary

This was an unannounced full inspection of all the key national minimum standards for children's homes. Its key findings are that each of the outcome areas inspected are good, therefore the overall judgement is good.

Particularly good features include: the meals provided; the promotion of young people's health; the focus on safeguarding children; the effective countering of bullying; behaviour management; the individual support young people receive; the focus on young people's education; the support of young people's contact with their families and carers; consultation with young people; the focus on increasing young people's independence; the promotion of equality and diversity; and the manager's work to continually improve the home's provision.

These findings concur with inspection surveys from six young people, accommodated at the home during this inspection, two placing social workers and one parent. When asked what they like about the home, one young person said 'everything's ok', another said 'staff', 'going out' and drew a smiley face, and another said 'being nice, giving me things to do, let me go to the shop on my own.' None of them thought the home could be better. One parent commented their child 'is happy and settled and all his needs are being met. As a parent I couldn't ask for more.' One social worker commented 'this is an excellent placement', that for their young person it 'offers a homely and beneficial placement.' Another social worker commented 'I think this has been a very positive placement for [my young person] and I am very happy with it.'

At present the home does not: maintain a record of medicines they keep for and administer to young people; include their use of surveillance with young people, for safeguarding purposes, in their Statement of Purpose; and reflect their current arrangements for child protection in this Statement. Actions are therefore reported regarding these shortfalls.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection was an interim inspection that ended in January 2010. To secure future improvement, it required the home to take one action regarding their record of their use of

restraint and sanctions. The home has taken action and has included a record of the overall effectiveness and any consequences of their use of these measures.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary and cultural needs, and they have opportunities to plan, shop for, and prepare meals. All six young people surveyed said they liked the food at the home. One commented that they 'have a say about what goes in the meal planners every week, sometimes go shopping, and am allowed to help cook.' One social worker commented that their young person 'with the support of the staff is now healthily eating and exercising.' Another social worker commented that their young person 'is continually encouraged to eat a well-balanced diet.' Young people help with the home's chickens and vegetable garden that provide them with fresh food.

Young people's good health is promoted by their health needs being identified and services being provided to meet them. Case tracking showed that one young person had an up to date health care plan covering each of their health needs, and a health care record of each of their health appointments.

Young people's welfare is safeguarded by the home's procedures for administering medicines and providing first aid treatment. Since this area was inspected in January 2010, the home has confirmed with Ofsted that the consultant psychiatrist their provider employs no longer prescribes medication for their young people. This is now reflected in the home's Statement of Purpose that says 'the psychiatrist does not have a prescriptive role but is rather consultative with the young person's own GP.' Five of the six young people surveyed said staff look after them when they are unwell; the other young person said they have not been unwell. Young people's case files include details of any medicines the home keeps for and administers to them, but an equivalent record for the home was not being maintained. An action is therefore reported regarding this.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected and their information is confidentially handled. One parent commented 'my son has his own room and staff respect his privacy and knock before entering.' Young people's case records and information are securely stored and confidentially discussed.

Young people know how to complain as this is the title of the young people's guide to the home's complaints procedure. It includes details of how they may contact external organisations such as Ofsted. The home has received one complaint since their last inspection from a young person. This was satisfactorily resolved through a young people's group meeting.

There are systems in place to ensure that young people are protected from abuse, which are known and understood by all staff. To promote child protection, the home works closely with their Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Case tracking showed that one young person's case file included a record of their child protection issues, and that each one had been referred to the LSCB.

Young people are protected from bullying. Five young people surveyed said 'no' and one 'not really' to the question about whether they get bullied by other children.

Young people who are absent from the home without consent are protected in line with the home's written guidance. The home maintains a 'run away and improper absence record' where the last record of such an instance is July 2008.

Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff response to inappropriate behaviour. In response to an action previously reported, the home's record of their use of restraint and sanctions now includes a record of the overall effectiveness and any consequences of their use of these measures. One young person commented that they think the rules at the home are fair and that if they do not follow them they 'get a sanction and told why'. They also referred to their 'incentive money', which the home gives to young people for achieving agreed individual behaviour targets. One social worker commented that when placed their young person 'had a range of challenging behaviour and physical violence. This young man has been managed well so these issues are now minimal.' Another social worker commented that their young person 'has an individual protocol for managing his behaviour.'

Positive steps are taken to keep young people, staff and visitors safe from risk from fire and other hazards. One social worker commented that their young person 'has risk assessments which are continually updated based on his changing behaviour.' The home uses electronic monitoring on most young people's bedroom doors for the purpose of safeguarding their welfare, but this is not included in their Statement of Purpose. An action is therefore reported regarding this.

There is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with young people in the home. The recruitment record of a member of staff who started working at the home since the last inspection included all of the information required.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive good individualised support to meet their particular needs. All six young people surveyed said they can talk to someone if they get scared or worried. This could be staff at the home, especially their key workers, or external professionals who visit the home. The home's provider employs a consultant clinical psychologist and psychiatrist who provide input to the young people, and the staff working with them, when needed. One parent commented that 'links with relevant professional and outside contacts are well maintained.'

Young people's educational attainment is promoted and supported. Young people at the home of compulsory school age attend the home's school. The school was inspected by Ofsted in May 2009, and in November 2009 an Ofsted monitoring visit found that the school had made satisfactory progress in implementing the action plan agreed in May. Young people at the home who are past compulsory school age attend college and participate in a programme of education and work experience. All six young people surveyed said they get help from the home with their school or college work. Three young people were having post-16 college admission interviews for different courses.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have their needs effectively assessed and placement plans outlining how their needs will be met are implemented and regularly reviewed. Case tracking showed that one young person had day-to-day arrangements for their care and a plan to meet their assessed needs. These included each major element of a placement plan. Five of the six young people surveyed said they know about decisions that are made about them, for example at placement and review meetings. One social worker commented that their young person 'has a big input into his care and decisions made about him.'

Young people are able to maintain constructive contact with their families and carers. All six young people surveyed said they can contact people important to them. One parent commented that the home 'makes sure [their son] visits regularly and contact is regular.'

Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. The home was working with two young people to effectively manage their planned move to and their planned admission from their nearby sister children's home.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. Consultation systems in place at the home include key worker sessions and young people's house meetings. One young person commented that 'in young people's meetings and activity planners' they feel able to make their views known and to have a say in what happens at the home. One social worker commented they 'have noticed the change in [their young person] and he is much more able to express his opinion.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

In terms of preparation for leaving care, the needs of some of the young people at the home are such that they will always continue to need some level of care. To this end, the home was working with one young person to effectively manage their planned move to their nearby sister children's home that is seeking to become registered as a home for 16 to 25 year olds. Nonetheless, the home actively encourages young people to increase their independence skills. All six young people surveyed said they get help from the home to be independent.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation that on the whole is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard, providing adequate facilities for their use. Through their decoration and pictures, young people have appropriately personalised their bedrooms. The home's sitting room was about to be decorated in a way suggested by the young people.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a written Statement of Purpose that mainly accurately describes what it sets out to do for the young people it accommodates. It was last revised during the month of this inspection. However, its section on child protection still refers to their local authority's Area Child Protection Procedures that have been replaced with Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures that the home has a copy of and follows. An action is therefore reported regarding this.

Young people receive the care and services they need from staff who are competent, sufficient in number and experience, and suitably trained. The home's Statement of Purpose includes its staffing structure, and the relevant experience, qualifications and training of its staff team. It also includes the range of internal and external training programmes accessible to staff. Staff have either achieved, are completing, or are waiting to start relevant professional or national vocational qualifications.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is most evident in the work the home does to counteract the discrimination, and sometimes the exclusion, their young people with emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties have previously experienced, and to promote their dignity and rights and their inclusion in the local community and wider society. One social worker commented that their young person with learning difficulties 'is accessing more community services than ever before.'

The care of young people accommodated is continually monitored and improved in the light of information about how the home is operating. The Registered Manager achieves this by completing a monthly report on each of the matters they are required to monitor, and by identifying any action that needs to be taken. Their internal monitoring is supported by the provider's external monitoring of the home each month.

Young people's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. Young people's case records include all the information required.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
13	ensure that the home's records include details of the receipt, administration and disposal of any medicine given to any child (regulation 29 (1))	10 May 2010
26	ensure that the home's use of electronic monitoring, for the purpose of safeguarding young people's welfare, is included in the home's Statement of Purpose (regulation 22)	10 May 2010
1	ensure that the arrangements made for child protection, included in the home's Statement of Purpose, are up to date. (regulation 4 (1))	10 May 2010

Recommendations

There are no recommendations.