

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC415347
Inspection date	24/06/2011
Inspector	Jacqui Gosling
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	30/03/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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 one of a number of homes run by the same organisation. The home provides care for up to three young people aged between 11 and 17-years-old who have significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is a detached property located in a rural setting. The home is set in its own extensive grounds. The grounds provide for a range of activities. The home has transport to take the young people to activities, local shops, education and organised visits. The home provides each of the young people with an individual bedroom. There are communal dining and separate leisure areas, plus a room that can be used by the young people to meet friends, relatives and their social workers in private.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a good service that positively impacts on young people's lives. The key strengths of this service are the staff. They are enthusiastic, trained to a high standard and understand the complex needs of young people well. The effectiveness with which the home provides personalised care is excellent, taking full account of the individual needs of each young person, whilst promoting positive outcomes for all young people.

Staff help young people to develop by providing good support and encouraging young people to engage and become self-confident. The manager understands the strengths and areas of further development for the home. The staff really focus on the individual and the home is highly child-centred. Young people are safe and feel safe. The quality of the relationships between staff and young people in the home nurtures empowerment.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit greatly from a diverse staff team who provide them with individual support in order to develop confidence and a positive view of themselves. Key workers have an excellent knowledge of the background and individual needs of the young people and actively promote their confidence and understanding. Specialist services are available to provide support if this is required. For example, the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

Health needs are identified within the placement plans and a range of services are available to support and address the individual needs of young people. Staff promote a very healthy lifestyle and encourage healthy eating and regular exercise. This excellent practice ensures that the health needs of young people are identified supported and addressed.

All young people attend an educational placement. The management and staff take pride in the high level of attendance and attainment achieved by the young people, some of whom had difficulty sustaining education placements prior to living at the home. Staff are committed to supporting the young people's education and liaise regularly with schools to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved. Young people speak positively of their placements. A quiet room is available and young people are supported to complete homework. This ensures that young people are provided with good opportunities and support to achieve their goals.

Young people confirm that they understand the contact plans and arrangements that are in place. These are made at the time of the placement and are reviewed regularly. Staff work closely with families in line with placement plans, likewise, any restrictions are clearly noted. This practice encourages and supports positive relationships for children and young people with the significant people in their lives.

The home currently caters for young people who require significant support in their day-to-day life. Therefore, independent skills are developed at a level appropriate to their developmental age and needs. This means that young people have the opportunity to further develop their independence skills in line with their age and abilities.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive within this nurturing and supportive environment. Young people's placement plans are child-centred and clearly identify their individualised needs taking into account culture, race, religion and gender. Comprehensive monitoring evaluates young people's progress over time and this is then used as the basis for statutory reviews and is forwarded to the child's social worker on a regular basis.

Young people say that they are always listened to and their wishes and feelings are actively sought and that they can very much influence the way the home is run. Staff will help young people understand if it is not possible to always act upon their wishes. Young people say 'staff are there when you need to talk'.

Young people benefit from a very competent and enthusiastic staff team who are able to provide good care and optimum support in their placement. Relationships between staff and young people are friendly, positive and good natured with lots of humour. There are clear procedures on how to make a complaint and young people are happy with the way staff respond to any areas of concern. One young person commented, 'the manager is always there and listens'. Staff implement positive behaviour strategies with a creative reward system and consequences to any inappropriate behaviour is seen, as fair.

Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting the educational achievement of young people, engaging with their schools and successfully promoting their attendance. Staff work closely with educational professionals and this has established effective communication. This partnership approach is highly successful and enhances young people's educational prospects.

A range of purposeful and enjoyable activities are available to young people. The home offers a games room where young people can engage in a variety of activities as well as other rooms when the young people want further privacy. The gardens surrounding the home are extensive, offering excellent space for young people to participate in games and activities. Young people are encouraged to participate in the community and their interests and hobbies are fostered. This leads to personal accomplishment and helps young people build their self-esteem.

The accommodation provides a pleasant, warm and comfortable home and young people enjoy living here. Furnishings and décor are of a good standard and there is an ongoing development plan for further improvements and decoration. Young people's bedrooms are being personalised to their own tastes and requests for any changes to the accommodation are dealt with promptly. Young people are extremely positive about the quality of their home.

Needs relating to the young person's cultural background and personal identity are identified and positively addressed in both daily living and care planning. Young people receive quality care which is personalised and tailored to meet their needs.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people all say that they feel very safe at the home and they demonstrate a good awareness of the fact that the staff focus strongly on promoting their safety. Staff receive regular and wide ranging training in safeguarding. As a result, they demonstrate a sound understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Dynamic partnership working with external partners, such as the local designated safeguarding officer, means that the staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection is continually being developed.

Young people missing from care episodes have reduced significantly. One placing social worker said 'I cannot fault the work done by staff. Clear boundaries are set and the staff follow the written plans. There has been a reduction of missing episodes which is exceptionally positive'. There is an open approach to complaints from all sources, and staff successfully support young people to use accessible democratic processes to make their views known. As part of this process staff skilfully enable young people to understand the views of others. Staff work hard to protect young people from the impact of bullying, anti-social or intimidating behaviour and young people are clear about their right to feel safe from this.

The quality of relationships between staff and young people is outstanding and reinforces the very caring atmosphere that can be witnessed throughout the home. Young people are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the home's behaviour management policy and strategies. Staff are very comfortable with their role of setting clear understood boundaries whilst maintaining a high quality of relationship between themselves and young people. One young person said 'staff have restrained me yes but I know why they did it, it was to keep me safe'.

The home is safe and well maintained. There are established systems and structures to maintain safe practices and fulfil health and safety obligations. Young people express confidence in the safety and security of the home. Environmental risk assessments are in place and these ensure the home is fully informed of potential hazards in order to reduce risks. There are safe recruitment procedures within the home. New staff are suitably vetted and are unable to commence working with young people until all of their checks are back.

Leadership and management

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

A real strength of this home is a strong, well experienced and child-centred management team. The manager and deputies have a commitment to driving up standards of care and recording practice. Staff have good support and guidance through a clear management structure. This structure is successful at meeting its aims to foster social awareness and mutual respect within the home and wider community. It achieves this by encouraging a happy and caring atmosphere through a professional and motivating environment.

The home has taken action to address requirements and recommendations arising from the previous inspection. All staff are now suitably experienced, they are receiving appropriate training. New staff receive one-to-one supervision at least fortnightly for the first six months of their employment. In respect of the written records of a child missing from the home, these fully detail the action taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return and any action taken in light of those reasons.

There is a clear staffing structure with clear lines of accountability in the home and in providing a stable and structured environment for young people. Staff are well supported and have regular staff meetings. These are well recorded and cover a good range of information, including the development of the young people and general staff notices. Staff duty rotas and the manner in which staff are deployed confirm that the home keeps sufficient staff on the duty rota at all times.

The home offers care and accommodation for young people in line with its Statement of Purpose and stated objectives which are understood by interested parties. There is an appropriate young person's guide. The manager and responsible individual regularly consider the running of the home and young people's individual needs to maintain care levels. Young people's needs, development and progress are well recorded to reflect their individuality. There is genuine interest and affection for young people.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.