

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	10/05/2013
Inspector	Judith Longden
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	30/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The service is a residential school that is registered as a children's home to provide care for 54 children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The service is owned by a private company.

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 **adequate**.

The home provides an adequate quality of care with individual plans for each young person. Young people are involved in their care and the running of the home and have influenced a number of changes in the home's practice. The home is experiencing a change in how it operates and there is a move from the previous regimented and sometimes institutional feel of the home towards a more homely environment where young people are respected and trusted. This is a gradual change and there are elements of practice that continue to restrict or limit the dignity and privacy of young people. Relationships are generally good but there remains a degree of formality with care staff in the home, with young people having to call staff 'Miss' or 'Sir'.

Young people achieve good outcomes in all areas especially in relation to their education and opportunities for learning through activities and leisure pursuits.

Young people are generally kept safe and feel safe. The home has improved the use, recording and monitoring of all aspects of behaviour management. The home has good safeguarding procedures and a good missing from home protocol and procedure. However, this is not always implemented, especially in relation to young people returning from being absent. Some actions from the recent fire risk assessment have not yet been implemented.

The home has a new manager and has changed the management structure to provide a team of care managers. This has improved the monitoring of care and the welfare of young people and provided improved support for staff. The requirements

and recommendations made at the previous inspection have all been addressed and met.

There are three breaches of regulation and two failures to meet national minimum standards as a result of this inspection. These relate to the privacy of young people and their relationship with staff, the implementation of the missing from care procedure and actions in respect of the fire risk assessment. However these do not significantly impact negatively on the welfare or safety of young people.

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
11 (2001)	ensure that the home is conducted in a manner which respects the privacy and dignity of children accommodated there (Regulation 11 (2)(a))	14/06/2013
16 (2001)	prepare and implement a procedure to be followed when any child accommodated in a children's home is absent without permission which has regard to any relevant local authority or police protocols on missing children (Regulation 16 (4)(b))	07/06/2013
32 (2001)	take adequate precautions against the risk of fire. (Regulation 32 (1)(a))	07/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure children enjoy sound relationships and interact positively with others (NMS 3)
- ensure children who do go missing are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return. (NMS 5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress in achieving positive outcomes in all areas. Young people's progress is reviewed regularly by staff with young people and their

achievements are shared and celebrated within the home and school. As a result young people have further developed their confidence and self-esteem. One young person said, 'This place has been the making of me, it has changed me for the better.'

Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle. They benefit from a varied menu that provides a healthy balanced diet and takes into account any medical dietary needs, cultural beliefs and preferences. Outdoor activities and exercise are encouraged in order to promote healthy living.

Young people enjoy a range of activities and clubs provided by the home and in the local community. These provide them with the opportunity to develop new skills while enjoying new activities. Many activities also result in young people receiving certificates of achievement and extra-curricular qualifications. Young people are encouraged to attend community activities such as army cadets where they are able to form new friendships.

Young people are achieving good attendance and attainments at their education. Their achievements are proudly recorded and displayed, this includes academic achievement and success in areas such as behaviour and extra-curricular activities such as football. This promotes young people's confidence and self-esteem and encourages them to achieve their educational potential.

Young people participate in routines and household chores which enable them to develop care skills and take on more responsibilities for the efficient running of the home.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with those people who are important to them. Staff actively promote contact arrangements and where arrangements are changed or disrupted they support the young people to understand and express their feelings. One young person said of the staff; 'They have really supported my contact and made things better with my family.'

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from sound care management procedures. Placement plans identify the individual needs of young people and provide clear objectives for their care. Young people are fully engaged in reviewing their care and participating in their placement reviews. Young people make good use of their key work sessions to raise any concerns and discuss aspects of their care and how the home is run. They also participate in regular 'circle time' where young people get together in the home to discuss issues such as bullying, drug use and communication. This also provides young people with the opportunity to discuss activities and take part in consultation. This means young people are involved in their care. The school operates a student council where young people can raise issues relating to their education. The manager is keen to develop the use of circle time to form a care council along a similar

framework. This will enable young people to continue to express their views and have more influence on how the home operates. Young people are aware of how to complain and feel supported to do so. Complaints are addressed promptly and discussed with young people. This means they are aware their complaint is taken seriously and informed of any action taken.

Young people live in a home that provides routine and structure. For some young people this feels institutional and too regimented. The manager and staff are making changes to established practices and creating a more informal and homely approach in response to young people's complaints and issues raised in previous inspections. The home is moving towards a culture of respect for young people's individuality, privacy and dignity and encouraging staff to trust young people rather than young people having to prove themselves and earn trust. This approach is being implemented in many areas, for example young people no longer have to earn the right to walk alone in the grounds through consistent good behaviour but are offered the opportunity to enjoy the extensive gardens the home provides and enjoy more unsupervised free time. However, not all staff are consistent in implementing this approach. In addition, young people still routinely have their bags searched on return from visits home. The manager is reviewing this policy to ensure it is not a blanket policy and is only used where risks are clearly identified. Young people believe if they are trusted and respected their behaviour will improve, relationships with staff would be better and they would enjoy the home more. A young person said, 'Trusting us should be the starting point not something we have to earn. It's about respect and dignity.'

Young people generally have good relationships with most staff and each other. Young people have identified that relationships with staff would be less formal if they were able to call staff by their name and not 'Miss' or 'Sir' when in the home. The manager recently undertook a survey regarding this issue and every young person responded that they would like this to change.

Young people's health needs are identified and actions are in place to meet these needs. Young people have access to a variety of health professionals including the school nurse and they are encouraged to attend all their health appointments. Staff either have a first aid qualification or are due to take this shortly. Staff are trained in the safe administration of medication. Written records of medication are clear and accurate. This means the arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective.

Healthy living, diet and exercise is encouraged. Issues such as relationships, feelings and sexual health are discussed in key work sessions and in circle time. As a result the physical, emotional and psychological health of young people is promoted.

Staff encourage young people to engage in a variety of activities and try different challenges. Young people benefit from good resources and facilities on site including a sports hall and extensive grounds. Young people learn new skills through activities such as archery, football, basketball, art and music. Facilities and clubs in the local community are also utilised for example the gymnasium and the snooker and pool

club. This means young people are engaged in a range of enjoyable activities.

Education is provided on site and care staff effectively support the learning and development of young people. They support young people with their homework and attend regular meetings with education staff. Activities in the home such as cooking and understanding different cultures enhance young people's learning. As a result, young people are supported to achieve their educational potential. One young person said, 'This place is great, it has opened so many doors for me and given me new opportunities.'

Young people live in a home that is furnished and decorated to a satisfactory standard. The home provides adequate space for communal living and for young people to be on their own. Young people are able to move more freely around the home following recent changes in the way the home operates. Where door alarms are used the home is actively pursuing consent from local authorities for their use. Young people say small changes are beginning to make it more homely.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe in the home and that bullying is reducing over time. Most young people are able to identify an adult to talk to if they are concerned. The home has taken robust action to improve its response to bullying and all incidents are reviewed by a care manager and action is taken to address any issues. Young people learn about all aspects of bullying through one-to-one work, group work in circle time and in school assemblies and workshops. This means young people are protected from bullying.

Young people have individual behaviour management plans that identify triggers to behaviour and how best to manage them, these are now being regularly reviewed to ensure they remain current. There has been a vast improvement in the use, recording and monitoring of physical intervention and consequences for behaviour. This was an area that had previously incurred a number of requirements and recommendations. These have all been met. The staff have received updated training on intervention and the manager is reviewing the model of intervention used to ensure it is appropriate. Staff are implementing various techniques to de-escalate any incidents and the use of restraint is reducing significantly as a result. Recording formats have been reviewed and updated to provide more detail of behaviour leading to incidents. A member of staff said, 'There has been a massive shift towards looking at antecedents and identifying triggers.' These records are undergoing further change as the manager identifies where they can improve even further. The manager and members of the senior team review every incident and identify trends and patterns such as the time of incidents, location, staff and young people involved. Action is then taken to address any concerning trends. For example, one young person was being held on a number of occasions in the evening. As a result of the monitoring of these incidents a new bedtime routine has been established and the young person has not been involved in any further incidents.

The manager also monitors the effectiveness and appropriateness of sanctions and where necessary these have been changed to be more beneficial and effective for the individual young person. The recording of consequences has also improved with more explanation of the consequence and less reliance on standard terms and phrases. As a result young people are able to understand and learn the consequences of their actions and are able to improve the management of their own behaviour.

The home has good policies and procedures for safeguarding practices. Staff are trained in safeguarding and are clear on their role in the safeguarding process. The home has improved how it communicates with local safeguarding teams and placing authorities and there is a more transparent approach to discussing incidents and dealing with allegations as a result.

The home has a good missing from care protocol and procedure. The manager has also recently attended a review of missing from care protocols with the local authority and police. The home is experiencing an increase in young people being absent. This is due to the manager stopping the practice of preventing young people from leaving and the increased freedom of movement that has resulted. The recording of missing and absence is good and the home shares information with the placing authority. A social worker said, 'All my dealings with the home so far have been positive. The young person is often absent but the sharing of information from the home during this time is good.'

However, young people are not always responded to positively on their return and the home is not consistently applying its procedure when young people return. This means young people feel they are being punished instead of being able to discuss the reasons for their absence.

Young people are protected from unsuitable people gaining employment by a good recruitment process. Visitors to the home are asked to sign in and identification is checked. This further ensures young people are protected from significant harm.

The home has a range of risk assessments in relation to the building, facilities and equipment. These are updated and action taken on identified issues. A recent fire risk assessment identified a number of action points and the home has addressed all the urgent issues and the majority of the remaining, more minor, issues. There remains, however, some action points to be addressed in order to ensure the continual safety of young people. These are not identified as major or urgent risks in the assessment but relate to issues such as establishing a programme to replace meeting room fire doors in the future. However, a requirement is made to ensure the home takes action to address all issues raised by the fire risk assessment. Regular maintenance and equipment checks are performed. This ensures the facilities and equipment are safe to use and the building is appropriately secure.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a home that has demonstrated improvement since the last inspection. There is evidence of extensive positive changes in the area of physical intervention and the imposition of sanctions. The home has met the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection and addressed all the concerns raised in the intervening period. The safety and care of young people has improved as a result. When asked their views on the home a social worker said, 'If you had asked me my views a month or so ago it would be a very different response. Young people are much happier, more settled and behaving better.'

The manager is also introducing a change in established practice and culture which is creating a more homely environment where young people begin to feel trusted and respected. This is however a gradual process and one which is not yet consistently applied. Three requirements and two recommendations are made as a result of this inspection. These relate to relationships and the continued work on respect and trust, taking action to address issues in the fire risk assessment and implementing the missing from care procedure specifically with regards to the return of young people. These shortfalls do not significantly impact negatively on the welfare or safety of young people.

The home has appointed a new manager who has applied for registration with Ofsted. There has been an overhaul of the management structure and a team of four care managers have been appointed to work alongside the home's manager. This management team has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the home and have already made significant improvements. Each of the care managers has a specific role which includes monitoring incidents, effective supervision of staff, health and safety and anti-bullying. This enables staff to easily identify the manager to go to for specific assistance. Improved systems are in place to monitor the quality of care on a more regular basis.

The registered provider undertakes visits to the home in accordance with regulations and carries out checks to ensure the quality of service is good and the welfare of young people is monitored. The manager, and care management team, monitor records kept by the home to identify any concerns, patterns or trends and take action to address any issues or concerns. Records are stored securely and information sharing is in accordance with data protection. All significant events relating to the protection of young people in the home are notified as appropriate and actions taken as required. As a result the quality of care and the welfare and protection of young people is monitored.

The Statement of Purpose is under constant review to ensure it reflects the aims, policies and practices of the home. Young people are provided with a children's guide which enables young people to have a clear understanding of the services provided. This is currently being updated in line with the Statement of Purpose and changes in policy.

Staff have a variety of skills, qualifications and experience and bring different

strengths to the service. The staff rota ensures young people's needs are met through the provision of sufficient staffing. Staff receive a good induction and benefit from a range of training and development opportunities. The training currently being provided reflects the prevailing issues in the home, for example staff are undergoing training in de-escalation techniques, addressing bullying, managing behaviour and understanding autism. As a result they are able to improve their competency and ensure young people's needs are met.

Staff receive good quality regular supervision and feel supported by their line manager and management team. The care manager responsible for supervision ensures all staff have supervision timetabled as required and annual appraisals are scheduled. This means staff receive the support they need to provide a quality service for young people.

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 the inspection of children's homes.