

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Trainor
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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

A private organisation operates this children's home. This service is registered for up to six young people aged between 11 and 17 years of age. The home cares for males with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This home is also registered as a school. In-house arrangements support local education authority provision.

Overall effectiveness

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

All the young people receive a high standard of care and this means they commit to their placements, work hard, achieve and develop to reach their potential. Individuals are clear about the arrangements for them, are aware of plans and programmes, and make good progress both socially and educationally. Progress for some young people can be a little slower than others. However, when considering past histories and their starting point, placements provide tremendous stability. The young people take responsibility for their behaviour.

Relationships between young people and between staff and young people are excellent and each young person provides their full or best cooperation. All the young people state that they feel safe while living at the home. There is excellent safeguarding afforded to residents from clear and agreed strategies and protocols that staff implement.

Young people's efforts are rewarded and clear incentives help to change behaviours. Management are working to further reduce the number of sanctions that are used. Young people are cared for by an experienced, competent, and highly motivated team of staff. Staff are up to date with professional and legal developments following extensive changes to inspection frameworks. The promotion of young people's education, health and well-being are excellent. The responsible organisation is reviewing the in-house education provision and this option could be withdrawn.

Recreational interests are supported well and holidays are planned. Young people gain important life skills from the start of their placement and develop self-knowledge, self-help skills and improve their self-esteem for the time they leave the home. Young people show excellent interpersonal skills and tremendous confidence.

The young people are extremely relaxed within their home. The home's environment is very supportive and underpinned by defined boundaries. Young people's views are consistently gathered and these influence the home's operation and future direction. The home's aims and objectives are being fulfilled but there are some minor changes needed to a few management systems. The views of partners are being gathered

and these are helping to shape future services and promote improvement at the home. The home's operation would gain additional benefits from extending consultation processes to include all partners. Regulation 33 and 34 reports do not provide an in-depth analysis of information and this can restrict weaknesses from being identified.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure clear and effective procedures are in place for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home; specifically, demonstrate how information within Regulation 33 & 34 reports, including the captured views of children and partners, is being evaluated and used to promote continuous improvement and development (NMS 21.1)
- review the numbers of sanctions being used and ensure when used they are clear, reasonable and fair to encourage young people to take responsibility for their behaviour (NMS 3.8 & NMS 3.6)
- ensure children have a range of education resources to support their individual learning needs. (NMS 8.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people experience stable placements and make progress in many areas, including their social presentation, self-awareness and taking responsibility for their behaviour. As a result young people develop and mature. The young people are extremely confident in their placements. A parent commented, 'I think my son has done very well and is learning different experiences'. A social worker added, 'I am very happy with the young person's placement at the home. He has made significant progress and is able to make responsible and mature decisions himself'.

Young people achieve personal goals and this helps them to develop a better understanding and appreciation of their personal circumstances. It is clear that young people can motivate themselves, especially to attend meetings where they express their views with some confidence. The young people have a growing optimism about their futures.

Young people living at the home are treated fairly and staff practice is capable of supporting their individual needs. A social worker commented, 'The young person feels that he is supported by staff and evidently feels relaxed with both residential and educational staff'. Staff have the skills, motivation and abilities to form very positive working relationships with young people and sustain them. Young people

gain tremendous benefits from high levels of emotional support they receive.

Each young person's education potential is supported by proactive staff practice. There are opportunities for the young people to attend different educational placements including local colleges, schools and special schools where achievements improve self-confidence and future prospects. Incentives successfully encourage and improve attendance.

Young people enjoy good health and mainly follow a healthy lifestyle. They take responsibility for their health and make clear links between diet and exercise. Regular activities such as swimming, badminton, golf and gym ensure they remain physically active. All young people are familiar with their health arrangements, are aware of the contents of their health plans and attend their appointments with health professionals.

Young people are well prepared for the transition to independence and adult life. Pathway and 'after care' plans are usually introduced at the correct age and stage of placement. Due to a change of arrangements a formal plan had not been set up for one young person. However, contingency planning influenced by the home was robust. A leaving care worker stated, 'I am very happy with the level of support the care team are offering'. Young people gain many competencies and life skills through good quality experiences provided by in-house independence and social skills training programmes. Young people have particular interests in food preparation and they are adept around the kitchen. Programmes encourage good social presentation skills which are clearly identifiable in how young people conduct themselves at the home and in the surrounding community. Programmes are linked to education leading to recognised qualifications being gained that prepare young people for the wider world of work.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff which enable them to engage positively and make good choices, for example, keeping themselves safe and getting the best from their education placements. Staff are skilled and show great insight and understanding of young people's needs. As a result young people appreciate and value the efforts of staff and work closely with them to plan their futures. Young people are confident to express their views in their statutory reviews. Staff practice supports young people to maximise their contributions. Individual plans are of a high quality reflecting young people's needs and charting their progress.

Young people make big improvements in their behaviour and all are relaxed, happy and confident in their placements. A parent commented, 'I feel very content knowing he is being well looked after'. Equality and diversity are well established within the culture and ethos of the home and this means there are many opportunities to develop self-knowledge, self-help skills and improve their self-esteem. Partnership arrangements are effective, and communication between staff, young people and

their parents, social workers and other professionals is highly effective. The overall atmosphere and provision of care is rated as outstanding by many partners.

Developing educational potential forms a clear part of the home's philosophy of care. Care staff emphasise the importance of young people gaining a good education and encourage school attendance. Continuous learning and development opportunities are presented. Young people are enthusiastic about their education and have aspirations to complete GCSE examinations and college courses. This is a tremendous achievement considering many of them have had limited or disjointed education experiences in the past. A review of the in-house education provision is being undertaken by the responsible organisation and closure is an option. The home's management recognise that high quality alternatives will have to be accessed.

Young people understand how to make a complaint. They confirm that their complaints are responded to in full. A written guide covers complaints, with information, guidance and contact details of agencies such as Ofsted, children's rights and the Children's Rights Director. Young people can differentiate between grumbles and serious complaints. Young people are developing skills by learning to sort out minor matters positively between themselves. This includes discussion or by raising matters during in-house meetings. The group is supportive, works very well together, and values individual differences.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted. The key worker role is extremely well developed to deliver health promotion work. Medication is stored safely, and records are maintained on the administration of medication, including, prescribed and non-prescription medication. There are clear policies and procedural guidance and these are followed in practice. All staff receive suitable training to support health and well-being and this maintains the quality of care being provided. There are good collaborative links with many different health professionals and agencies. This allows helpful guidance and support to be provided when young people are most in need.

Staff engage young people in a range of activities and planned holidays to develop individual potential and enhance learning opportunities. Young people's aspirations are supported and a suitable budget enables them to pursue their hobbies and interests. A good balance between organised activities and young people's free time supports their growing independence.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they are safe living at the home. They learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they contribute to the home's operation. Young people develop skills that enable them to differentiate their behaviour according to the different settings and situations they find themselves in. A social worker commented, 'The young person is in a safe

environment which subsequently is not putting him at risk of anti-social and criminal behaviour'. Young people's personalities prosper and progress is made.

Young people say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them and confirm that staff do not tolerate any form of bullying. They have confidence that staff will respond to any bullying that may occur. There is very good interaction and sensible discussion around difference allowing members of the peer group to maintain a positive self-view. All young people understand the many forms that bullying can take and are equally clear about what to do if they have any concerns.

Young people have suitable safeguarding and complaints information. Young people are aware of the content of this information and acknowledge that they will not suffer any recrimination if complaints and grumbles are made. All complaints and concerns made by young people are reported transparently and investigated. Policy and procedural guidance is consistent with that of the local safeguarding team's protocols. Staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a good understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take when an incident arises.

Systems for dealing with young people who go missing from home are well established and a clear protocol is set out. Risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing. Excellent working relationships with the local police coordinator support safeguarding. The police missing from home coordinator confirmed that there are no concerns relating to how the home manages the young people's behaviour. Recent strategies had been successful in reducing the volume of reports of children missing from care. Young people always have an opportunity to reflect on incidents they are involved in. There is a proactive response in arranging return interviews to identify any potential safeguarding concerns.

Staff uphold children's rights. Young people respond very well to praise. There is good use of positive reinforcement but there can be an overreliance on sanctions especially for minor misdemeanours. Respectful communication and an excellent atmosphere were maintained throughout the inspection. Interventions are reported transparently and monitoring of the service and its records allows suitable safeguarding to be afforded. Staff are clear that physical intervention is very much a last resort. The number of incidents requiring physical intervention reduced between inspections. All staff receive regular and refresher training in positive handling techniques.

Young people benefit from a permanent, experienced and stable staff team. Some changes had been made to the staffing structure between inspections. Recruitment practice is robust ensuring only suitable people work with young people. Equally good practice ensures the vetting of visitors to safeguard young people. No concerns were identified with the home's recruitment procedures.

Health and safety are managed well ensuring young people and staff remain safe. Regular servicing of equipment and routine safety checks maintain a safe environment. Young people know what to do in the case of an emergency and can

exit the home safely. Staff implement a range of risk assessments to identify and minimise hazards. There is a comprehensive audit of all health and safety matters carried out on an annual basis.

Leadership and management

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

Young people develop meaningful and lasting attachments from the supportive management culture and the hard work of the staff. Young people are gaining tremendous benefits for placement experiences being provided by a highly motivated team of staff providing high quality care. It is a strong, child-focused service that is conducive to young people developing their potential. This service is managed by an experienced and fully qualified manager. Partners confirm communication is highly effective. Permanent records are produced to show how children's developmental needs are being met.

There is a clear vision for how the home should operate. Practice adjustments have been made in line with a new inspection framework, new evaluation schedule, and new national minimum standards. All levels of staff influence and shape the service with their ideas and initiatives. Practice is developed by a management team that is perceptive in identifying the home's strengths and the areas where it could perform better. An accurate verbal self-assessment of the service was outlined by the Registered Manager.

The views of the young people and partners are not fully captured during visits made to the home under the requirements of regulations 33 and 34. Improvements in evaluation processes linked to these visits can be made. Better data analysis will support continuous improvement. Information contained within these reports still manages to provide a snapshot in time on what it is like to live at the home. Some realistic and challenging targets are outlined within the home's development plan. Evaluation of this plan occurs and this contributes to controlling the home's activities.

Individuals' needs, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are being met. The young people have full confidence in the staff and know who is responsible for them at all times of the day and night. Staffing levels are maintained and a good gender balance is evident within the team.

Records at this home show good clarity in how staff are managed. Detailed induction and foundation training are provided. Staff confirm that supervision is taking place. Most staff have relevant qualifications or are enrolled on National Vocational Qualifications at level 3. Systems for staff personal development and appraisal are well established and this helps staff to improve their skills sets. Staff have limited opportunities to complete higher level qualifications.

Young people's placements are stable and the home's service history shows a good record in compliance. No recommendations were made at the last inspection. There is a good system in place to notify persons and appropriate authorities of the

occurrence of significant events and information shows what action is being taken to prevent future occurrences. All records are to a professional standard, being kept safe and secure.

Staff practice is supported by comprehensive written guidance, policies and procedures. The responsible organisation has accessible information in hard copy and via an intranet facility. The home's Statement of Purpose provides information in accordance with regulations. The ethos and working practices of the home clearly meets aims and objectives and this means young people acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.