

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Susan Mullin / Philip Cass
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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 home is registered to provide care and accommodation for eight young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is owned by a private company.

Overall effectiveness

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

The Registered Manager and staff are caring for young people very well. They are knowledgeable, experienced and motivated to provide best outcomes. They are very effective at enabling all young people to succeed in education. They also excel at enabling young people to be fit and healthy.

The home promotes a sound quality of care in a friendly and welcoming environment. Young people benefit from relationships with the staff team which are genuinely warm, friendly and caring, commenting that, 'the staff here are really good.' They sit and read me a story at night, before I go to sleep'. Young people spoken to confirmed that they are involved in the running of the home by attending regular house meetings and having a say in issues brought up in those meetings such as bed time arrangements and reward incentives.

The team display commitment to offering a high standard of care and young people make positive progress in behaviour, life skills and social contact. Young people's behaviour is very busy and active and staff supervision and observation is good. Some young people can on occasion, display challenging behaviour and it is sometimes necessary for the staff to use restraint to promote safety. All young people spoken to stated that they felt safe whilst in the home.

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
30 (2001)	notify Ofsted at the outcome of and child protection enquiry involving a child accommodated at the home (Regulation 30 (1))	02/11/2011
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any restraint, a full written record is made as required. (Regulation 17B(3)(a)–(i)(4)(a)(b))	02/11/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled fairly, quickly and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for the child and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation. (NMS 20.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The behaviour of young people demonstrates they have excellent relationships with members of the staff team. The environment is very busy, with young people continually chatting to staff and themselves and getting organised for the day. From school they come back into the main house for a cooked lunch, which is done in two sittings and staff are plentiful, keeping the young people focused and promoting social interaction.

Young people confirm they have a say in how the home is run, which helps them to feel valued and a real part of the home. It also helps them to develop a strong sense of identity and maturity which is reflected in their progress and behaviour.

There is art and a cognitive behavioural therapist who work with the young people in the home to determine how they are feeling, by looking at their background and their personal identities. Through group and one-to-one sessions they are able to determine what level each individual is at with regard to how they feel about themselves, how they feel about other people, what is worrying them and about their behaviours. Through continuing therapy young people are tested at regular intervals to see how they are developing. Comprehensive reporting is provided for social workers and to review panels which show the progress each young person has made since their starting point in the home. The therapy undertaken in the home supports the young person's social and emotional development and enables them to increase personal self-esteem and to express themselves in a positive way.

Policy, procedure and good practice helps young people to know that their individual needs on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender, age and religion are valued and the service is able to meet their diverse needs in everyday life in the home. This promotes individual differences and circumstances that young people may have, so that they do not feel 'out of place' in the home.

Young people are fit and healthy and encouraged to have a healthy balanced diet and get plenty of exercise. Young people said ' staff take us all over the place, we go

out walking a lot and we also play footie and play outside'. 'The staff take me to see the doctor and dentist regularly.' 'The staff give us healthy food and they listen to what food we like best'. 'The cook knows what I like on my pizza and she helps me make my own'. This supports a healthy lifestyle for young people living in the home.

Outcomes associated with education are excellent. Young people attend a combination of teaching and learning sessions at the service provider's registered school, which is in the grounds of the home. There is ample evidence to show excellent attendance has resulted in relevant achievement through these arrangements. These are designed to enhance personal progress in life skills, craft and leisure and they form part of the preparation for adult life.

Young people are fully supported to maintain and develop relationships with their families and with friends. Family members are made welcome in the home. These arrangements and consistent care practices throughout the placement have enabled young people to enjoy more successful home visits and to demonstrate greater sociability. This helps to promote contact and helps to keep young people safe.

Young people engage in a good range of activities to help support their development of skills for adulthood. One commented, 'I clean my room, take my washing downstairs and help make food with the cook'. Another said, 'I learn about money and get my pocket money every week. What I don't spend I save up in my bank account'. This helps to prepare young people for future independent living.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from positive relationships with staff. All young people who sent in a survey to Ofsted said that the staff looked after them and that they were happy living in the home. Young people were observed to play and interact together on a friendly basis and generally behaved very well. They were polite to visitors and staff and some were keen to ask the inspectors questions about the inspection process. This warm relationship with each other shows that the young people benefit from a respectful staff team and learn acceptable social skills which will help prepare them into adulthood.

Young people benefit from strong relationships between school and the home's staff, especially with the close proximity of the school to the home. Teaching staff join in the social event at mealtimes and there is active and constructive discussion by all involved. Young people are positive about attending school, they said, 'We do lots of different things at school, today we learned about the Tudors, it was really interesting'. Another said, 'I like history it teaches you about different people and different places'. Young people benefit from a learning environment which will enhance their confidence and promote their self-esteem.

The views of young people are central to the operation of the home. The staff team are careful to consult young people and to involve them fully in the day-to-day

operation of the home. All young people spoken to confirmed that they knew how to make a complaint and stated, 'I go and talk to the staff if I am unhappy about anything and they put it right'. In the home young people are provided with the confidence and courage to seek support from staff when they are worried about anything.

Detailed placement plans are in place for young people in conjunction with their local authority's plan. Care provided in practice is consistent with the stated aims and objectives of the written documentation. There are systems in place to keep staff and social workers up to date when the care plan changes. The plans are comprehensive and include behaviour management strategies and detailed risk assessments. Young people spoken to confirmed that they had input in to their care planning arrangements. One young person stated, 'My key worker talks to me about my care plan and tells me what is going on so I understand what I need to do. He reads it to me and I put my name on it'. This helps staff meet young people's routine daily needs.

Young people are proud of their personalised bedrooms and the opportunity to display important memorabilia. One young person showed the inspector his family photo collection which staff had helped him put together and stated, 'I look at these pictures when I am feeling down and they make me feel happier'. Young people also report staff respect their rooms and their privacy and knock on their doors and obtain permission to enter, before they come in.

Staff are pro active in ensuring that young people are kept fit and healthy. Along with a good nutritious menu in to which the young people have input, the home ensures that all the young people are kept active with a full programme of activities. For example, the young people go out in groups to play football, other ball games and do lots of walking in the fields. Young people also play in pairs on bicycles or on skates and they sample being involved in large and small group activities as well as playing alone.

The house is an adapted farmhouse and its location is rural and isolated. The service has its own transport to access local community facilities. The house consists of two lounges, a music room, a large kitchen and dining room on the ground floor. Young people's bedrooms and adjacent bathrooms are located on the first floor. There are extensive front and rear gardens, including play equipment and a small football pitch.

The home has a school on-site, which is registered with the Department for Education and is inspected by Ofsted.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding is at the forefront of practice and young people live in a safe and secure environment. Young people report that they feel safe in the home. There are a range of detailed policies and procedures including safeguarding, anti-bullying,

complaints and behaviour management, which are understood by staff and effectively implemented. The regular and effective monitoring of records and practices ensure that young people receive safe care in line with their individual needs.

The home has a robust complaint procedure in place, which is understood by the young people and the staff. Young people say they feel confident talking to staff about any worries or issues they have and know that their concerns will be addressed. Complaints are responded to in an effective and timely manner and this further protects young people.

There are good systems to reduce the risk of young people putting themselves at risk by going missing from home, including risk assessments and close supervision. Young people rarely go missing from home. This is supported by the geographical location of the home, which is located in a remote rural area. However, the young people were observed enjoying the expansive grounds of the home and were running around playing hide and seek and chasing each other. They reported, 'It is a great place when the snow comes. We can do sledging down the slopes'. 'I like the space to run around with the others'.

Young people confirm that there is little bullying in the home. When bullying does occur it is managed sensitively and effectively by staff. This has led to a culture where young people are confident to report bullying and understand that bullying is not tolerated in the home. This protects young people from feeling or being intimidated whilst in the home or at school.

The management of health and safety at the home is good. Staff receive a range of health and safety training including fire safety. Improvements to the safety of outbuildings have taken place since the last inspection. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place and regularly reviewed, which means that young people can play and learn in a safe environment.

Servicing and testing of equipment is carried out as required. Regular checks of the fire alarm system and emergency lighting are carried out. Fire drills are completed regularly. Young people have a good understanding of evacuation procedures which means that the building is evacuated efficiently when the fire alarm is sounded. This ensures that young people and staff are protected from harm whilst in the building.

The Registered Manager is clear about what checks are required when employing new staff and operates a robust recruitment procedure. All staff, including ancillary staff, undertake a thorough induction programme, which ensures that they understand how to keep young people safe by following safeguarding procedures. Staff are fully committed to their responsibilities in reporting any concerns, including whistleblowing to protect young people.

The home has established effective routines which promote positive behaviour. The ethos of the home is based around rewarding positive behaviour and communicating expectations clearly and sensitively to young people. Because of the positive way in

which the staff communicate with the young people, incidents of restraint are infrequent. Incidents of restraint are well monitored by the manager. However, not all the records are complete and do not contain the names of others present or confirmation of discussion with child and staff following the restraint. Young people do not fully benefit from de briefing discussions following restraint, allowing them the opportunity to explain issues leading up to their negative behaviour.

The home has clear disciplinary processes and procedures in place, however, these are not always followed by senior management. In a recent child protection investigation involving a member of staff, there were areas of ambiguity and inefficiencies in the disciplinary process, which lead to an unnecessary delay in the conclusion of the investigation. Although the investigation process ensured that all young people were cared for safely, this may have a negative impact on the morale of the staff in the home, which in turn could have a detrimental effect on the young people.

Although notifications are made promptly, Ofsted had not been informed of the outcome of a recent investigation. This does not fully safeguard young people.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager is an effective and enthusiastic leader who demonstrates real commitment and success in improving the lives of young people. The staff team is sufficient in numbers to meet the assessed needs of young people in placement. Staff spoken to are also committed and work well together and offer stability and consistency in care practices. The team are creative and resilient in their approach to care and support individuals with differing needs well. Staff said the best things about the home were, 'The young people, we make sure they get a happy and loving time here. We all work closely together and make sure the young people get the best care we can'. ' We know our kids really well and we can tell if they are unhappy about anything'. The only negative comment made was the remote location of the home and the difficulty getting on to their shift when there was snow on the ground. They did state that the home had a four wheel drive which could be used to help staff get to work.

The Registered Manager has developed positive links with other agencies in order to ensure effective care practices. Good relationships have been established with other professionals so that young people's needs are met from a wide range of provisions when required. Relationships between the home and families are very positive with staff ensuring that there are close consultations and effective lines of communication.

Staff receive good training opportunities. These are provided on an ongoing rolling programme, available company wide but monitored within the home. All mandatory training is up to date. The team are well supported by the Registered Manager through the supervision process which occurs regularly.

The home's Statement of Purpose has recently been updated to reflect the current operation of the service. A young person's guide is given to young people when they move in; this provides them with useful information about the day-to-day operation of the home.

The home is monitored through management checks and checks by an external representative of the company. Monitoring visits occur monthly as required under the regulations and there are systems in place to identify and address any shortfalls. A development plan is in place. This informs better practice and will enhance the care the young people receive in the home.

Confidential information is held securely and records are up to date and present a clear picture of young people's situations.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.