

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	02/11/2011
Inspector	Deirdra Keating
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

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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 children's home is privately owned and provides placements for children on behalf of local authorities. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children of either gender. The home offers care and accommodation for four children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and or learning disabilities.

Overall effectiveness

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

The quality of care is good and meets the individual needs of the young people placed at the home. Strong promotion of education, healthy lifestyles and ongoing consultation with young people are strengths of the service. Relationships between staff and young people are good and this supports positive outcomes for young people.

Young people are safeguarded well; there are good levels of supervision and support and in most areas young people's independence is well promoted. Most staff are established and know young people well. There are extra cover staff to support young people, however the deployment of these staff is not always organised well. There are also some areas of the environment that are not well maintained. Overall, the service has made improvements since the last inspection and raised the quality of care.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home is well maintained and decorated in particular relation to the pantry and first floor bathroom (NMS 10.3)
- improve further the opportunities for young people to develop skills which will prepare them for independent living this is in relation to the provision of room keys (NMS 2.5)
- ensure that the deployment of staff on individual shifts can meet the individual needs of all children resident in the home. (NMS 17.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people develop emotional resilience as they start to understand their diverse backgrounds. This is clear from the significant change in behaviour and the respect they show for the staff and the house. Young people are welcoming and polite; they are involved in the day-to-day running of the house and know how to treat visitors. Young people treat one another kindly. There are significant age differences in the group and young people show maturity and care for one another.

Young people are confident in their abilities and acquire many practical life skills at the home. They cook, shop and budget with staff. Cakes, snacks and meals are regularly prepared by young people. This maximises on young people's individual strengths and prepares them for more independent lives ahead. Young people who are facing changes and have moving-on plans are given lots of support emotionally and practically by staff. This helps them adapt to significant changes in their care plan arrangements.

Young people's contact arrangements are facilitated with careful planning. Staff ensure that each young person's contact is managed with sensitivity. Young people are taken to contact, including family events and supported well by staff. Families also visit the home and are made to feel welcome. Staff communicate with families regularly to promote good communication and continuity of care for each young person. Young people know that their families are made welcome and equally valued by the staff. This helps them gain acceptance about their family lives.

Quality of care

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

The staff have established trusting relationships with young people based on respect. Young people recognise the value of this and the support staff give them. Overall behaviour is good, young people treat one another well while positively accepting differences in their personalities and gender. Young people show care for one another, they cook meals to share and offer help and support to other young people.

Staff utilise young people's views and value their ideas. They make time to sit down and spend time with them regularly. This is arranged at times when young people feel comfortable and they willingly share their ideas. Staff use young people's ideas when making structural changes to the house, planning trips and developing menus. Young people say that they know their ideas are valued and that they like to contribute their views.

Staff have helped young people access the services offered by the Children's Rights Director. This has helped young people assert their true feelings at meetings about their future care plans. This has empowered young people facing decisions made about their care and given them a voice to express their concerns.

The educational achievement of young people is promoted well by staff. They have high aspirations for young people. Staff recognise young people may have had poor past experiences in school. Young people are consistently encouraged to attend and offered incentives for good attendance. This has resulted in young people who get up and go to school regularly. These good routines help them learn self-discipline and develop future skills.

Staff contribute well to young people's placement plans by organising professional appointments and other support to address young people's individual needs. Staff organise routine medical appointments for all young people and encourage them to attend these. Any specific help is detailed clearly in placement plans. Young people are offered a range of services to support both their physical and psychological health. They are strongly encouraged to make healthier food choices, take physical exercise and to take responsibility for maintaining good health.

The home is maintained safely and young people are pleased with recent improvements to the interior. These have provided them with a better ground floor layout including a newly decorated lounge and dining area. Young people have made their bedrooms personalised and use these for individual space. Bedrooms all have locks, however, young people have misplaced keys which have not been replaced and this reduces their independence. Parts of the house have been redecorated. Staff have given young people choices about the paint and décor in communal areas while promoting a homely atmosphere. However, the standard of décor is not consistent throughout the house. The first floor bathroom and kitchen pantry both require attention to paintwork, fittings and flooring.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are cared for in a physically safe environment. Regular safety checks ensure that appliances are safe to use and maintenance work is completed swiftly. Visitors to the house are monitored and identification is validated prior to entry. The house is secure and the relocation of the office beside the front door reinforces this as staff can easily observe anyone leaving or arriving at the home. This helps staff monitor young people's whereabouts and keeps them safe.

Young people feel safe at the home and say that, 'you know where you are with staff'. This demonstrates that staff provide consistent boundaries which help young people feel secure. The house is settled and young people seem relaxed and comfortable with one another and staff. There are incidences where staff have imposed consequences for young people to promote their well-being and safety. Young people are given meaningful consequences if they put themselves in unsafe situations. This helps them reflect on their conduct and realise that staff prioritise their welfare and safety above all else. While young people do not like these restrictions they regularly add comments to sanction records and reflect back on events with insight. This shows that relationships between staff and young people have developed well. Young people feel safe and nurtured, they usually adhere to

boundaries that they know are there to protect them.

Young people are cared for by staff that are only appointed after rigorous checks have been completed. There have been no new staff appointments since the last inspection, although staff are utilised from other homes owned by the organisation. All staff undergo the same checks that meet safeguarding requirements and ensure young people are only cared for by safe, suitable adults.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a Registered Manager who is established within the organisation and knows most of the young people very well. There is a clear line of senior management and this provides support and accountability for the management of the home. The home offers care and accommodation for young people in line with the Statement of Purpose and objectives which are shared with local authorities. Young people's individual needs are considered prior to placements to ensure they can be met by the home. The care and affection for young people is genuine and this promotes a nurturing environment.

The home is monitored closely by the manager and independent visitor. Previous recommendations have been acted upon and the overall quality of care has improved. There is a development plan to improve the quality of care for young people by updating parts of the environment. Managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the service and these are generally identified in the development plan.

The home has a core staff team and extra staff are deployed from other homes to support individual young people as and when required. While young people are familiar with these staff the organisation of this cover is not well organised. This resulted in a shift where there has been several changes of staff to support one young person. Although rotas show this is unusual it does not meet young people's individual needs.

Young people are cared for by staff that are trained and supervised well. There are mandatory training courses that all staff undertake and these are updated regularly. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and are competent about how to safeguard young people's welfare by ensuring that their individual practice is safe and responsive.

Records are clear, concise, and stored securely. These records help staff to understand young people's diverse backgrounds. The systems for recording are good and understood well by staff. Overall, systems work well, the quality of care has improved and subsequently there are better outcomes for young people. Young people are quick to recognise this and say that they are happy with the care they receive.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.