

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Carole Moore
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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 in a rural location. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children of either sex, who have emotional or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities, and aged from 12 to 17 years. Young people may stay beyond the age of 18 years provided the home reduces the number of children accordingly, and cares mainly for children.

The provider operates an independent special school on the site that is registered with the Department for Education. The provider runs a home for younger adults nearby, which is registered with the Care Quality Commission. The two homes share a staff team and many activities.

### Overall effectiveness

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

Young people with high levels of complex needs are supported to make good overall progress. Staff remain committed to improving the life chances of young people. Staff seek all available opportunities to enable young people to positively engage and enjoy their experiences by employing strategies to reduce young people's stress and anxiety associated with individual disabilities.

Young people are safe and feel safe because of the high levels of staffing and supervision. This is underpinned by the staff's knowledge-base, thorough training and adopting best practice and supervision which are a key priority of the organisation. Young people receive care in line with plans and their needs are central to daily practice. Staff and professionals respond creatively to improve strategies based upon young people's preferences, views and responses to what works well, to improve outcomes. Young people benefit from stable relationships with staff who respond positively, warmly, and where appropriate with humour, to their needs.

As a result of this visit, two areas of improvement have been identified. One relates to improving the record keeping of physical interventions and the need to look at alternative strategies involved with confrontational behaviour and the second relates to writing a development plan for the home.

### 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 where a measure of restraint is used on a child the record must include-a) the duration of the measure of restraint and b) details of any methods used to avoid the need to use that measure. (Regulation 17B (4))	01/12/2011

## Recommendations

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

- ensure the home has a written development plan, reviewed annually for the future of the home (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially violent behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid the use of physical restraint. Restraint is only used in exceptional circumstances, to prevent injury to any person or to prevent serious damage to the property (NMS 3.13)
- ensure that the use of restraint is set out in the home's behaviour management policy and is in line with relevant government guidance on restraint and approve approaches to the application of physical intervention and restraint. (NMS13.14)

## Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from individualised support which helps them grow in confidence, gain a real sense of their identity and an understanding of their background. The key worker system enables young people to focus on their aims and objectives and regular meetings provide a route for young people to discuss their feelings. Staff are aware of young people's strengths and support them with their hobbies and interests. Staff provide the transport into the community in order for young people to benefit from the community resources.

There is a good approach to promoting the physical, emotional, and psychological health of young people and they are cared for in a warm, caring, nurturing environment with firm and consistent boundaries. Young people are in good health because staff ensure that all health needs are properly assessed and visits with the doctor, dentist and optician are well planned and take place. There is a multi-agency approach to ensure there are clear strategies in place to manage complex health needs. Young people are fit and well and enjoy participating in sports, such as golf and cycling. Young people are encouraged to exercise their own healthy choices of foods and increase their independent skills at meal and snack times. Daily routines are structured and individually tailored plans are implemented to offer comfort, security and stimulation for young people.

Young people have a good record of school attendance and are making good overall progress in relation to their starting points when they first moved in to the home. Currently some of the young people are attending the provider's school and others are in mainstream placements. Young people are not only attending but achieving with their educational attainment. Young people are supported to recognise their achievements, however small, and receive positive recognition for 'good work'. As a result young people increase their understanding of expectations and less positive behaviours. Albums are put together to demonstrate the individual achievements of each young person and this helps greatly with those young people who have limited communication. The staff have good links with the schools and work in partnership together, this helps young people to meet their educational targets.

Young people are making a positive contribution to their home and the wider community. Young people are encouraged to help keep their home clean and tidy which helps develop key skills related to cooperation and responsibility. For example, young people are helped to prepare and cook their meals and they receive lots of praise and encouragement for their efforts. In addition, young people are able to pursue their interests.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family and other people who are important to them. The home promotes, encourages and facilitates contact. Young people understand the contact arrangements because it has been fully discussed and agreed at the outset of their placement at the home. Staff are good at helping with the practical arrangements, such as help with different venues or with travel and transport. Staff ensure that full and detailed records are kept for the monitoring and management of contact arrangements.

Increasing life skills as part of structured education packages are part of daily routines. Young people are encouraged to achieve personal goals, although at times of crisis there are interruptions in planned activities and undertaking structured tasks safely. This can sometimes impact upon young people sustaining progress. Bespoke transitional arrangements support young people with moves to adult services or into their sister home close by and attention to preparing individual young people is carefully planned with all agencies.

## **Quality of care**

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

Young people are cared for by a caring, committed and consistent staff team. As such young people benefit from long-term relationships and attachments to key people. Young people's needs are very well understood and interpreted enabling staff to respond to any anxiety promptly. Staff are vigilant to any changes and signs to ensure young people's health, safety and welfare is promoted. Equally there are strong links with psychologists and psychiatrists providing ongoing specialist support. Comprehensive plans detail individual needs and guide staff on implementing consistent and tailored strategies, particularly in relation to managing some very

complex behaviours. Medication arrangements are safe, organised and fully accountable.

Young people feel that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought and that they can influence the running of the home. Young people participate with support in weekly house meetings and key worker sessions and are able to plan what meals they would like to eat and what activities they want to do. In addition, all young people have regular meetings with their key worker to discuss their recent progress, success, problems and concerns. Complaints are rarely made as young people and staff work together to resolve any issues. Staff are very good with helping young people to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plan and these plans are comprehensive, well detailed and regularly reviewed. Monthly summaries are shared with the social workers which explain how effective support and guidance has been delivered in reality.

This service is committed to ensuring young people can access education. The provider has a school within the grounds of the home where young people have good attendance; additionally some go to local schools. Residential staff are present at the provider's school to support young people throughout their day in education and there is a seamless approach across the service.

A range of purposeful and enjoyable activities are available to young people relating to the young person's cultural background and personal identity. Young people are encouraged to pursue their interest and hobbies and they can experience a range of outdoor pursuits which provides them with many exciting opportunities. This is encouraging young people to take responsibility for their physical health and fitness. A young person said, 'I get to do lots of things living here'. At a practical level, the home has a range of computer games and console equipment, access to a television and videos and board games. Young people also have access to a large garden with outdoor equipment including ample space for cycling. There is a sensory garden, vegetable plot and the experience of looking after chickens.

The home is appropriately located, designed and maintained. Although the home is rural in its location the company have more than compensated for this with the good level of transport provision. This means that young people have convenient transport for activities, shopping and home visits. Young people live in a homely and comfortable environment where they are actively encouraged to take pride in their environment.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Staff communicate clear expectations regarding boundaries which sufficiently help

young people to begin to understand consequences for their behaviour. Staff's approach to behaviour is based on redirection and purposeful intervention to calm the situation quickly. Restraints are only used when felt really necessary to ensure safety. However, the restraints have been high in number and records of the restraints have not been recorded appropriately to reflect what methods have been used to avoid the use of the restraint. Similarly some of the incident recordings have not been altogether clear. Staff are trained in physical intervention, restraint and de-escalation techniques with regular refresher training. The home has individual therapeutic behaviour support plans for young people identifying details about the behaviours, how they are to be prevented, managed and reviewed. Staff regularly discuss the behaviour approaches with the in-house psychologist and agree as a team how to respond to young people. The incentive systems that are in place succeed in helping young people develop and maintain socially acceptable behaviour.

Young people rarely go missing from the home and if they do, they return quickly. The home has clear protocols with the local police and the placing authority and young people are responded to positively on their return. Bullying is not perceived as an issue within the home although staff are quick to identify any areas of concern.

There are robust procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. These ensure that all staff are thoroughly vetted before they start work. All visitors to the home are monitored because they are required to provide evidence of their identity and to sign a visitor's book. These robust systems protect young people as they ensure that unauthorised individuals are not able to gain access to the home.

Staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and duties, regular training ensures their skills remain current and relevant to young people's needs. Safe practices are regularly reviewed and underpinned by thorough risk assessments focusing on young people's welfare and safety. The home is kept safe from hazards and is well maintained to provide a homely environment. Health and safety checks, including checks of fire equipment are routinely undertaken to maintain a safe environment. Young people have personal evacuation plans and practise evacuations to support a safe exit from the home in an emergency.

## **Leadership and management**

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

Young people receive care from a committed staff team. Young people's individual needs are often intensive and there is enough staff to support them. Staff work efficiently as a team and report feeling well supported in their role. Senior managers routinely monitor practice and support staff. Satisfactory independent visits further monitor care practices and overall measures ensure care remains consistently good.

The whole team understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home and discuss areas for further development. However, currently there is no written development plan in place, which would accurately prioritise actions and areas for change.

The recommendation from the previous inspection relating to accurate recordings of physical interventions has not been addressed, therefore this will be raised as a requirement at this inspection.

The management team appear to be aware of the new practice developments in relation to the new inspection framework and new legislation. However, this has not been shared with the staff team and this could impact on improving the quality of the service.

The provider meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose. It comprehensively addresses equality and diversity and there is a strong commitment to anti-discriminatory practice. Young people are provided with an environment where boundaries and expectations are clear and staff practice is consistent. Young people, staff and the placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides.

All members of staff spoken with gave positive comments about the manager's commitment, child-centred approach, support to staff and clear monitoring processes. Good communication is a feature of the home, which enables staff to be well informed about daily events, routines and the progress of each young person. Staff members feel supported in their work through regular supervision, good training opportunities and clear policies and procedures to support them. The training programme devised by the organisation ensures that mandatory training is available and refresher training is planned. Regular team meetings focus on meeting young people's needs, improving the care staff offer and mutually supporting the staff team.

Records are reasonably clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. All significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person of the home to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action is taken following the incident.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.