

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 residential special school which is also registered as a children's home. It is situated on the edge of a small market town. The home is registered for eight young people, of either sex, aged 6 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 six pupils on roll, most of whom have a statement of special educational needs. 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

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The purpose of this unannounced key inspection is to assess the home's performance against key national minimum standards.

The service provides a good standard of care to young people with many outstanding features. Strengths include the support given to young people's educational attainment, sensitive admission and discharge processes and the commitment to developing care practices in relation to behaviour management.

Following this inspection it has not been necessary to make any actions or recommendations. This is a result of the reflective practice of the staff team encouraged by the Registered Manager. Five young people were living at the home at the time of the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the previous inspection and one action and two recommendations were made. Weekly checks of the fire alarm systems are now routinely undertaken. The effectiveness of sanctions given to young people is appropriately assessed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy, balanced meals that take their preferences into account. They are presented with choice at most meal times and menus show they receive a varied diet that meets their nutritional needs. All care staff receive certificated food hygiene training, which ensures that they are aware of safe working practices and procedures to follow when preparing food for young people.

The Registered Manager and the staff team ensure that young people's health care needs are promptly addressed. Each young person has a detailed health plan that forms part of their placement plan. The Registered Manager ensures that specialist support is provided to address young people's identified healthcare needs. The staff team have developed strong links with colleagues from the health service in order that they are able to respond to young people's identified needs. Appropriate action is taken in the event of accidents and incidents to ensure any medical treatment is speedily delivered.

The arrangements for the administration and storage of medications in the home are good. Medication is kept in an appropriately locked cupboard and the records of the administration of medication are accurate and up-to-date. All staff receive training in safe medication administration and are aware of the health needs of each young person. The staff team benefits from the support of a qualified nurse employed by the organisation. She undertakes monthly audits of medication records and will also advise staff on the possible side-effects of any new medication prescribed to young people. First aid training is regularly updated and all activities are risk assessed to highlight any action needed to minimise risk to young people's health and safety.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff team respect to young people's privacy. They routinely knock on doors before entering bedrooms and ensure that all personal information about young people is stored appropriately. Separate bathrooms have been allocated for boys and girls. These are sited close to the young people's bedrooms to ensure they have adequate privacy.

The young people know how, and feel able, to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living at the home. They are provided with this information at the time of their admission. Documentation viewed, and discussion with young people, indicates that most issues are dealt with informally. Young people indicate that 'staff always sort out things we're not happy about'.

The welfare of young people is protected and promoted by the home's safeguarding processes. Staff know how to pass on safeguarding concerns and receive regular child protection training. The team have access to up-to-date local area safeguarding

procedures as well as the home's own written procedure. Detailed chronological records are maintained for any referral made and ensures that notifications are made to the appropriate authorities. These practices evidence staff commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of the young people in their care.

The home's procedures protect young people from bullying. Risk assessments regarding bullying are in place. The placement plan sets out effective strategies to avoid and deal with bullying. The effectiveness of the team's approach is examined at weekly team meetings.

There are systems in place to protect young people who are absent from the home without authority. There have been no incidents of absence since the last inspection. Individual procedures are in place should this occur and there is overall policy guidance for staff to follow.

Young people are encouraged to behave in a socially acceptable manner. Behaviour is well managed through a set of detailed individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans. The team deals sensitively with incidents, and relations between staff and young people are good. A set of incentives are used to encourage and reward positive behaviour. Staff work hard to ensure that sanctions are appropriate and proportionate to the incident. The recording of the effectiveness of sanctions given, in relation to the promotion of positive change in young people's behaviour, is significantly improved. Physical interventions are used at the home and staff have receive training specific to young people's behaviours. A reflective approach to the use of restraint is taken with the team examining the effectiveness of their intervention. This is positive as it is serving to reduce the overall level of physical interventions used.

There are good health, safety and security procedures in place. These ensure young people are protected from harm. They include gas and electrical safety checks, fire safety risk assessment and checks of fire safety equipments. A system of vetting visitors to the home and a visitors' book are in place. Staff are checked and vetted in line with national minimum standards including obtaining a Criminal Records Bureau check before they start work. Overall the home's actions show that there is a strong 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.

Young people receive excellent individual support in line with their needs. For example, needs and aims specific to individuals are set out in the placement plan and reviewed for progress on at least a monthly basis. Specialist external agencies are sought in order to gain support with particular assessed needs. The team excel in their provision for individual care, particularly in relation to the support given to developing young people's educational potential.

Education is provided onsite by the organisation's Department for Education

registered school. The team provides excellent support to assist young people to achieve at school. They work in close collaboration with school staff. Meetings occur both at the beginning and end of each school day between care and education staff. Care staff encourage and assist young people with the school work and assist them to develop their literacy and numeric skills through games and reading times. Care staff at the home attended educational meetings, reviews, and supported young people's educational attainments. They are increasingly working with the education staff in developing curriculum topics that can be covered across care and education. These link 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.

The level of information provided through the planning and assessment processes is very good. These reflect young people's needs well and direct staff in how to care for young people. Care needs are reviewed weekly. Staff use weekly meetings to reflect on their practice in order to develop their approach to meet young people's needs more effectively. The outcome of looked after children reviews are integrated into the home's placement plan. The system of placement planning continues to develop in order to ensure that the plans fully evidence the detailed work being undertaken to meet young people's assessed needs.

The arrangements for moving in and leaving the home are excellent. Young people move in and leave in a planned way. There is good evidence that the team work in conjunction with other services and social workers to ensure a smooth transition. The team are sensitive to the potential for emotional harm due to placement moves. They act sensitively providing emotional and practical support. Young people are involved as much as possible in the planning process and where appropriate, the team arrange to stay in contact with young people who move on.

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. Positive feedback is frequently received from families and carers. For example a parent wrote '... is a totally different child since living in the home. He has responded in a brilliant way and I am full of praise for what staff have helped him achieve'.

Young people and significant others are able to influence the day to day operations of the home. The team take a collaborative and consultative approach to care. Young people are encouraged to air their views and a number of systems are in place to enable them to do so.

There are good lines of communication between staff at the home and other professionals who are consulted on a regular basis about young people's care.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The team help young people to develop skills for daily living. Young people receive assistance and are encouraged to develop skills in line with their age and abilities. For example, young people are encouraged to help with household chores, such as helping with the meal and clearing away dishes. Support is given to develop independence in personal care and personal presentation.

The house provides a comfortable homely environment for young people. Young people have single room accommodation, which is well personalised. Communal areas are well decorated, clean and comfortable throughout. They are furnished with comfortable furniture and fittings. Attention is paid to homely touches, such as photographs of young people. Outside there is an enclosed garden, big enough for bike riding, ball games and with space for young people to grow their own vegetables.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose is available to placing authorities and families. The document accurately reflects the service provided. There is a children's guide setting out information about the home and what young people may expect. The Registered Manager ensures both these documents are reviewed regularly and that the practice is consistent with the aims of the service.

Staffing levels are suitable to meet the assessed needs of young people. They can be adjusted in line with young people's needs and agreements with placing authorities. The home employs waking-night and sleep-in staff to ensure the welfare of young people throughout the day and night. The staff team work well together and demonstrate trust and respect for each other.

All staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 or its equivalent. They are confident and competent carers. They are reflective in their practice and are encouraged to challenge each other. This helps develop consistency in dealing with young people's behaviour. Roles and responsibilities are well-known and the shifts are organised effectively. Staff rotas include a handover of one staff team to another and these are observed to share useful information about the progress and needs of each young person. Accountability lines are well known and there is always a senior staff member on each shift. The company provides a good range of training opportunities to its staff and ensures the basic necessary training, such as child protection, is refreshed regularly. Staff are supported to develop their knowledge and skills on a continual basis and can request specialist training if it is work-related. Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of child development and attachment theory.

The company has a well-developed monitoring process, including unannounced

Regulation 33 visits. The reports provided are thorough and pick up any issues of concern. They include measurement against standards and regulations. Any gaps in the delivery of service followed up at the next visit.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff practice is very young person orientated and staff are good at assessing and meeting individual needs. Staff are very keen to promote individuality and will support young people to follow their own goals. Clothing, food and activities are provided taking each young person's preferences into account. The staff are careful to ensure they challenge any discriminatory behaviour and encourage young people to appreciate each other's differences. The home celebrates a range of special occasions and dates including those of other cultures.