

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Lynne Busby
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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

This service is a children's home run by a local authority. The home is registered to provide a service for up to six children, male or female between the ages of five and 17-years-old, who have a learning disability and may also have a physical disability.

The home offers a short-term respite service only, no one is accommodated on a long-term basis and one of the six places is used only for emergency respite. The home sometimes offers occasional day care, either planned or in emergencies.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a well-run home, with staff who are child-centred in their approach and who demonstrate professionalism in their practice. Staff are trained and qualified so that they have the skills to meet the needs of the children in their care. They understand their role and provide good and outstanding outcomes to children. Staff are properly supported by senior staff and a manager and they communicate very well within the team to ensure consistency in the way children are cared for. The manager demonstrates a commitment to improving the service for the benefit of children.

A particular strength is that the staff work very well with educational settings. They visit schools and work closely with teachers to ensure there is consistent practice in managing behaviour and communication with children. Health needs are clearly identified in health plans and there is an excellent multi-agency approach in place to support the medical and health needs of the children.

Children are clearly viewed as individuals and plans reflect their needs, likes and dislikes. The introduction of the 'All about me' books focuses on the child. These are being developed further to have a more pictorial format.

Safeguarding, health and welfare are very important in the home. Staff are clear about safeguarding procedures which are robust. Staff are working with children on all aspects of how to keep themselves safe which is excellent practice.

Children benefit from living in a homely environment that is very well maintained and kept safe. The service has robust systems in place to ensure that children are protected and cared for safely.

There were no actions or recommendation made at the last inspection. One new recommendation has been made as a result of this visit. This relates to the recording of restraints.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17 (2001)	ensure the duration of a restraint is consistently recorded. (Regulation 17 (4) (a))	29/07/2011

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children's health needs are well met as the home has strong links with parents and a range of health professionals. Children's health needs are clearly understood and thorough plans detail their individual needs which are followed in practice by staff.

Children's welfare is promoted as the staff are well trained in administering medication, first aid and food hygiene and have specific training to meet individual needs such as epilepsy. There is a thorough and accountable system in place for administration, storing and disposal of medication. There are clear medication records which are key to an effective management of health care matters.

Meals provided are of a high quality and menus indicate that they are well balanced and are seasonal with fresh vegetables and fruit available. Staff are knowledgeable about a child's likes and dislikes and children are offered choice at mealtimes but are encouraged to try new things and develop their tastes. Mealtimes are enjoyable social occasions.

Children are encouraged to develop life skills through going shopping and paying for items, cooking and helping keeping their room tidy. These are differentiated dependent on the child's goals. For children who are moving on there is a transition plan in place, which the child can contribute to.

There are excellent links with the local schools that the children attend. The educational needs of children are celebrated. Staff visit the schools and discuss with teachers each child's behaviours, methods of communications and goals to be achieved, they have a copy of the individual education plan and attend the school review. This is a strength and ensures they can offer a consistent approach.

Children access a good range of activities on offer, some are in the wider community including a local young club, a café, cinema and theatre. There is also a group where children can go to give their views about a wide range of issues. This is run by the local authority and gives the children an opportunity to participate in the recruitment of new staff, which is excellent practice.

The children attend the home usually for three nights a month and parents can contact the home whenever they wish and are kept fully informed by the staff. Parents say they can talk to the staff whenever they wish about their child's care.

Quality of care

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

Children benefit from very good relationships with staff, supported by a largely consistent and long-term staff team. Staff develop positive relationships over time by their knowledge of each child's individual needs. Interaction with children is based on their preferred communication style, which supports children to express themselves. Children say they like coming to the home and particularly like seeing their friends.

Children receive personalised care that promotes all aspects of their individuality and identity. This begins with an assessment prior to a child coming to the home. This identifies the child's specific needs and is completed with the parents. The staff complete a placement plan which clearly identifies targets to be met. In addition there is a plan which identifies the child's routine to be followed on a day-to-day basis. The key worker updates the plan following a child's review. As far as possible the children's views are sought depending on the level of understanding. To assist the consultation the documents are pictorial based. Children can attend their reviews. There is also an advocate available to the children who can help gain children's views.

There is a clear complaints procedure available. There are complaints leaflets which are being updated by a group of children which are pictorial. The home has a grumbles book and any issues raised by the children are dealt with quickly by the manager.

The staff listen to children and there are regular meetings held where topics such as staying safe are discussed. An example of children being listened to is the new play equipment where children had discussions about what they would like and also had a visit to see the equipment they may like. A strength of the home is that children are given choices throughout their stay, from meals to activities.

The home is a single storey building with wheelchair access. There are six single bedrooms, a bathroom, shower room, lounge, dining area, kitchen, playroom and sensory room. Outside is an enclosed garden that has been developed into a play area and there is a sensory garden. The home is located close to a town centre and has its own transport so children can go on activities in the local community.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are good measures in place to promote the safety and welfare of children. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding and they are aware of the procedures to follow to protect children from harm. Staff are clear about the whistleblowing policy.

There are good procedures in place if children go missing without authority. However, the home has not had any child go missing. Staffing levels are based on the needs of the children and this enables good supervision of the children and minimises the opportunity for bullying or targeting other children. There is a anti-bullying procedure and risk assessment in place.

Children are well supported in developing acceptable behaviours. Staff are appropriately trained in care and control which includes restraint and is regularly updated. Restraints are rarely used and are seen as a last resort. Staff use de-escalation techniques to calm children. Sanctions are used infrequently. There is a record of all incidents which includes physical interventions. However, the recording does not consistently include the duration of a restraint and information lacks clarity regarding guiding children away from situations. This does not provide a fully accountable system.

There are very good systems in place to ensure the physical safety of children and staff with all maintenance up to date and appropriate risks assessments. There are good fire safety procedures. Fire drills are held regularly and the staff are conducting a number so all children can participate. This will identify any problems children may have and so help eliminate them.

The home has sufficiently robust arrangements for visitors. The recruitment and selection process is thorough and ensures children are protected from harm.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Statement of Purpose which includes the aims and functions of the home. There is an information booklet in a written format and for each child an individualised pictorial guide to the home. This is excellent making it specific to the child. Policies and procedures are accessible to staff and reflect equality and diversity.

The staff team have a very professional approach to their work and this was commented on by people spoken to during the inspection. The staff team have a good range of experience and are committed to providing excellent outcomes for the children they care for. Staff talk with pride about the progress children have made whilst attending the home and how they work in partnership with the parents. Staff are very well supported through regular supervision, annual appraisals and training. All staff say there is commitment by the organisation to provide good opportunities for training.

The manager of the home is very experienced and qualified. The manager and staff are clear about the strengths and improvements needed. There is an extensive internal monitoring system completed by the manager and monthly visits from a designated person. There is a written development plan which is realistic and identifies the areas for development.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.