

Inspection report for children's home

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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 home is registered to care for up to six males between 11 and 17 years of age with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Six young people were living at the home and it was possible to speak to five of them.

The house is an extended detached cottage with sufficient rooms for young people to pursue their leisure interests and hobbies. Each young person has an individual bedroom. The cinema, parks and sports and athletics facilities are a short journey away. Public transport routes connect the home with the local community and the national rail link. Shops and supermarkets are easily accessible within the surrounding community.

This children's home is also registered as a school with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The home employs a full-time teacher as well as classroom support to facilitate in-house education. Opportunities for the young people to attend different educational placements, including local schools and colleges, is also facilitated.

Summary

This inspection was unannounced. This report comments on every outcome heading covering all the key children's homes national minimum standards. Progress against recommendations made during the last inspection was evaluated.

This is a good service in every area with many outstanding features. The service history shows that the home's management and operation is coordinated very well. A high quality of practice is provided that enables the young people to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. Young people's needs are consistently met by a competent and qualified team of staff who present opportunities and experiences for continuous growth and development.

Quality assurance systems demonstrate the management team are reflecting on the need to continually develop the service in line with new initiatives. There has been good success with pathway planning and independence training. Group work is well established and this links into the education support. Thematic work and projects are coordinated very well. Staff are also very efficient at supporting young people's health. Safeguarding support is coordinated on many levels and this ensures young people remain safe and happy.

This report highlights an action and some recommendations to support practice developments. Monthly reports on the conduct of the home contain limited information and lack objectivity. The staff vetting, recruitment and selection process does not always produce full and satisfactory information. Staff induction does not include a response to any weaknesses identified at the interview stage. Ongoing equality and diversity training is required.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations made at the last inspection had been addressed. More staff completed their National Vocational Qualifications at Level 3 and 4. The skills and knowledge gained have

improved continuity with staff practice. A new front door lock was fitted in line with fire precautions.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Health plans at this home are comprehensive and up-to-date allowing health support to be coordinated extremely well. An experienced member of staff has delegated responsibility for medicines management. Quality assurance systems monitor practice closely and this means that it remains safe. Comprehensive training is provided. There is a partnership arrangement with a leading chemist to support all aspects of medicines management. A social worker commented; 'I have found the home to be excellent in all health aspects'.

The young people confirmed satisfaction with how health and well-being are being handled. 'Staff are good at caring for us when we are not well', was one comment received from the young people. They confirmed that they are familiar with their health arrangements and are fully aware of the contents of their health plans. Routine medical, optical and dental appointments are organised by key workers. Statutory medical examinations take place. The key workers support the young people to lead safe and healthier lives. Specialist advice and help is organised to support mental health when required. The staff at the home are good at encouraging the young people to engage with supportive services. Staff are fully aware of individual's health needs.

The key worker role is also well developed to deliver health promotion work and group work covering matters such as sexual relationships, smoking cessation, drug misuse and healthy living. Many of these areas are covered within the educational curriculum. A tremendous amount of progress has been made with thematic approaches being coordinated between care and education disciplines. A seamless response is evident and this is now contributing well towards the young people's personal development.

Policy and procedural guidance to support health and well-being is clear. These have been developed over many years through consultation with leading chemists and pharmacy inspectors. The management team ensure that full health histories are gained as part of the referral and introduction procedures. Parental permissions for emergency treatment, and for administering medicines and first aid have been gained. This means that young people's health is promoted from the start of the placement. This remains a key priority throughout the time they live at the home.

Catering arrangements are managed well. Menus are planned by the young people. Minimum staff input is needed relating to healthy eating. Being healthy through good diet and exercise is recognised by all the young people. They work closely alongside staff in preparing meals. Many have developed skills through independence training and regularly prepare their own food. Culturally themed meals are encouraged by staff and birthdays and special occasions celebrated. Staff recognise that heritage is important to the young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

All the young people present at this inspection were happy and settled. Individual personalities have been enabled to prosper at this home due to effective staff support. No concern relating

to bullying or safeguarding children procedures is evident. The young people have an appreciation of and respect for their peers. They accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and understand how they contribute to community life. The peer group dynamic remains manageable on virtually all occasions meaning that the vast majority of experiences being gained are positive.

Every young person living at the home commented that they felt safe. Accurate records are maintained showing the home is managed well, providing suitable physical safety and security for the young people resident. The management team has established some excellent operational systems. Social workers confirm that they are highly satisfied with the services being provided.

Staff have received suitable training in order that they can respond appropriately to allegations or suspicions of abuse. Policy and procedural guidance has been established at this home that is consistent with local safeguarding team protocols. Suitable safeguarding and complaints information is provided for the young people within a children's guide. They are fully aware of the contents of their information and they acknowledge that people suffer no recrimination if complaints and grumbles are made.

Staff with key worker responsibilities uphold children's rights as well as providing daily support to achieve and develop. Respectful communication is the norm at the home. An excellent atmosphere was maintained throughout the visit. Residents respond very well to praise. There is effective use of positive reinforcement opposed to use of sanctions. Support being provided ensures that the young people can make choices about how to lead safe lives. No concerns were highlighted relating to physical intervention or missing from home. As part of the home's agreed safeguarding procedures the young people always reflect on incidents that they are involved in. Transparent reporting allows staff practice to be monitored and this means residents remain safe at all times. A social worker commented, 'Staff have an in-depth knowledge of missing from home procedures'. The reporting systems and actions taken in the past in response to significant incidents have been appropriate.

All aspects of health and safety are managed well. Certification is held centrally and this shows regular servicing of fire, gas and electrical installations. A fire risk assessment of the premises has been completed. This is reviewed annually by qualified staff. Regular fire drills are carried out. A tour of the accommodation revealed no hazards to young people's safety. The home has a nominated representative to support health and safety and the service provider operates a health and safety committee to provide additional input. A wide range of risk assessments have been produced to support practice. 'Risk assessments are always up to date and comprehensive' was a comment made by a social worker.

The responsible organisation has recently had a head office audit by Ofsted National Provider Scheme. Checks carried out on the quality of the vetting and recruitment procedures revealed some gaps in the personnel files examined. The responsible organisation is addressing the shortfalls highlighted. A single staffing register was presented at this inspection and this showed staff do not start work ahead of being in receipt of an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. The end to end process of recruitment was found to be a little unclear. To strengthen the recruitment practice interview panel members are to attend formal training in line with DCSF guidance. The home's Registered Manager has already completed this training. A robust checking system had been evident during previous inspections. Suitable vetting of visitors to the home is undertaken with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted. The home's

policy on the management of voluntary workers, agency staff and building contactors makes clear how these people will be managed on site.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff practice engages the young people in a range of activities to develop skills and individual potential through new experiences. The knowledge that staff have enables a timely individual response to be taken when the young people are most in need. Support being provided is coordinated within a multidisciplinary framework, ensuring children and young people make progress and achieve goals. A young person commented, 'Staff are good at helping you achieve what you want to do'.

All work undertaken is subject to regular review through statutory procedures. The management team at this home are good at linking up with specialist services. They are also quick to identify each individual's interests and have been very successful in supporting children and young people's aspirations. A social worker commented, 'The progress that my young person has made since his initial admission is remarkable, he has made massive progress in all areas of his life including school'. Comprehensive records are maintained on all the work undertaken.

Relationships are excellent allowing the individual and collective needs of the young people living at the home to be met. Detailed plans are available to show how individualised support is being coordinated. There is much evidence to show that plans are implemented efficiently. There have been successes in main stream school attendance, GCSE attainment and the successful completion of college training courses. Each young person has access to clubs within the community. Many have made new friends. This assists the young people in acquiring an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures.

Holidays are planned regularly and these provide thematic learning experiences. Young people commented, 'There is always something to do'; 'Activities are good'. This is a key strength at this home. There is an outdoor pursuits curriculum also being coordinated. A good risk assessment framework is operated for trips and education visits. The young people gather certificates on their achievements and there is photographic evidence displayed on the activities and holidays being enjoyed. The resources available at the home are used well to promote personal growth and development. Recreation is clearly linked to developing healthy life styles for each resident. Suitable finances are made available.

In-house education is supported very well by the social work staff who coordinate the 24-hour curriculum of education and care. There is a separate management structure for education staff. The Registered Manager has efficiently managed the interface between both disciplines. The experienced teacher and the full-time classroom assistant make sure young people develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. Interactions show that they have developed skills, have made progress, achieve and develop potential and improve future life opportunities. They are also able to distinguish right from wrong and respect the law. A recent Ofsted education monitoring visit commented that the curriculum is well matched to the needs and interests of the students. A social worker commented that, 'The home fully support and understand the needs of my young people with regard to education'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Outcomes for the young people are excellent and demonstrate that individualised care is being provided. The needs of the young people living at this home are met exceptionally well. There is good clarity established within records which provide a permanent overview of the work that takes place. Plans highlight the response being taken to equality and diversity matters including religion, cultural identity and heritage. Information provides a clear account of individual's progress and successes as well as the occasional disappointment. The young people provided many positive comments on their experiences at the home. Referring to what the home is good at young people commented: 'Keeping us safe'; 'Listening to the lads that live here'; 'Keeping us out of trouble'.

Communication and appropriate consultation between staff, children and their parents, social workers and other professionals is evident. The ability of staff to maintain strong supportive relationships with residents ensures placement stability. An education inspector recently reported on observing positive and open relationships and a shared sense of humour and a friendly approach that makes for a relaxed atmosphere around the home.

It is clear that the management team works hard to ensure placements are focussed. Regular written summaries are produced on residents' progress. This shows a clear commitment to improving the quality of care and experiences being gained at the home. All the young people are treated fairly, with practice capable of supporting individuals living there. Comprehensive risk assessments support planning.

The home's management team has established systems to manage placement arrangements. Systems are known by staff and sensibly implemented in order that the young people comprehend their full arrangements in place. All referrals and introductions have been successfully matched to staff's skills and experience. Consultation with partner agencies and professionals occur throughout the time that the young people live at the home.

Practice at this home fully embraces the Every Child Matters agenda designed to improve children's services. Reviews occur at the correct frequency allowing placement plans to be monitored and adjusted. Staff discuss review recommendations after meetings ensuring that the young people fully comprehend decisions affecting them. Comprehensive reports are prepared for each review. Contact arrangements are established for each resident. A social worker recently thanked staff for the level of support they provided when managing young people's contact. The assistance provided had ensured the whole family gained a positive experience.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The management team is familiar with the formal response to pathway and aftercare planning. These plans are developed through statutory review procedures and they run in conjunction with other plans setting out placement needs. The age and stage of residents' placements meant that two formal pathway plans had been established. Arrangements are implemented well in practice and the young people are fully aware of the contents of their plans. Placement experiences provided at the home allow residents to gain many life skills, to support them into adulthood. Programmes operated, routines followed and placement planning are clearly linked. There is ongoing independent training provided while living at the home which is equipping young people with skills for their future and the world of work.

The home is safe and decorated to a good standard. There is ample space and resources to meet the needs of the young people. Ongoing maintenance work is maintaining a good first impression. The design and layout of the home manages to retain a homely and comfortable feel. The use of the space and the different rooms is well thought out. The home was clean and tidy throughout. Each young person has their own bedroom. Bedrooms are personalised. Bathroom and toilet provision is separate for staff and the young people, affording suitable levels of privacy. Bathrooms and toilet facilities comply with national minimum standards for children's homes. The home is situated in a location that takes into account transport, education, health and leisure facilities. The staff at the home are maintaining appropriate links with the local community.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Service history shows the operation and management of the home remains to a good standard. The staff and management team have maintained high standards between inspections. Efficient management of young people's needs has led to stable lifestyles being experienced. Practice meets with the requirements of children's homes national minimum standards and associated regulations. The staff team understand and have skills to support the needs of the young people. Staff are extremely well motivated.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The management team reflects on practice and continues to develop the services being provided. Staff members are utilising important equality prompts within their practice. Ongoing training is being provided by the Registered Manager to ensure clear links are made with equality and diversity matters throughout the 24-hour curriculum. Equality and diversity is becoming firmly established within the culture and ethos of the home. There is good policy and guidance. Fairness is reflected within staff's practice to ensure positive experiences continue to be gained. Staff are good at listening to residents and allow individuals opportunities to voice their views, opinions and concerns. Transparent communication with residents and social workers demonstrates a real commitment to further improving equality and diversity in practice.

The home is being managed well and run efficiently providing a safe and stable environment for the young people living there. Checks are in place to monitor the home's operation. Monthly reports are being produced but these do not always provide sufficient detail on the discussions that take place. Reports, up until recently, have provided few objective comments. A new reporting format had recently been introduced to address this shortfall. This part of the home's quality assurance framework has been weak. In-house procedures do generate good evidence on consultation taking place via exit interviews, periodic surveys and regular meetings with the young people.

The home's management team have produced a written development plan outlining how the home's operation will be maintained. This is linked to staff training and development. There is consistent use of self-evaluation and improvements identified are managed in a timely and effective way.

The Registered Manager is experienced and fully qualified. The deputy manager also has many years of experience and some of the required qualifications. Both demonstrated many competencies as well as identifying where their skills sets can be improved. Deployment of staff is good. The staffing structure has not experienced many changes between inspections.

Staff retention has been excellent. Each shift has a nominated team or shift leader. Rotas demonstrate that staffing levels are being maintained. Staff are clear about their roles, balancing their work so that the individual and collective needs of the young people are met while ensuring that the necessary administrative tasks are undertaken.

Records at this home show a clarity of purpose in how staff are being managed. Induction and foundation training is provided. The Registered Manager has acted upon comments made by Ofsted National Provider Scheme and reviewed the home's induction process. Any gaps highlighted in staff's knowledge at the interview stage will be included within a tailor made induction process. Supervision records are good and are linked to staff's personal development and appraisal. There is access to National Vocational Qualification training at Level 3 and 4 and the Registered Manager's Award. These are recognised qualifications to work and manage children in a residential setting. The staff team all have relevant qualifications.

Staff have good written guidance, policies and procedures to support their practice. The home's Statement of Purpose provides good information in accordance with regulations. Aims and objectives as well as the philosophy of care are outlined. Records are easy to access within two office areas. Staff use guidance to ensure a consistent response to meeting residents presenting needs. It is also possible to access policy and procedural guidance on line via the responsible organisation's intranet. Some health and safety guidance is still in draft form.

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
32	prepare accurate and suitably detailed reports, on a monthly basis, on the conduct of the home. (Regulation 33 (4) (a) (c))	31 May 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure full and satisfactory information (evidence) is maintained throughout the responsible organisation's staff vetting, recruitment and selection process (NMS 27)
- ensure staff receive further training to develop knowledge on wider equality and diversity matters and ensure these are recognised within their practice. (NMS 7.1 & 31.5)
- ensure newly appointed staff have induction to fully suit their needs; this should include a response to any weaknesses identified at the interview stage. (NMS 31.2)