

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Christy Wannop
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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

This is a large children's home that is also a residential special school, approved by the Department for Education to educate 25 children and provide care for up to 23 children. A large national charity operates this establishment.

It was first registered in January 2004 and provides care for children who are aged between four and 18 years, and who have a visual impairment and emotional or behavioural difficulties, learning and physical disabilities, or sensory impairment. Children do stay at the home until they complete their final year of secondary education at the age of 19 years.

The number of children who can be cared for in single rooms is 19, but it is registered for 23 to enable sharing of bedrooms where requested and suitable. Most children are resident 52 weeks a year with varying levels of home contact; returning to parents and carers at weekends or holiday breaks with some children living at the home on a permanent basis. All children are admitted as looked after children and are assessed and reviewed as such by placing authorities.

There is 24 hour care provided by a staff team that includes: two nurses with a learning disability background, speech and language therapists and a physiotherapy service. Children have complex needs and admission processes ensure that responsibilities for meeting health needs are clear and practical. The service has contracted some additional support from local primary care trusts.

The school is managed by the head of education with a Registered Manager for the children's home. Children live in a large building with two wings linked by a meeting hall and central kitchen. They live in one of four units, in groups of no more than six. There are two ground floor and two upper floor self-contained units. There are shared laundry facilities and a central kitchen, though children eat in the units.

All children go to the school in a separate building on the site. A major expansion is currently underway to increase the numbers of pupils, build a new school and five individual residential bungalows for up to 30 children to live in. Building work for the new children's home is nearing completion and current children expect to move into three self-contained ground floor bungalows in late February 2011.

There are currently 15 young people in residence. The inspector visited all units around lunchtime and spent time with six children in three of the four units, as some children were at school or out swimming.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced interim inspection and covered all the key national minimum standards in the Every Child Matters outcome group of staying safe. It also followed up on two recommendations made at the key inspection in October 2010. The service continues to take satisfactory action to meet these good practice recommendations.

This service provides care of a good standard for children with profound disabilities, visual impairments and complex health needs. Children have safe care while staff promote new experiences and community involvement. Their dignity is valued and their feelings are respected. Care planning is well developed and puts the child firmly at the heart of all assessment, planning and review. Children benefit from privacy in individual, well-furnished bedrooms. There is a committed and caring staff team, good therapeutic support and care is shared with parents and families. Children are cared for by adults who are safely recruited, well trained and supported by an experienced senior management team. The management of the service is in transition with the retirement of the previous manager and the application by the deputy to become the Registered Manager.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection identified two areas for improvement: monitoring within 24 hours the use of physical intervention, and extending the communication opportunities for children using practical support and technology.

The manager now makes sure that staff bring incident reports of physical intervention to her as soon as possible, so that she can monitor and ensure that all use of restraint is within the behavioural policy.

The service has completed a review of the current communication needs and equipment within the school and children's home, but is yet to meet to consider how the range of communication tools, technology and opportunities for children can be enhanced in the children's home practice.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The arrangements for ensuring children are protected by safe care practice are good. There is established procedure and practice for promoting dignity, and staff show respect by talking with children, not about them. They understand when children

need space and time alone in their bedrooms. There is an effective complaints procedure known to professionals and parents and all complaints are properly followed up with action where needed. A professional social worker says, 'They always put the child first and work in a very positive way with children's families.' Staff advocate on children's behalf at regular house meetings, where children's issues are the focus. Staff manage children's needs to reduce the impact of some challenging or dominant behaviour on more vulnerable children, but there is no bullying. There is careful matching of children in each of the four units and on outings and holidays to ensure that each child has a positive experience and staff are good at promoting well-being.

Safeguarding arrangements are good and staff promote children's right to protection through comprehensive arrangements for safeguarding. Staff at all levels are trained and know how to use the safeguarding procedures so that welfare is promoted and children are protected from abuse. No child is able to leave the premises alone because of their extreme vulnerability and children get the close supervision they need to make sure they do not run off in dangerous situations.

Children's behaviour is sometimes challenging and all behaviour is influenced by the children's profound learning, physical and sensory impairment and disability. Staff help children to behave well and encourage socially acceptable behaviour through well thought out constructive and consistent responses. There are developing skills amongst care and nursing staff to provide an enhanced behavioural approach. Staff have an increasing depth of awareness about the impact that the sensory impairment has on social interactions. Professionals say the service works very effectively with children with special needs and manages children's behaviour positively. Staff understand that children express anxiety and emotion through their behaviour and social workers comment positively about good outcomes from increased use of calming techniques with children. Staff sometimes need to intervene physically to stop children injuring themselves or others. Their training provides them with enough specific techniques to cover the required interventions when it is necessary to guide children away from others or to spend time alone in their rooms, or to keep children within their bedrooms to prevent hurt or injury.

Health and safety systems are well established, professional and systematic. Staff are trained and knowledgeable so the safety of the environment is good. Each child has a comprehensive, individual assessment of the risks they face. This includes what needs to happen to keep them safe in the home, on the way to school and out and about in the community, as well as from risks in relation to their behaviour. While the external environment on the campus is undergoing tremendous change and building work, the safety of the children remains a high priority for the staff. The service has established at previous inspections that children are looked after by staff who are safely recruited through a rigorous, well established recruitment procedure.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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 that practical support is provided in the home for children who use alternative forms of communication to enable them to communicate their wishes, needs and concerns. For example, consider use of technology and government good practice guidance in making information accessible to children. (NMS 7.4)