

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Shaun Common / Graham Robinson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is operated by a local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation. Education is provided on site within purpose-built classrooms. The centre is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 20 young people.

Facilities available for young people's use include a sports hall, fitness suite, music studio, vocational skills zone and outdoor play areas.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make excellent progress and are provided with very high quality care. Detailed, individualised care plans are systematically reviewed and delivered in practice to ensure positive outcomes are achieved.

Staff and managers exhibit high aspirations for all young people and a determination to continually improve service provision. This is supported through excellent quality assurance systems that show the strengths of the service and any areas for improvement. Action is taken quickly and decisively where any shortfall is evident.

Young people's views are central to the running of the centre. Their views are considered, taken seriously and contribute to changes and improvements in the service they receive. They have good access to a range of health services and professionals, and make very positive progress in education.

Young people are helped to stay safe through robust, rigorous and transparent safeguarding systems. They are cared for by a qualified, skilled and well-trained staff team. Staff are effectively supported by managers through formal supervision.

There are two areas for improvement. The effectiveness of sanctions imposed needs

to be recorded accurately and a summary report of monitoring carried out by the managers needs to be sent to Ofsted twice a year.

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 within 24 hours of the use of any sanction, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose, which shall include the effectiveness and consequences of the use of the measure; specifically ensure that the effectiveness of the measure is accurately recorded by all staff. (Regulation 17B(3)(f))	31/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that summary reports of Regulation 34 monitoring are sent to Ofsted at six monthly intervals and within 28 days of completion. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people, professionals and those with parental responsibility all recognise the high levels of support provided by staff at the centre. The child-centred ethos is firmly embedded into the centre's culture and working practices. As a result, young people develop stability in their lives and prosper socially, emotionally and educationally.

Young people, who have histories of risk-taking behaviours, are given time, space and support to settle in and take stock of their lives. They are closely involved in decision-making processes that affect both their immediate and long-term future. This gives them a sense of direction and purpose. They make exceptional progress in developing self-confidence, emotional resilience and a wider understanding of other people's needs, as well as their own.

The arrangements to promote and improve young people's health are outstanding, with all aspects of their health promoted positively. As well as accessing and receiving services that address day-to-day health needs, the centre has developed and maintained excellent working relationships with mental health services. They provide young people with a full range of assessment and interventions where required.

Young people said the quality, quantity and choice of food served are good. Any special dietary requirements including cultural, are noted at admission and catered for. Attention is paid to nutrition and healthy eating when menus are being considered. Mealtimes are well-ordered social occasions where staff and young people sit together and discuss various issues. For example, in one unit the day's news was introduced as the main topic of discussion. This gave young people an opportunity to discuss and develop a greater understanding of current affairs and how these affect day-to-day living.

Young people are encouraged to improve their lifestyle through exercise and diet, with their general health and fitness being closely monitored. Individual and group programmes provided educate young people to assist them to modify aspects of their previous lifestyle, such as tobacco, drugs and alcohol use. As a result, young people enjoy improvement to their general health, fitness and well-being.

The cooperation and communication between care and educational staff are excellent and this contributes positively to young people's care. The ethos, practice and daily routines of the centre are geared towards school attendance and educational achievement. Based on their starting points, young people are making excellent progress in their education, with one young person recently completing A-level mathematics. School attendance improves as young people engage positively in all aspects of their education. The centre has developed strong links with educational providers in the community. This is underpinned with imaginative and individualised mobility schemes, providing young people with opportunities to study at community-based colleges.

Young people have a say and influence certain aspects of the centre's operation. Young people's meetings are an example of where they have opportunities to share their views and make choices. Excellent levels of communication between staff and young people ensure young people's views are taken seriously, allowing them to make a positive contribution to their unit. This encourages young people to take responsibility for their daily lifestyle, enhance their independence and develop skills in making better and more informed choices.

Young people are given opportunities to make a positive contribution to the wider community. For example, the centre has significantly improved its programme of restorative justice and reparation, which links effectively to young people's mobility programmes. As a result, young people are engaged in local projects on a regular basis, giving them a greater appreciation of others and contributing to life in the local community.

Young people benefit from contact with family and other people important to them. Young people, parents and visiting professionals confirm that the centre works flexibly and energetically to facilitate and promote regular contact. Extra indoor and outdoor space has been created since the previous inspection which benefits family contact. Parents say they are welcomed when they visit and are put at ease by the warm response of staff. This contributes significantly into making visits a positive experience for all concerned.

Transition planning is outstanding. Detailed planning commences when young people are admitted, with plans being monitored and regularly reviewed. Excellent mobility programmes underpin work in this area, with careful risk assessment and support that meets individual needs. One young person spoke enthusiastically about his programme, which helped him to identify and then be accepted into a full-time placement at college, commencing in September 2012.

Quality of care

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

Young people, parents and visiting professionals said that the quality of care is outstanding. For example, one professional described the excellent care and support being given and this view was supported by the parent of the young person concerned. This young person engages fully in life at the centre and is now enjoying excellent outcomes.

Staff are highly skilled at developing and maintaining positive relationships with young people. This approach underpins the culture and ethos created within the centre, along with its working practices. Relationships are strong, survive testing behaviour and allow young people to develop stability and trust. As a result, young people settle into the centre and reinvest into a more ordered lifestyle, which in turn helps them to develop socially, emotionally and educationally. Young people develop a more positive view of themselves and others, giving them a more realistic view of life in the community.

Young people benefit from the excellent relationships and attachments they make with staff, who communicate positively with young people. Staff have high aspirations for young people, resulting in young people experiencing an excellent standard of support and care. Many young people report significant improvement regarding the quality of relationships they now have with their family as a result of the work undertaken by staff at the centre.

Young people understand how to make a complaint and are confident to do so. They have free access to forms and pre-addressed envelopes, which allow them to make a formal complaint externally if required. Visiting advocates spend regular time each week with young people and confirm they support young people in making complaints where required. Complaints are responded to fully and in a timely manner, which means young people's concerns are treated seriously and acted upon.

A range of detailed planning documents identify and address the needs of young people. Plans are individualised to cover all areas of need, which include identity, religious and cultural needs. Statutory reviews in conjunction with the centre's own internal reviewing system ensure that plans are reviewed and updated at least every four weeks. Young people are fully involved in their planning and have a clear sense of direction regarding their progress and future.

Planning arrangements are outstanding. Staff are proactive and ensure plans are on track and progressing. For example, a recently introduced consultative exercise with young people takes place regularly, where their education targets are assessed and revised as necessary. Targets vary from matters such as greater consistency of school attendance, through to arranging a college course as part of a young person's mobility and transition programme. This is just one example of the flexible and individualised approach taken with young people to meet their needs and improve outcomes.

Well-planned, purposeful activities and leisure pursuits, coupled with an ongoing enrichment programme, provide a full and varied curriculum, which overlaps between education and care. The innovative use of space, along with ability to link into community resources effectively, provides young people with a wide range of sporting, artistic and cultural activities. These develop and enhance practical skills which give them a sense of purpose that they can further develop on release.

Providing meaningful leisure activities is an area of continued development with the recent completion of a music studio and outside relaxation area. These are just two of a number of initiatives and projects completed since the previous inspection. As a result, young people are given more options and choices when deciding how to fill their leisure time. This is a well organised and coordinated part of the centre's function and is a real strength.

The centre's location, design and size support its purpose and provide an environment conducive to the positive secure care of young people. The standard of maintenance, décor, fixtures, fittings, furnishings and equipment are of a high standard, providing young people with a safe and relaxing environment. Young people's bedrooms can be personalised to suit their taste and interests and provide appropriate privacy. Service contracts along with regular security and health and safety checks are in place to keep young people safe. A number of improvements internally to the existing building have been completed since the previous inspection. For example, the completion of extensions in two living units provide space for young people to relax.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people stated the incentive scheme is good and it helps them to develop positive social skills and behaviour. The scheme has different levels, and progression

through positive behaviour brings increased rewards. Information about the scheme is provided to young people and is also clearly displayed throughout the centre for them to refer to.

Sanctions used are appropriate and relevant to the misdemeanour. Records kept contain young people's comments and signature. This shows that young people are encouraged to develop understanding and responsibility. The effectiveness of measures imposed are monitored by managers through various quality assurance processes. This ensures that sanctions used have the desired effect of shaping young people's behaviour to become more positive, and diminishing negative behaviours that impact upon other people. However, recordings made by unit staff do not always demonstrate the effectiveness of the sanction.

There are excellent relationships between young people and staff, which is a major factor that underpins the centre's ability to deliver outstanding quality of care and outcomes. There is a clear mutual respect, and young people speak highly of staff and the support and care they receive. The positive relationships with staff and excellent role models they provide young people with, lead young people to improved socially acceptable behaviour.

Young people stated they feel very safe at the centre. They are effectively safeguarded through the implementation of sound child protection policies and procedures. Staff have up-to-date training in child protection matters and understand their responsibilities. All matters are handled efficiently and thoroughly, with accurate recording that supports practice and ensures young people are kept safe. There are clear links with placing authorities and with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The LADO has direct oversight of child protection concerns, which ensures transparency and thoroughness in centre practices for the benefit of young people. There are strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. This ensures further independent oversight and scrutiny of practices, which promotes young people's well-being and safety.

Throughout their stay at the centre, young people's needs and vulnerability are continually assessed by staff and managers with the support of mental health services where required. Any concerns about self-harm are known by staff and managers, and there is a clear system and process for oversight and monitoring. This includes live risk assessments that are constantly updated and shared with all staff. This system ensures there are comprehensive arrangements to keep young people safe.

Bullying is infrequent and occurrences tend to be of a minor nature. The majority of young people report no concerns or worries. Where young people stated they have been bullied, they described the problems as minor, such as teasing. They are clear to point out that any bullying is quickly addressed by staff and treated very seriously, giving them reassurance and a sense of security.

Physical restraint is only used when absolutely necessary and where appropriate to do so. Any use is thoroughly recorded, with close scrutiny and rigorous oversight that

helps to protect young people. For example, managers review every recording and observe incidents on closed circuit television. Any concerns are immediately highlighted and addressed. This also enables good practice to be shared and to identify where further improvement can be made to practice. Behaviour management plans and risk assessments identify the support and care young people need. For example, if a young person has a health condition that needs to be considered should physical intervention be needed, the records provide staff with the necessary information to ensure appropriate safe care.

The use of single separation is appropriate and is always fully and accurately recorded to show the reasons for its use. When young people are separated, close monitoring and observations take place to keep young people safe.

Recruitment practices are thorough and robust. This ensures that the range of required checks needed are carried out fully before anyone is allowed to work at the home. The process determines that the right people are employed to work with vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

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

The Statement of Purpose provides good information for parents, professionals and others about the range of services the centre provides for young people. The children's guide also provides good information for young people about what they can expect while at the centre. The centre has access to interpretation services, so that where young people's first language is not English, an appropriate format can be accessed and provided.

Staff at the centre provide high quality safe care delivering outstanding outcomes for young people. Staff are knowledgeable about young people's needs and the centre's policies, processes and systems. They are very well supported, experienced and qualified, and have undertaken essential and further developmental training. They demonstrate enthusiasm and commitment to their work and the young people in their care.

Leadership of the home is exceptional. Internal quality assurance and monitoring processes are of a high calibre. There is rigorous scrutiny of all aspects of the care and safety of young people leading to positive outcomes. Managers have high expectations of all staff and demonstrate a clear vision and determination to continuously improve and deliver high quality services to young people. However, summary reports of monitoring have not been sent to Ofsted every six months, so that Ofsted can monitor the quality of care provided to young people and the progress the centre is making.

External monitoring processes complement internal management systems in securing improvement in service delivery to young people. Monthly visits by an independent person assist managers to further improve the quality of care provided. A report of

such visits is available and is provided to Ofsted in a timely manner as required. Additionally, the Registered Manager reports quarterly to an external Scrutiny and Strategy Board hosted by the local authority. This examines the care, education and financial aspects of the centre, providing another source of feedback that assists the centre to improve its service delivery.

A clear development plan is in place that sets out what the centre intends to achieve over the next two years. This plan sets out objectives that are focused on how the centre can improve a service that is already high quality. A number of improvements have already been made to the centre since the last inspection. For example, there have been numerous building initiatives, such as the creation of a relaxation area with running water, rabbits and fish, and the introduction of 'student voice', which is a consultation process completed with young people within education every six weeks. The process consults with young people about reviewing and setting their educational targets; this has had positive results and outcomes.

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.