

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Anne Bannister
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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 is a residential special school which is also registered as a children's home. It is situated in the edge of a small market town. The home is registered for eight young people, of either sex, aged six to 12 years. The school and home provide a care and education programme for young people with severe educational, and emotional and behavioural difficulties, whose vulnerability requires an extremely nurturing environment. There are currently seven pupils on roll, aged from six to 12 years, most of whom have a statement of special educational need. The majority of pupils have experienced a disrupted education and often attain well below expected levels for their age when they arrive at the school. The school and home aim to 'support young children, whose lives have been severely disrupted to grow socially, emotionally and learn to cope with school' and 'to return to families and day schools before they reach their teenage years'.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection and all the key national minimum standards were assessed. A recommendation from the previous inspection was followed up.

Many aspects of the care provided to young people are outstanding with the remainder being judged as good.

Young people's assessed needs are met by staff who have developed strong, positive relationships with the young people and their carers. The staff team work closely with a range of outside agencies in order to meet the range of needs presented by young people. Young people are positive about the care they receive in the home.

Young people are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles. The practices implemented within the home ensure that young people's health and dietary needs are very well met. The life skills used within leisure activities assist young people to develop skills that will support their independence and link into planned education programmes.

One action has been raised in relation to the failure of the company's Facilities Manager to update the fire risk assessment annually.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

One recommendation was made at the last inspection. It concerned the fact that the home did not have copies of key medical consents and health plans that were maintained in the nurses office on another site. This has now been addressed and young people's files contain all key information.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Menus continue to promote a healthy and nutritious diet for young people. Routine involvement in leisure activities, which promote physical activity, ensures that young people's holistic health needs are addressed.

The health and wellbeing of young people is closely monitored. The recent appointment of a new school nurse has ensured that the content of health files is being reviewed to ensure all relevant information is on file. The home's practice is for all young people to be registered with local health professionals, such as the doctor, dentist and optician. Statutory medical examinations are organised. Specialist advice and help is organised, when needed, to support specific identified health needs. Positive health promotion by staff ensures young people receive advice and information that will help them to make positive choices and keep them safe.

The home operates procedures that comply with the administration and safekeeping of medicines. These are effectively monitored by the school nurse and a senior member of staff. All staff administering medicines have received appropriate training.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff team are highly committed to ensuring that young people in their care are protected from harm. Overall the arrangements in place to promote the welfare and safety of young people are good, with many of the outcomes being assessed as outstanding.

The home has suitable policies and practices in relation to maintaining privacy and confidentiality. Staff practice creates a supportive and nurturing atmosphere in which young people feel safe and comfortable. Caring and consistent approaches to young people's needs are implemented by the staff team.

The home operates an appropriate complaints procedure and ensures that the young people are given relevant information on the various ways to raise issues that they are not happy about. Records maintained ensure that young people's views on the outcome on an investigation are clearly documented. There is also a suggestions and worries box that young people can post concerns into. This box is regularly checked by senior management and a written response to the issues raised by the young people is displayed above the box. The home has also provided young people with an independent visitor, who visits once per month and who will raise any issues on their behalf. Young people indicate that if they are unhappy about an issue the staff team always sort it out for them.

All care staff spoken to have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures. A rolling programme of safeguarding training for all staff has been put into place. This ensures that they have, and they continue to maintain, the skills to protect young people from abuse. The home maintains detailed records of any incidents made under safeguarding guidelines and ensures notifications are made to the appropriate authorities. These actions show that the home has appropriate practices, policies and procedures in place to protect young people from abuse.

All physical interventions and sanctions that have been imposed in response to unacceptable behaviours are appropriately recorded and are monitored by the Registered Manager. This practice helps identify trends in behaviours and ensure staff are consistent in their response to them. All staff are trained in behaviour management techniques and are skilled at diverting

the young people's negative behaviours into a more positive activity. There has been an increase in the use of physical intervention since the last key inspection, however, the majority of these occur during the school day. A contributing factor to this is that there have been four new admissions since the last key inspection. This increase has led to the revision by the Registered Manager of the manner in which physical interventions are recorded. New recording systems detail more effectively both staff and young people's views on the events that lead to a physical intervention occurring and enable them to constructively reflect on the incident. The positive outcomes of this way of reflecting on behaviour and practice is to be commended.

The Registered Manager and staff team are reviewing the effectiveness of sanctions given to young people and are exploring alternate responses to their challenging behaviours. This review is being implemented because recording of the effectiveness of sanctions used does not currently reflect the level of discussion that takes place within the staff team. Staff work positively with young people and encourage, praise, reinforce and reward socially acceptable behaviours. Unacceptable behaviours are addressed and discussed with young people.

Evidence and observation shows that the home has a responsible attitude towards health and safety matters. The home has risk assessments in place for all aspects of the safety of the premises and grounds. There are also risk assessments relating to young people's behaviours and planned activities they undertake. These risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure young people's continued safety. Visitors are welcomed into the home once they have satisfied staff of their identity and the purpose of their visit and when they have signed the visitors book.

All fire drills, fire alarm tests and fire safety equipment checks are up to date. However, the annual review of the building fire risk assessment has not occurred and an action has been raised in relation to this deficit. All gas and electrical appliances receive an annual check. Overall the home's actions show that there is a commitment to ensuring young people live in a safe and secure environment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Observation of staff practice and written records clearly indicate that young people receive personalised support. The home has well established links with a range of outside agencies that support young people in developing a positive view of themselves and others. Monthly liaison with specialist agencies ensures that care staff are kept aware of any issues being raised in counselling sessions that might affect young people's behaviour. Young people state that there is always someone on duty who they would approach if they needed help or advice. All staff spoken to are knowledgeable about young people's individual needs.

Developing educational potential is a clear part of the home's philosophy of care. The home has very effective support systems in place to ensure that the young people develop skills both through formal education and a variety of leisure interests. During the school day there is a good focus on developing young people's personal, social, health and citizenship skills, particularly through the social and emotional aspects of learning programme. This promotes young people's confidence and self-esteem, and provides opportunities to discuss their feelings and develop consideration of others. The care staff team is very skilled at recognising and celebrating young people's achievements and personal successes. They are increasingly working with the education staff in developing curriculum topics that can be covered across care and

education and which links into developing young people's knowledge of other cultures. This collaborative way of working increases opportunities for young people's learning and development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All young people have detailed residential action plans in place, which concentrate on how their needs are to be addressed and the roles and responsibilities of other key individuals in the young person's life. The plan is based on an assessment of their needs and detailed risk assessments. They are comprehensive documents, which clearly evidence the targets set to attain positive outcomes for all young people in the home's care. The young people's files clearly evidence the amount of support staff give them to address and meet their assessed needs. Young people, social workers and key other professionals and family members are involved in monitoring and reviewing the plans. The management team works hard to ensure that young people are fully involved in all decisions affecting their lives and has adapted all documentation to ensure they are able to add their comments.

Young people are encouraged to maintain contact with family and key other friends in line with their placement plans and staff give practical support in making this possible. Contact arrangements are clarified at the time of admission and are clearly recorded as part of the action plan. Positive feedback was received from two placing authorities indicating that 'staff go the extra mile to support young people in their care'. Feedback further indicates that 'the contact and frequency of communications with the placing authority are of a very high standard'.

Young people have several different opportunities to raise issues with the care staff team. These include one-to-one sessions with their house tutor. All young people also have regular times when they have opportunities to meet with members of the management team. There is evidence of a warm, caring relationship between staff and young people. Young people confirm that they feel valued by staff. Young people are clear that they are able to approach any member of staff at any time to discuss issues.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home has comprehensive transition plans for young people coming to the end of their placement. These have been praised by two placing authorities one of whom states that 'the home places children at the heart of all they do. Their needs are well met. Nothing is too much trouble. Transition arrangements for older children back to day provision is good'.

There are occasions when failure by placing authorities to secure alternate placements results in young people becoming anxious about moving on. There is evidence that staff maintain frequent contact with placing authorities and advocate on young people's behalf in these situations.

The home also endeavours to implement transition plans with young people moving in where previous placements have broken down. The detail of these ensures bedrooms are decorated to young people's liking and that one of their favourite meals is on the menu.

The location of the home is convenient for leisure facilities, transport and other community facilities that are important for young people's development. Young people benefit from homely accommodation that is decorated and furnished to a high standard. They have their own individual bedrooms, which are well personalised. These actions ensure the home provides a high standard of accommodation for young people, and that young people can be involved in choosing furnishings and decorations for the home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home is very well-managed and efficiently run, providing a safe and stable environment for the young people living there. The Registered Manager is supported and supervised by senior managers, and provides clear management for the care staff team. The care staff team demonstrates an awareness of their roles and responsibilities that ensures young people's assessed needs are being met.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good, with documentation being developed that will clearly evidence staff practice. Cultural identity is reflected within the choices being made on how bedrooms are personalised. The quality and detail of care plans ensures personalised services are provided that are capable of meeting young people's personal needs. Ongoing consultation ensures that the young people are fully involved with all aspects of their lives as well as the management and organisation of the home. Matters that promote fairness and understanding of other beliefs and cultures are routinely integrated into staff planning of activities for young people.

The home provides comprehensive details about the care it provides. A user-friendly guide for young people advises them of what it is like to live in the home.

The Registered Manager and all other care staff are very committed to providing high quality care for young people. The team monitor and constantly review staff practice to improve the service they are providing. Staff duty rotas and observation of working practices shows the home is adequately staffed for the young people currently living there. The staff team are well organised and benefit from strong, energetic leadership and management. The supervision and appraisal of staff takes place consistently within the recommended timescale, contributing significantly to their own personal development plans. Staff feel well supported and are clear about their own roles and responsibilities.

Regular staff meetings are held each week to ensure consistency in practice across the staff team. Staff morale is high, resulting in an enthusiastic workforce, which works positively with young people to improve their quality of life.

Monthly monitoring visits are undertaken by the Registered Manager and through independent monitoring visits by the organisation. These form part of the quality assurance system of the home. The home has developed its quality monitoring systems and seeks feedback from placing authorities, parents or carers and young people as part of this.

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
26	ensure fire risk assessments of the building are reviewed annually (Regulation 31)	31 October 2009

Recommendations

There are no recommendations.