

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC406505
Inspection date	30/05/2013
Inspector	David Martin
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	29/11/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2013

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to provide accommodation and care for up to 12 boys and girls. Children who use the home generally stay there for 35 days per year. These days are spread over a number of short breaks at regular intervals through the year. The home is managed by a local authority.

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**.

This home continues to make improvements in the way it operates. It provides children with excellent outcomes. They thoroughly enjoy visiting the home and have positive and warm relationships with staff. Children's health care needs are met well and all children have high levels of school attendance. They are engaged in a broad range of enjoyable activities when they stay at the home. Children learn to modify their behaviour over time and make good progress in their social and emotional development. Keeping children safe and protected from harm is a priority and staff clearly understand how to achieve this. The Registered Manager has high aspirations for the children. These are shared by the staff team, who are committed to providing children with high standards of care and support. All activity in the home is evaluated and practice is changed and developed as the need arises.

There are no statutory requirements made as a result of this inspection. There is one recommendation concerning children's freedom of movement. Overall, the home provides children with extremely positive short breaks care which is appreciated by the parents. One parent described the home as a 'good service which is invaluable to us'.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure restrictions on normal movement within or from the home are only necessary to safeguard children: specifically include access to the garden in the assessment of children's ability to use fobs to open doors. (NMS 10.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Children thoroughly enjoy coming to the home for short breaks. They have strong and trusting relationships with staff. Their interactions are warm and good humoured. Over time, this makes a significant contribution to children developing socially and emotionally. Parents are very pleased with the progress children make. One said that their child was learning to 'accept change' and is 'much more confident.'

Children lead active and healthy lifestyles when they visit the home. They enjoy wholesome and nutritious food and meal times are happy, social occasions. Health care planning is of a high standard and ensures that children receive prompt medical attention when the need arises. Children make good use of play equipment. For example, they use the trampoline with great enthusiasm and obvious pleasure. This contributes to their fitness and overall sense of well-being.

Parents retain responsibility for ensuring that their children are educated. Children enjoy going to school and have excellent attendance. When they visit the home, children actively participate in a wide range of stimulating and constructive activities. They are making the most of their opportunities to learn. During this half term, children visited interactive museums and leisure facilities and thoroughly enjoyed these experiences. The home's approach makes an important contribution to children's development.

Children actively contribute their ideas and influence decision making in the home. On an individual basis, they make choices about what they want to do and can share their views through regular keyworker sessions. Collectively, children have a strong voice and their opinions are taken seriously.

All children live with their parents and stay in the home on a planned basis for a set number of nights per year. When they are at the home, they keep in telephone contact. This helps to minimise separation anxieties felt by children and their parents.

In light of their starting points and levels of understanding and ability, children make excellent progress in acquiring self-care skills. One social worker said the home 'strongly promotes' children's independence and they could see young children 'really coming on.' Children make a positive transition to adulthood and careful planning ensures they are well prepared when they move on from the home.

Quality of care

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

Children and staff have positive relationships. As a result, the home has a happy and relaxed atmosphere. The staff are attentive and good humoured in their interactions with children. This creates an environment in which staff are able to gently encourage and support children to change their behaviour. Careful matching helps children manage their difficulties in relating to their peers. The home's approach assists children in their emotional and social development.

The home actively seeks children's views. Children's wishes are acted on wherever possible and they are encouraged to contribute to decisions about meals and activities, for example. Many of the children have impaired communication skills but are assisted to express themselves effectively and make their preferences known. This is achieved through creative use of communication aids. Additionally, staff have developed an in-depth understanding of each child. Children's views are taken seriously.

Information about making a complaint is widely distributed. However, the home rarely receives complaints. Children's concerns and worries are discussed with them in keyworker sessions when the need arises. This pre-emptive approach ensures staff are able to resolve issues quickly. Staff know when children are in distress and take prompt action to alleviate it. This contributes to children's sense of emotional well-being.

The home has made significant progress in raising the standard of its care plans. They are well organised and are clearly designed to meet the needs of individual children. The 'active' file is regularly updated and used effectively in understanding a child's behaviour and establishing appropriate and consistent responses from staff. Care plans promote children's good health and individual risk assessments minimise the chance of children coming to harm. Children's educational support is clearly set out. The quality of care planning in the home ensures that children receive the care and support they need.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children are looked after safely and said they like coming to the home. One parent said that their child 'really enjoys their time in the home' and is 'comfortable, settled and safe.' Parents are confident that their children are protected from harm.

All staff have recently completed safeguarding training which specifically addressed the needs of children with a learning disability and impaired communication skills. The training provided staff with a good opportunity to reflect on their practice. Individually, the staff are confident about reporting any child protection concerns to

the senior management team. The staff have a sound understanding of safeguarding and this helps to keep children safe. All safeguarding matters are referred to the responsible agencies promptly. This contributes to the protection of children.

The home is implementing the principles of 'restorative' practice as an underpinning philosophy. This actively promotes mutual respect, honesty and appropriate challenge. Children are encouraged to behave in socially acceptable ways through skilful redirection and de-escalation and gentle guidance. The use of physical intervention is infrequent but when it is used, incidents are fully evaluated. This enables the home to modify individual behaviour management plans quickly and effectively. This helps to keep children safe.

Children do not go missing from the home. They are closely supervised at all times. Trips out and activities in the community are planned in advance. This includes a thorough risk assessment. The home has effectively assessed the needs of each child in relation to their freedom of movement within the building. Any restrictions are in place only to keep children safe. The assessment does not address children's ability to access the gardens unaccompanied. As such, it does not fully explore whether or not children can make this choice.

All staff are robustly vetted prior to taking up post. There are on-going checks of the continued suitability of existing staff, including agency workers. This ensures that only adults who are safe to work with children are employed in the home. This contributes to the safety and well-being of children.

The premises are suitably located and maintained in good order. The home provides children with a safe and secure environment.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a full time, permanent Registered Manager. This ensures consistency of leadership. The management team has become well established and is held in high regard by the staff. They value the leadership and recognise it as a strength of the home. The manager's high aspirations are shared by the staff. Staff have confidence in the management arrangement and are inspired to provide children with the best possible outcomes.

The home rarely receives complaints. When it does, it takes prompt action to investigate and resolve them. The response to complaints is fully evaluated in order that the home can implement changes in practice where necessary. The home has an open and adaptable approach, ensuring it operates in children's best interests.

Monitoring and analysis of activity in the home is excellent. This includes independent visits on behalf of the provider, the annual improvement plan and regular reports completed by the manager. The combined information strongly underpins the home's successful drive for continuous improvement. The staff

understand the direction of travel and are well motivated to achieve the highest standards for children.

The Statement of Purpose is clear and concise. It provides a full account of the home's ethos and working practices. The children's guide is engaging and provides pictorial and written commentary on day-to-day life in the home. Both documents ensure that children, their parents and the professionals who work with them understand what they can expect. And, if necessary, hold the home to account.

Supervision of all staff is of a high quality and includes thorough discussions about the work that is being undertaken with each child. The home has sufficient staff to ensure it can meet the needs of individual children and keep them safe. The staff are suitably qualified and have excellent access to on-going training. The home's approach ensures that staff practice is up to date, strongly child-centred and responsive to children's changing needs as they develop.

All records are well organised and have improved significantly. The records are maintained securely, ensuring that confidential information about children is safe.

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.