

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Stephen Smith / Mick Earl
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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

This home is part of a special school, which provides education and residential care for children with autism and complex learning and social difficulties. These include challenging behaviours, autism and Asperger's syndrome. As an independent school providing over 295 days of residential care per year, the whole school is registered as a children's home.

The school offers residential provision on two sites for up to 30 children; one house at the school offers care for 52 weeks per year to 16 young people, the other is some distance away and provides care for up to 14 young people from Monday to Friday during school term time.

Each children's home is set within a local community. All have access to transport belonging to the school for the young people as well as public transport, local shops and amenities.

### Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection of the children's home. The inspection looked at all key standards and examined all outcome areas. Outcomes for children relating to being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being are outstanding, while staying safe is good. The home's organisation is good. The home is outstanding in the way it promotes equality and diversity.

This home provides a service to children and young people that is outstanding in many respects. Its work to support and maintain children's health is excellent as is the work it does to help children's education and leisure. It provides first-class, individualised care to children based on impressively thorough and detailed placement planning and this ensures children receive the support that is most suitable for them. The home is focussed on helping children develop the skills to be as independent as they can be.

The home is good at helping children to stay safe although some of its written records and processes in this area do not support this as well as they should. The home has a well trained staff team and is well organised and managed.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the home has continued to develop and improve its service. It has a well qualified staff team and continues to work to ensure that a sufficient number have a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in the care of children and young people although this has been hampered by high levels of recent recruitment.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people living at the home enjoy a healthy and well-balanced diet. Nutritious meals are provided and young people's preferences are considered in the planning of menus. Guidance is provided by a dietician and the school nurse regarding the development of healthy menus. The home ensures that each young person is able to follow the diet of their choice. Young

people are provided with any special diets they may need for religious or health reasons. Dining rooms are very pleasant and homely and great effort is made to promote mealtimes as social enjoyable occasions.

The healthcare needs of young people are met exceptionally well with staff members providing very high levels of care. Health needs are very clearly identified and health care plans are detailed and specific. Despite the complex needs of some children accommodated, health needs are addressed proactively with any specialist support required being accessed promptly. The organisation's school nurse works very closely with staff in the residential provision. This ensures that young people get the best attention possible and also allows effective communication with specialist health services. Staff members receive good training in all required health areas.

The home's medication administration systems are very effective and rigorous in the way that they manage children's medication. This ensures that children are kept safe as they are assured the correct medication that they need. Policies and procedures relating to the safe handling and administration of medication are detailed and underpin good practice. Medication storage is very secure and the home ensures that medication is stored in the correct conditions. Staff members receive clear and detailed training in the administration of medication before they can be involved in its administration. An exceedingly careful system of checking medication administered and stocks maintained is operated. Clear monitoring systems are in place along with a clear system of reporting and investigation should any errors occur. Arrangements for the administration of non-prescribed medication are sound with clear consent being sought for any medication administered. Checks with medical professionals are undertaken to ensure that any medication taken is safe when taken in combination with other medication.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Young people living at the home are treated with dignity and respect. There are sufficient bathrooms, showers and toilets, to meet the needs of the young people accommodated and personal care needs are dealt with in both a sensitive and discreet manner. Policies cover the provision of intimate care and effective care planning ensures that support is delivered in a manner appropriate for each young person. A telephone is available for young people to keep in touch with their families and personal information is stored securely.

The home has a very good procedure for handling any complaints received in an effective and timely manner. No complaints have been received by the home; this reflects the very high standard of care delivered. Young people living at the home have access to complaints information which is provided in different formats in order to be as accessible as possible. Children are actively encouraged and supported to make their needs known.

Young people living at the home are protected from exploitation and abuse. A copy of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) procedures is available in the home and the home has a range of guidance documents relating to safeguarding. The home has policies and procedures in place relating to child protection but these have not been submitted to the LSCB for consideration and comments. There have been no child protection referrals made since the last inspection. Members of staff working at the home have undertaken formal training in child protection and regular update training is available.

The home has a policy and procedure in place regarding countering bullying. Staffing levels within the home and very effective care planning ensures that children and young people receive individualised care that protects them from experiencing bullying behaviour. However, the home does not have a risk assessment identifying the places, times and circumstances in which the risk of behaviour that could be perceived as bullying may take place. This limits the home's ability to give attention to dealing with any situations in which bullying is more likely to occur.

The very high staffing levels provided by the home and the individualised nature of the care provided means that children do not go missing without authority. The home has a procedure in place with regard to what action staff should take if a young person should go missing. Members of staff provide consistently high levels of supervision and quality care to young people to help keep them safe. In ensuring that young people are kept safe the home ensures that children's liberty is not restricted unlawfully. Children have ready access to external and garden areas at any time and staff are alert and available to ensure children's safety should they choose to go out.

Children's behaviour is well managed in a way that ensures they are kept safe and are helped to manage their own behaviour. The home has policies and procedures in place relating to the safe holding or restraint of young people. Members of staff have received appropriate training. Physical intervention methods are based on diversion and the lowest possible level of physical intervention. Restraint records are retained within a separate book used specifically for that purpose. However, this book is not adequately bound which means that records are not sufficiently protected from tampering. Additionally, in some instances records of physical intervention are not sufficiently detailed. For example, they do not always contain a detailed description of the circumstances leading to the intervention and the nature of the restraint used.

Sanctions are very rarely used. The home has a policy covering their use but prefers to use less punitive measures to help young people change their behaviour, such as guidance, support and encouragement.

Young people are protected from fire and other hazards within the home. There are robust systems in place to ensure that young people, members of staff and visitors to the home are kept safe and free from hazards. Health and safety risk assessments are carried out and regular fire drills are carried out. Essential maintenance and servicing of the home's gas and electrical installations and equipment is carried out regularly and any maintenance issues in the home are dealt with promptly. However, children's individual risk assessments are vague and insufficiently detailed. As such they do not adequately set out the likelihood and severity of an identified hazard and do not provide detailed enough guidance about how to reduce these to acceptable levels.

The home has good recruitment and selection processes in place. These procedures are implemented in practice with thorough checks being carried out to ensure the suitability of each applicant. This procedure helps ensure children are kept safe.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people living at the home receive individual support in line with their specific needs and preferences. Young people all have very detailed and well developed placement plans that are implemented in practice. These include comprehensive assessments of need that are used to set specific targets for the work with young people. Each young person has a named link worker who works closely with them to ensure their changing needs are updated and reflected in practice. The home is creative in the way it provides or arranges service to benefit children. The delivery of care is reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to meet children's needs.

The home provides boarding accommodation for the organisation's school on either a 38 or 52 week basis. Residential staff have very good relationships with school and communication is very effective. This means there is a consistency between the approaches of school and the home that is vital for children with autism. Detailed records are kept within the home of children's achievements. These may be of an academic or educational nature but acknowledgement is also made, in the form of photographs and certificates, of the 'small' achievements that are very significant for children with disabilities. Children's care plans provide very effective support for their education. The integration of these plans into the daily life of the home is impressive. A key focus is given to helping children develop skills and abilities to support their independence in daily living situations and to help them develop and maintain relationships. A wide range of equipment and resources is available to help children to develop skills and enjoy a wide range of sensory experiences.

The home provides young people with a wide range of leisure and recreational activities both within the home and outside in the community. Activities provided focus on promoting children's development in the widest sense as well reflecting their preferences and interests. Care plans contain detailed information about children's interests. Effective organisation of activities ensures that children take part in and enjoy the activities they are offered. The home's staff plan, supervise and monitor activities to ensure that they do not become stressful or difficult for the young people taking part.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person living at the home has an impressively detailed and comprehensive placement plan. This clearly identifies children's needs and preferences and sets out how these are to be met on a day-to-day basis. These plans underpin the provision of excellent care that is reactive to children's changing needs. Care provided focuses on children's ability to communicate, develop relationships and gain skills and is based on good relationships between staff and children.

The needs of young people are continually reviewed. The home monitors the effectiveness of care plans regularly and provides very detailed and thorough reports for children's reviews. Effective communication between home, school, families and partner agencies ensures that essential information is shared and that changing needs are quickly highlighted and appropriate action is taken swiftly.

Part of the home provides care during school term time only on a Monday to Friday basis. As such, effective contact with families is essential and the home manages this well. Information sharing is very good and this supports the care of individual young people. The rest of the home provides full-time care for children. It provides very good support for them to have contact with their families and people important to them. Contact arrangements are clearly

recorded in care plans and the home supports these effectively. Excellent facilities are available to support visits to the home to allow children and families to spend time together without causing problems for other young people resident. Children have access to a telephone and are supported to use this if necessary.

The home has an effective and careful admissions procedure based on the needs of the children accommodated. As children living at the home have autism this procedure is gradual and based on each child's own needs. Close consideration is given to the needs of children living at the home as well as any new child being considered for a place to ensure that their needs are compatible. Children visit the home before they move in and are able to bring important possessions to the home with them. Information about the home is provided to children on an individual basis based on their own needs and communication preferences. Parents are provided with a full information pack to support the information given to children.

The home supports young people very effectively as they prepare to move to live elsewhere; usually as they are nearing adulthood. Care planning in the home focuses on helping children develop the skills for everyday living and the home works well to support transition plans for children.

Staff members talk regularly with young people to discuss issues affecting their lives, to make them feel at ease and to see if they are happy living there. Records of consultation with children are maintained to ensure that changes are noted and responded to. The home is creative in the way it communicates and consults with children. Pictures are used within care plans and displayed around the home to aid communication. An impressively thorough commitment to photographing young people as they take part in activities is helpful in maintaining a record of their life at the home but also aids the identification of preferences, choices and abilities. The home uses a range of communication symbol systems. These are used to inform young people of the content of their care plan or to help communicate and teach skills.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

The manager and members of staff work hard to help young people learn the necessary day to day skills that will help them to be as independent as possible. Children are helped to communicate their wishes and feelings and the home works hard to help them develop relationships with other people. Care planning and delivery is very effective with daily living skills and communication assessments and plans underpinning the practice. Young people who are old enough have transition plans to aid their transition from the home into adult services. The home actively contributes to and supports these plans.

Both houses that make up the children's home are impressively homely in nature are well suited to the needs of the young people resident. Accommodation is decorated, furnished and maintained to an extremely high standard. The home's grounds have been developed to provide a safe and secure place where all young people can enjoy themselves. Children have ready access to the home's gardens at any time. Bedrooms and communal areas are well equipped and children have access to leisure and recreational equipment as they need. Children are able to personalise their rooms and staff understand children's preferences about their environment very well. A very efficient maintenance service ensures that any repairs needed are carried out promptly. All staff employed within the home work hard to keep it clean, tidy and very pleasant.



## Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Very effective care planning means that children's individual needs and situations are considered and addressed equally. The home focuses on meeting children's needs arising from their disability and all children are treated with respect in a non-stigmatising way. The needs of children arising from their religious or cultural heritage are identified and addressed. Work done to promote children's ability to communicate plays a large part in promoting their equality.

The Statement of Purpose accurately describes what services young people can expect from living there. A children's guide is developed based on each child's individual needs and this is supported by an additional information pack which is given to parents to ensure they have full information about the home.

Young people are looked after by members of staff who are well supported and properly managed. Members of staff are provided with formal and recorded supervision and ongoing 'live supervision' is available at all times from senior staff. Staff are sufficient in number, experience and qualification, to meet the diverse needs of the young people living at the home. The home's rotas ensure that, where possible there is a mix of both male and female staff on duty.

Young people receive the care and services they need from skilled and competent staff. Training is provided at frequent intervals, to ensure staff have the necessary skills, confidence and ability to meet the diverse and changing needs of the young people living at the home. The home places a priority on providing staff with training to, at least, National Vocational Qualification level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. The home does not have 80% of its care staff with this qualification and the recent recruitment of a significant number of new staff has resulted in the proportion of qualified staff falling further. However, significantly over half the staff team do have this qualification and clear arrangements are in place to ensure that remaining staff members complete this as soon as possible. There are clear arrangements in place for members of staff to deputise in the absence of the manager. Staff rotas have designated handover periods built into them.

The care of young people living at the home is monitored regularly by both the manager and an independent person. This monitoring is robust and ensures that care delivered to children is of high quality. A comprehensive and thorough development plan for the home is in place and the opinions of the young people themselves and their parents is actively sought in order to continue to improve and develop the service provided.

The needs of young people are recorded to reflect their individuality and daily records are maintained. Care plans contain clear information about the developments and progress made by children. Young people, where they are able, or their parents, are able to access this information within the home if they request it. Information relating to the care young people receive is stored securely.

## 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
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### Recommendations

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

- submit the home's child protection procedures for consideration and comment to the local LSCB and take any comments into account (NMS 17.4)
- regularly carry out recorded risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest (NMS 18.5)
- ensure that records of restraints are kept in a properly bound book (NMS 22.9)
- ensure that records of restraint contain full and complete details of the behaviour requiring the use of restraint and the nature of the restraint used (NMS 22.9)
- ensure that children's risk assessments fully identify each specific hazard, estimate the level of risk to health, safety or welfare and identify in detail the action to be take to reduce the risk to an acceptable level (NMS 26.2).