

Inspection report for children's home

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| Inspector | Gillian Walters |
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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 is a privately owned residential special school, which is also registered as a children's home. It provides a service to eight children, between the ages of six and 12 years, who experience emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides well-planned personalised care to meet the varied and complex needs of the children placed. Staff have good knowledge of the children they are working with. They are committed to working together with other professionals to secure positive outcomes for each child.

The home is comfortable and has a friendly and homely atmosphere. Children share good relationships with staff and with each other. Children say staff protect them and that they feel safe. Children benefit from clear routine and structure in their day and understand boundaries.

Staff do seek children's individual views when working with them on a one-to-one basis. However, children struggle with group discussions and are not engaged with regular children's meetings. The home has not yet identified an alternative to children's meetings. This means the home is not consistently obtaining children's collective views, which would enable the children to further influence the running of the home.

Additionally, two requirements are made. These relate to; the Statement of Purpose, children's guide and recording of physical interventions.

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 |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 17B (2001) | ensure that following the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose, and that it specifically includes a description of the measure used (Regulation 17B(3)(c)) | 27/02/2012 |

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| 5 (2001) | update and revise the Statement of Purpose and children's guide. (Regulation 5 (a)) | 27/02/2012 |
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Recommendations

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

- improve systems for children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support, this is with specific reference to infrequent children's meetings. (NMS 1.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

For a significant number of the children this has been a long-term placement. All the children have varied and complex needs. Some children have tried to self-harm and displayed violent behaviour towards others. All have presented difficulty in a mainstream education environment. However all the children placed are settled and are now making good progress in all aspects of their life. Children feel happy and secure in this home, and have developed good relationships with staff.

Children's health needs are identified within health and placement plans. Children receive routine health care support and specialist services are available to them to support and address their individual needs. A number of the children are engaged with play therapy. They have regular one-to-one sessions with independent therapists who come into the home. The therapists also offer training to staff, on such issues as attachment, and provide regular advice and consultation as required. This ensures a consistency of care and support that enables children to move forward, understanding and dealing with their individual issues and difficulties.

Children attend the home's education provision on a daily basis and work hard with the teaching staff. Some children, before coming to the home, had poor attendance at school or had been excluded. All children are now attending education full time and are making good progress in all areas of the curriculum. Care staff and teaching staff work closely together to consolidate learning, preparing children for the transition from primary to secondary education.

Children are encouraged to maintain contact with family and friends as is consistent with their care plan. Some children board at the school, returning home at weekends and during holidays. Others benefit from supervised contact with family as appropriate. Parents and other family members also visit the home and children enjoy these arrangements. The home supports and encourages such contact and does on occasion facilitate arrangements by securing local bed and breakfast accommodation for families visiting from a distance. Communication between the home, children's families and professionals is good. This enables children to retain

and rebuild positive family relationships.

All children make a positive contribution to the running of the home. They are encouraged to help staff at mealtimes, keep their rooms tidy and work together when required. For example, the children decorated their Christmas tree together in advance of their Christmas party. Children can make their views and ideas known to staff during individual home tutor time. However, children do not have a regular and frequent opportunity to come together as a group and put their ideas and suggestions forward. Staff recognise a need to explore alternative options of gaining the children's collective views. This will enable the children to have further influence on the running of the home.

Children can access the same activities as their peers within their community. Staff take the children out on trips to local shops, cinema, zoo and leisure facilities. This provides the children with enjoyable and interesting opportunities with staff out in their community. Some children recently attended a dance workshop for a number of weeks at a local theatre. This activity culminated in the children involved, giving a dance performance to a paying public audience. Children thoroughly enjoyed the experience, learning new skills in dance and attaining pride in what they had achieved.

Quality of care

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

Staff have a good knowledge of the children in their care and have a detailed understanding of the issues and difficulties they experience. Staff are committed to providing a consistent therapeutic approach with the children, and are eager to learn from the trained therapists that come to the home. Staff have regular contact with therapists for updates on children's progress and seek advice as necessary to improve their practice and support the children concerned.

Staff are aware of the particular behavioural challenges some of the children can present. Staff are informed of how they should respond to children's behaviours by regularly reviewed behaviour management plans and risk assessments. Staff always attempt to de-escalate difficult situations through discussion with the children. This ensures that physical intervention is used only as a last resort, when it is necessary to protect the child or others.

Staff work directly with children in home tutor sessions to develop an awareness and understanding of their backgrounds, difficulties, personal identity and culture. All children engage positively with staff and understand that staff are trying to help them. There is a comprehensive complaints procedure in place that can be accessed by children, parents and others. Children know how to make complaints and when they do, they are supported through the process. The home responds positively to complaints and works closely with neighbours to maintain good community relationships.

Staff work closely with teaching staff within the provision to support the child's learning. Staff spend time playing with children, encouraging positive play and focusing on a task through to its completion. Children enjoy building with construction toys, and staff share the fun of helping them with individual construction pieces. This builds on the children's personal sense of achievement and provides a good nurturing experience. Children also enjoy bath time play. Staff ensure this is fun for the children, making plenty of bath time toys and bubble bath available.

Children are supported in accessing routine and specialist health care as required. This ensures that basic health care routines, such as doctor and dental check ups and more complex health matters are appropriately followed up. Therapists also come into the home regularly, avoiding the need for children to access this service away from home.

The procedures for managing medication are put into practice to ensure young people's welfare is promoted and protected. Staff are trained and have suitable qualifications in first aid and handling medication. Staff have a clear understanding of the home's procedures and knowledge of each young person's medication requirements. Staff ensure that medication is administered appropriately with checks in place to avoid errors.

Children live in a quiet residential location. School forms part of the provision that meets children's needs. Children have their own rooms that are decorated and personalised with their own belongings. The home is comfortable, clean, tidy, and well maintained. There is a maintenance programme in place to ensure that repairs are identified and attended to immediately.

All the children take a pride in their home and are encouraged to participate in caring for their home environment. Children's drawings and photographs are put on the walls and children have designed their own name posters for their bedroom doors. Staff and children worked together to brightly decorate the home for the festive holiday.

Children, accompanied by staff, participate in horse riding, rugby and swimming. This means that children are aware that they have a place, and are included in the life of the community they live in.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children say they feel safe and know that there is an adult they can talk to if they have concerns. Robust child protection procedures are in place and staff know how to access and follow them to ensure children are safeguarded. Staff are aware of the vulnerable nature of the children they care for. They complete individual risks assessments and put plans and strategies in place to minimise risk.

Staff have good knowledge of the children in their care. Children going missing from care is not currently an issue, this has been successfully managed in recent years. Staff are aware and have access to the local authority's procedures and protocols. The home is aware that local protocols with the police are currently being reviewed.

Children have individualised behaviour management plans that address their specific needs. These plans ensure that staff are informed of the strategies that will assist them in dealing with the children in their care. Staff receive training in behaviour management and safe intervention techniques. Physical interventions do occur but these only happen when there is a need to protect the child concerned or others around them. Staff complete individual records of such occurrences. They are specific to each child concerned. Those records reflect the training technique term but lack detail of the actual measure used. Unless the reader is familiar with the terms given to certain techniques, it is difficult to know how the child was held, and determine the appropriateness of the intervention.

The home operates a zero tolerance policy to bullying. Children are informed of this in the children's guide that is provided on admission. They are encouraged to talk to staff about any concerns that they have. This ensures that staff can identify and address issues immediately, supporting and protecting the child concerned.

Children benefit from living in an environment that keeps them safe and secure. Fire-fighting equipment and other utilities are regularly serviced and safety checks are carried out in accordance with recommended timescales to ensure that the home remains a safe environment for young people to live in.

The home has a good recruitment and selection process. All pre-employment checks are completed before new staff commence work within the home. Visitors sign in and have their credentials checked on arrival. These processes ensure young people are not exposed to unsuitable persons who may do them harm.

Leadership and management

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

A qualified and experienced Registered Manager manages the home with the support of an experienced staff team. The Registered Manager and staff have good knowledge and understanding of the children in their care.

Staff benefit from regular supervision and staff meetings, where they have the opportunity to discuss the needs of the children in their care. The home annually reviews staff performance with an appraisal process, identifying any gaps in knowledge, skill or experience. Appraisals have been successfully taking place. Staff describe the Registered Manager as supportive. They say that they enjoy working at the home.

Staff receive regular training opportunities that assist them in their role. These include training on first aid, health and safety, safeguarding and food hygiene. The

Registered Manager is trained and experienced in physical intervention techniques. The Registered Manager frequently provides effective training to new staff and an ongoing programme of refresher training for existing staff. At the last inspection, no requirements or recommendations were made.

The home has in place a Statement of Purpose and children's guide. The guide, given to children when placed at the home, is child-friendly and contains appropriate information for them. The Statement of Purpose and young people's guide sets the scene of what the home offers, its facilities and what children can expect. However, due to recent changes in statutory guidance and legislation both of these documents contain outdated information and omissions. The organisation has both these documents under review.

The home is adequately resourced and there are quality assurance systems in place to monitor the care received by children in the home. The Registered Manager routinely completes monthly reviews of the service, and the organisation has an arrangement for carrying out regular independent visits. The Registered Manager uses both reports to identify issues that require action and to inform planning and future developments. The Registered Manager is responsible for regularly reviewing and updating the home's annual improvement plan. The Registered Manager has initiated some work on data collection and analysis to examine trends with children's individual behaviour. This enables the Registered Manager to identify patterns of behaviour and triggers. This informs and improves behaviour management planning for children in the home.

There are systems in place to notify Ofsted and other relevant authorities of significant events that may occur within the home or with young people. Information recorded is appropriate and allows the reader to understand what the issues or concerns are and how they are being dealt with. Children's individual records are up to date and securely stored to preserve and maintain privacy and confidentiality.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.