

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC429748
Inspection date	09/01/2013
Inspector	Stephen Halliley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	13/06/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is privately-owned and provides placements for children and young people on behalf of local authorities. The home offers care and accommodation for four children and young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and or learning disabilities.

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 **good**.

Young people in this home benefit from individualised, well-planned care consistent with the needs of their placement plans. This ensures that young people achieve good progress in many areas of their lives. This includes educational achievement and attendance, improved social skills, an awareness of the importance of taking responsibility for their own health and developing life skills which will benefit them in future placements.

Young people's views and opinions are given a high status in this home and they are consulted in a number of different ways. One young person said 'We have regular house meetings and staff listen to what we have to say. They do their best to try and do what we ask them.' Another added 'We have regular house meetings and I think staff listen to what we have got to say. The computer room is getting shabby and we have suggested how we would like to see it redecorated and staff are going to do that for us.' Young people are also clear that if they needed to complain the matter would be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately and promptly by the Registered Manager.

Relationships between staff and young people are positive and relaxed. There is a definite homely feel to this service though both young people and staff know the structure, routines and boundaries that are in place. Staff are consistently available to young people and there is a very good balance between young people's appropriate requests and staff's prompt responses. This flexibility of approach allows for young people's needs to be met as fully as possible while being able to respond

to changing needs.

Young people feel safe in this home and they are protected by a range of health and safety checks which are carried out regularly and clearly recorded.

The Registered Manager is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of her team and a clear development plan is in place to ensure the home continues to progress.

Shortfalls were noted in respect of the frequency of some staff training and in ensuring notification of significant events are forwarded to Ofsted. The Registered Manager has already taken action to address both of these areas. Minor shortfalls were noted in respect of the thoroughness of some monitoring and the content of the young people's guide. Additionally there was a minor shortfall relating to the maintenance of the building but, again, the Registered Manager has already taken steps to address this.

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
27 (2001)	ensure all staff receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal; this specifically relates to safeguarding training being regularly updated (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	31/01/2013
30 (2001)	ensure that if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table of schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 30 (1))	31/01/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the children's guide includes information on a how a child can contact the Children's Rights Director if they have a concern they wish to raise (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the homes policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate

action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring; this relates specifically to signing and dating entries when they have spoken to young people about the use of restraints and sanctions. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have made significant steps in many areas of their lives in the relatively short time they have been living here. This includes attendance at educational provision, contact with families, improved self-esteem and a much improved understanding of the importance of being healthy.

All young people have arrived here with very low self-esteem for a variety of reasons. Staff have worked very hard to support them in this area and improvement is evident from the confidence shown in all aspects of their daily living during the course of the inspection. Young people have a developing level of emotional maturity and they are able to express their views and feelings in a sensible and mature manner. One young person showed how much he has matured as a person when his keyworker left to take up another job. He approached her and without any prompting apologised for his rude and belligerent attitude towards her while she had been working with him.

Attendance levels for all three young people at their educational provision are high. This is a marked improvement from the starting points they had when they first came to the home. Young people are reported as doing well in all aspects of their education. The involvement and evident enthusiasm for college courses, particularly mechanics options, is good to see as it is clear these young people want to learn and to benefit from their education. One parent commented 'He is definitely benefiting from being there - I never expected him to say he enjoyed school but he has and he attends regularly especially enjoying his one day per week at college.'

Young people are in good health. They have regular access to health professionals as required and are well supported and cared for by staff if they are unwell. Young people take an active part in ensuring their own health through regular physical activity and eating a balanced diet. They are integral in planning the menus and arranging trips to the gym or swimming pool. Young people have easy access to child and adolescent mental health services if this is required. Young people also benefit from regular discussions with substance misuse workers and the availability of specialist therapeutic input if appropriate. This overall approach ensures young people are in good health and that their physical, emotional and psychological health needs are fully met.

All young people are responsible compiling menus, doing tasks such as laundry, cleaning and cooking and activity planning. This ensures they play an active role in planning their daily lives and that they are seen as important to the functioning of the home. They have also had input into the proposed redecoration of the landing and stairs areas, lots of input into the development of their computer room in terms

of the layout of the room and the furniture which should be in there, and in individualising their rooms. This helps ensure that the layout of the home and facilities in place meet their needs.

All young people have contact with their families in line with individual arrangements. This also supports young people maintaining friendships in their home areas. One parent said 'He has weekly home contact on a Friday evening when he goes to the scout troop he was in before he moved to the home. This allows him to maintain contact with his friends too. He also has occasional overnight contact which is also good. This is the right level of contact for everyone at the moment.'

Young people have independence plans which are individually planned depending on levels of understanding and ability. These show a gradual development of skills which will lead to young people moving on with the basic skills and abilities they will need to manage in adult life and in their future placements.

Quality of care

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

Young people in this home receive high quality care from a dedicated, knowledgeable and experienced staff team.

Relationships between staff and young people are relaxed and very positive, based on a mutually respectful approach. Young people confirm they can talk to all staff and make requests of them in the knowledge they will be given fair consideration. Young people were very clear that staff listen to them during house meetings, keyworker sessions and in general discussions. Examples of this include a request to go to the gym on the evening of the inspection, which staff facilitated without hesitation, and yoghurts were bought for supper at young people's request. All young people were asked what special activity they would like to do before Christmas. Their suggestions were fully met and included one young person going to see the Lion King at a theatre in London and two young people being taken quad biking. Young people are also very clear that they would go to the Registered Manager if they had a complaint or a serious issue which needed to be addressed. They are also clear that she would address this issue quickly and clearly and would feed back to them about what she had done and what she expected of them in the future. This open approach ensures young people's voices are heard and that they see that their views and feelings are extremely important to staff and to the running of the home.

Detailed, individual care plans ensure staff are fully aware of both young people's backgrounds and their future plans. These are regularly updated and any changes shared with all staff. This ensures a consistency of approach and care practice which is fully in line with care placement plans. This in turn ensures outcomes for young people are good. One Social Worker states that 'the home are really good at working with young people through developing trust, rapport and developing relationships with young people. They are also extremely good at ensuring he mixes in the local

community and benefits from taking part in community based activities as part of his general living and independence plan.'

The links between education and the home are very strong as two young people are educated in a school run by the organisation. The development of a written handover sheet which goes to school and returns with the young person each day ensures that behaviours are known, any issues during the day can be fully addressed and a consistent approach to issues can be provided. One young person attends a local college and there is regular contact by phone with them to update on progress and any issues which may arise.

Young people are involved in a wide range of activities. These include scouts, bowling, cinema and trips to the beach. The gym and swimming are the main activities which young people participate in as there is a real thirst for fitness. This is well supported by staff who participate in activities alongside young people and provide good role models in terms of exercise and healthy eating.

The home is situated on the edge of a busy market town and is well located for easy access to this town and larger towns in the area. The building has been laid out in such a way that there are appropriate communal areas for young people to access and their rooms are individualised according to their tastes. The stairway and landing areas in particular show signs of wear and tear due to the volume of traffic going through them and the, at times, poor attitude of young people to maintaining their living environment. Some door handles have also been damaged and are in need of repair. Minutes of a recent management meeting show the Registered Manager has been authorised a substantial sum of money to fully address these issues and improve some other areas of the home. This shows a good awareness of areas needing to be addressed and a commitment to ensuring a high standard of living environment for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe in this home and are kept safe through the practice of the staff. One young person said 'Staff keep us safe and help us to know how to keep ourselves safe - like the manager just came to pick me up so I can talk to you because it's dark and I have to walk through parts of town which aren't nice.'

A range of health and safety checks are regularly carried out to ensure young people are kept safe from harm including through accidents and bullying. Bullying issues have been stringently addressed since the home was last inspected. This includes more vigorous monitoring of bullying incidents and their nature and a thorough follow up of incidents through restorative approaches. This ensures young people feel safe to raise concerns and they are able to see that the matter is followed through appropriately by staff. Thumb turn locks have also been fitted to the main door so it can be easily opened should the need arise even when it is kept locked overnight for security purposes. This ensures that the home is secure overnight and

also that egress is easily managed should there be a fire during the night.

There have been four incidents of young people being absent from the home without permission since the last inspection. Recording is clear and accurate and details appropriate actions being taken when young people have returned. Tellingly there have been no unauthorised absences since August 2012 showing that this group of young people are well managed, feel safe and do not feel the need to abscond.

Positive behaviour is recognised through the use of positive incident forms. When a young person achieves a certain number of these they are able to choose a reward from the home. The use of positive incident forms has helped turn the ethos of the home away from one whereby only negative interactions and behaviours were recorded. This has had an impact on young people though some are struggling to deal with this as they have never previously received positive reinforcement. This has, however, helped focus young people on the benefits of acceptable behaviour and has seen a reduction in inappropriate behaviours recently. There have been 40 incidents of physical intervention, including restrictive physical intervention, since the last inspection and 23 sanctions have been given. Generally these are recorded well though there are some minor omissions in the recording of both sanctions and restraints.

Staff are rigorously vetted as part of the recruitment process and this helps to ensure that young people are protected from harm by adults who work with them. Unchecked visitors are chaperoned if they are in the building at the same time as young people. This provides further protection for young people from potential harm from adults in their home.

There have been no allegations or suspicions of harm to young people since the last inspection. Staff are fully aware of the safeguarding policy and procedures and managers are very aware of the need to notify external agencies such as Ofsted or the Local Authority Designated Officer when appropriate. This ensures that young people would be responded to appropriately and fully if an allegation or disclosure was made.

Leadership and management

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

This busy home is effectively and efficiently managed by an experienced Registered Manager. She is currently being supported by a new deputy manager from another home for whom she is acting as mentor. This has not had an adverse impact on young people as the member of staff is experienced and suitably knowledgeable and qualified. Also a consistent staff team has ensured that the care given to young people has been maintained during this time of change.

The home has continued to improve since the last inspection. Requirements and recommendations made at the previous inspection have been addressed. A new bathroom and lounge flooring have been fitted and paperwork systems have been

updated and streamlined. Positive incident forms have also been introduced to show young people there are positive consequences to good behaviour as well as sanctions when behaviour is unacceptable. This has all led to a more positive outlook from young people and has freed up staff time to ensure they can focus more fully on face-to-face work rather than recording.

The Statement of Purpose is clear and one social worker says the home 'fully meets the aims and objectives' as stated in this document. The young people's guide is being reviewed to make it less wordy and more accessible for young people of varying degrees of literacy and understanding. The copy seen does not, however, include information on how young people can contact the Children's Rights Director should they wish to do so. This means young people do not have access to all avenues of support which they may need should they make a formal complaint.

Monitoring of the home is regular and shows consistent good quality consultation with young people, their families and placing authorities. This ensures that the service can respond to feedback and continue to evolve the service it offers to young people.

Staffing levels are high ensuring that young people receive appropriate levels of supervision and that their needs can be met as fully as possible. The staff team receive regular supervision with one member of staffing saying 'this has been a really good system for me and has helped me develop and understand my role.' Staff receive a comprehensive initial training package and this is supplemented by regular updates to ensure their knowledge of practice and legislation remains current and that they work with young people in a safe and consistent manner. Safeguarding training for two staff has lapsed though a course has now been booked for them to attend. As an interim measure the Registered Manager has covered safeguarding at length in supervision, run through some scenario based situations and ensured they have re-read the organisational safeguarding policy. This is a good response to an identified training need while the appropriate course was located.

The Registered Manager has dealt well with complaints which have arisen in this home. There have been two from young people about bullying which have been recorded clearly and resolved to everyone's satisfaction. There have also been two complaints from a neighbour about young people which have involved the Police. The Registered Manager and senior managers within the organisation have worked diligently to try and resolve these and allow everyone to move forward but this has not yet happened. The Police Community Support Officer who has been involved says 'the manager very much wants to address this issue and has done everything she can to try and resolve the situation amicably.'

Notifications have been sent through to Ofsted when serious events have required this. However, due to an information technology issue in July 2012 two notifications were not received though they had been sent by email from the home. These were re-sent during the inspection to ensure that Ofsted maintain a full overview of events within the home.

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* and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.