

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
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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

The setting offers long term care for up to seven children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A private company operates the setting alongside its other home. Each young person has their own bedroom situated on the first floor where there are also three bathrooms, a games room and staff sleeping-in rooms. On the ground floor there is a lounge, dining room, kitchen, education room and two offices. There is a good sized garden area to the side and back of the house and car parking at the front.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home is successfully promoting positive outcomes for young people, particularly in the areas of education, emotional health, daily routines and behaviour. Care is well planned overall and is personalised to each young person's needs. Consistency of care is achieved through stable key working teams. The relationships between staff and young people are good. As a result, young people express positive views about living here and say that the staff provide them with good support. Young people are safe here and say they feel safe.

Leaders and managers of the organisation have good contingency arrangements in place which assure continuing good quality care. Their development plans and monitoring mean that they have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. As a result, there are few identified breaches of Regulations and minimum standards. These relate mainly to specific details in policies, procedures or documents about the setting. They have minimal impact upon young people. Similarly, the impact of shortfalls relating to young people's rights and choices are minor.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
24 (2001)	ensure that the complaints procedure includes the name, address and telephone number of Ofsted (Regulation 24 (4) (a))	10/09/2011
34	ensure that the systems for improving the quality of care are	10/09/2011

(2001)	reviewed, provide for consultation with children, parents and placing authorities, and that copies of reviews are provided to HMCI and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (2) and (3))	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people better understand and make informed choices and decisions about maintaining healthy lifestyles, particularly in respect of varied and nutritious food choices NMS 6.2
- ensure that arrangements for young people to have friends visiting the home balance the ability of staff to make decisions as would a reasonable parent, with risk assessments and placement plan decision making (NMS 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6)
- ensure that the written policy concerning electronic monitoring devices includes how young people are informed about their use and how they are protected from the potential abuse of such devices (NMS 10.5)
- ensure that the children's guide informs young people how they can contact their independent reviewing officer (NMS 13.5)
- extend the support and encouragement offered to young people to read their files and correct errors and add personal statements as well as keeping appropriate memorabilia of their time in the placement. (NMS 22.5 and 22.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making particularly good progress from their starting points. They are developing self-confidence, emotional resilience and an ability to understand their family relationships and background. Psychological support, specific training courses and in-house support from staff are used very effectively to improve young people's emotional and psychological health.

Young people are benefitting from appropriate contact with family and other people who are important to them. This is because staff understand the plans for each young person's placement and work together well with placing social workers. Staff work hard to help young people understand the reasons for decisions which are made about levels and arrangements for family contact. They provide young people with good emotional support around contact visits so that young people's emotional resilience and understanding are developing well. However, staff are not always consistent with young people about the arrangements for friends to visit the home. This confuses young people and somewhat undermines staff in their parenting role.

Young people's physical health is improving because they frequently take part in outdoor pursuits and sports. Young people have some opportunities to shop, bake and prepare food. They have some input into the menus and have made healthy fruit smoothies. However, they are often able to eat unhealthy snacks before meals, avoid fruit and vegetables and choose to buy junk and processed food when away from the home. This slightly impairs their otherwise healthy lifestyle.

Young people all attend education or training regularly and with good levels of commitment. This represents excellent progress for most young people. For example, young people have returned to mainstream school after significant time away and are preparing for college courses. The school holidays are being very well utilised for education too. For example, young people voluntarily attend extra lessons with the home's teacher to help them catch up with their peers. They also attend computer or music courses locally, pursuing their individual interests. They take part in outward bound challenges alongside staff, enjoy free time with friends and go on leisure trips with staff at weekends and evenings. All this helps young people to make positive, rewarding choices and achieve their full potential.

Young people are confident enough to express their needs and wishes about the transition to adulthood. They are well supported by staff to put their views across in review meetings. They learn independence skills and manage their self-care and the daily routines of running a home with gradually increasing skill. This is proportionate to their starting points and reflects their continuing need for nurture and parenting from appropriate adults. Young people are enabled to stay at the home beyond the age of 16 when independence is not yet appropriate for them. Staff commit to assisting young people's moves and staying in touch with them afterwards. This benefits young people because they are valued and supported by familiar adults.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and trusting relationships with staff and are helped to respect and tolerate one another's differences. They behave well and achieve good rewards for doing so; including free time, unsupervised spending and trips out. Staff spend good quality one-to-one time with young people and actively support their educational achievement and health.

Staff are particularly effective in contributing to young people's placement plans by sourcing and organising professional and other support to address young people's individual needs. For example, they engage effectively with psychology, behaviour therapy, education and youth offending services. They also research and enrol young people on appropriate training courses which address areas such as risk taking behaviour, sexual exploitation, sexual health and drugs awareness. As a result, young people are making good progress towards healthy routines and safe behaviour.

Young people feel that their views, wishes and feelings are sought; for example,

about food choices, bedroom decor, home contact and future plans. Their levels of engagement in education, review meetings and mealtimes are good and they are proud of their bedrooms. Their cultural background and personal identity needs are positively identified and addressed in daily living and care planning. However, young people are less enthusiastic about their house meetings and the meetings are less effective as a result. The frequency of the meetings has been reduced in response. In addition, few young people engage in reading their files and adding personal statements. Some reports and documents are not child friendly enough for young people to want to read them. There is also too little emphasis upon helping young people to keep appropriate memorabilia of their time in the home. The impact of these shortfalls on young people's progress is minimal.

The home is well maintained and young people are pleased with recent improvements to provide them with a pool table, table football, football goal nets and extensive re-decoration of communal areas. They enjoy arranging their bedrooms and choosing colours and bedding. Staff and managers work to achieve a homely feel which is appropriately balanced with the individual needs of each young person being cared for. For example, young people are comfortable to leave most of their toiletries in the bathrooms and the exit doors are sometimes open in hot weather because there are enough staff around to ensure that all visitors are met and checked. Some young people have keys for their bedrooms and all locks are being changed to ensure that sufficient keys are available for each young person to have a working key to their room.

There is some flexibility to supervise young people using computers in the office because the education room is kept locked when teachers are not available. These aspects ensure that individual young people's safeguarding needs are met without making the home feel institutional.

Young people benefit from good information about their rights. They are confident about how to complain and are able to easily contact their social workers and independent reviewing officers. The contact details for Ofsted are not given in the home's policy but the impact of this on young people is minimal because the details are contained in their guide. Overall, their wishes and feelings about matters such as contact and staying in the placement are heard and acted upon. Young people have a new children's guide which explains very well all aspects of what the home is like. However, the contact details for the young people's independent reviewing officers are not in the guide. There is no impact of this on young people because they know how to complain and the internal and informal systems to resolve matters work well. In addition, the information is readily available to young people elsewhere in the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and feel safe in the home. They feel well protected from abuse, exploitation and accident, because staff use robust and up to date

individualised behaviour plans and risk assessments. Staff are vigilant and proactive to minimise the incidence of bullying and young people demonstrate confidence and trust in them. Staff provide good role models for respecting individuals' differences and they ensure privacy in bedrooms for each young person. Staff provide young people with strategies to consider and tolerate one another. Young people understand that their bedroom alarms are activated at night when all young people and staff are in bed. They know that this is designed to safeguard them and the children's guide informs them about this. However, the home's policy regarding the use of electronic monitoring devices does not contain all the elements outlined in the minimum standards. This has minimal impact upon young people.

Staff adequately ensure that young people understand the rationale for decisions that are made which have safeguarding implications. They teach young people how to take increasing responsibility for their own behaviour, how to take appropriate risks and how to avoid situations which put them at risk of abuse, exploitation or accident. Young people benefit from the strong boundaries and positive rewards which are in place. They are increasingly able to see how conforming to good routines and focussing on education and positive relationships underpins their success as young adults. As a result, they rarely go missing, return home from free time when agreed, and maintain communication with staff when they are away from home.

Positive behaviour is promoted well through daily and weekly behaviour incentives, which are individually tailored to suit each young person's needs and stage of development. Staff spend good quality time with young people and provide them with enjoyable activities; some of which young people do with the support of staff and some of which they do independently. Restraint is rarely used and is used only in accordance with the legislative framework.

Staff working with young people are carefully selected and vetted and visitors are monitored to keep young people safe. Investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled fairly and in a way that provides effective protection for young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is being effectively and efficiently managed through a transition period where there is no Registered Manager in post. The provider and manager from the organisation's other home are successfully supporting the home's assistant manager and the staff. Monitoring is active and regular, and the home is well resourced. The impact upon young people of recent difficulties is minimal. This is because staff commitment, morale and practice have been quickly restored and no new placements are being admitted at present.

There are good plans in place to develop the home and to support improved training and practice for the benefit of young people. Monthly monitoring of the home's

procedures is taking place, but the monitoring does not provide for consultation with young people, parents and placing authorities. In addition, there is no periodic reviewing of this monthly monitoring. The impact of this shortfall upon young people or the quality of their care is minimal because formal and informal discussion and liaison with young people, parents and placing authorities takes place effectively throughout the life of the home. For example, all parties are involved well in individual placement reviews and consultation with young people and parents is undertaken by the Regulation 33 visitor each month.

The provider meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose and has kept Ofsted informed of changes. Recommendations and requirements from previous inspections are mostly acted upon effectively and this improves the safety of young people. For example, the procedures for medication and fire drill are improved. However, the complaints procedure still does not contain the contact details for the Regulator, Ofsted. This has no impact on the care of young people because the information is provided in the Statement of Purpose and young people's guide.

Young people, staff and placing authorities are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and are very positive about the good outcomes which young people are being supported to achieve. There are beneficial and cooperative relationships between the home and the placing authorities. For example, social workers express enormous confidence in the competence and commitment of staff as well as the benefits of high staffing levels and supervision for young people's all round progress.

Staff receive suitable training to enhance their individual skills and keep them up to date with new developments. They know how the records should be maintained and they use them adequately to provide an understanding of young people's life and progress in the home. Staff understand the purpose of notifying significant events and they take appropriate action following incidents. These practices safeguard young people and support individual planning and work with them. Staff are regularly supervised and receive annual appraisals. Staff meetings are well attended and shift handovers are of sound quality. These structures support the provision of consistently good care to young people.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.