

Inspection report for children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a registered children's home approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure accommodation and care for girls and young women. The home can accommodate 16 young women whose behaviour has placed them or others at risk.

The home comprises of four individual living units with formal education provided on site.

This inspection has the purpose of informing the Secretary of State on the continuing suitability for this provision to operate as a secure unit to restrain children's liberty.

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**.

The home provides care for young people who display a range of particularly unsettled behaviour. The comprehensive assessment and planning in operation ensures that individual needs are identified and the work required to meet these is carried out. There is a clear emphasis on seeing each young person as an individual and ensuring that they develop emotionally, socially and educationally.

Relationships between staff and young people are positive. The manager and team have created a culture of support and nurturing, which is recognised and valued by the young people. Robust and detailed systems are in place to assess, monitor and review care needs, ensuring that care delivered is of a high standard. Young people say they feel safe within the home and that their opinions are respected and valued. Education and enriching activities are promoted to a good standard. Young people have achieved successes, especially when bearing in mind their starting points when they were admitted.

The acting manager and senior staff communicate an expectation to the staff team that care must be of a very good standard. Quality of care in the home is subject to thorough and robust monitoring. A stable and committed staff team examine their

practice constantly, with a view to improving the service that they offer to the young people.

Young people receive good education within the home. Levels of attendance in lessons and placements are good. Young women make good progress academically, and with vocational and personal life skills. However, a number of areas are identified as being in need of improvement including: promoting and providing more lessons around sciences and performing arts; ensuring there is good communication and collaboration between the education and unit staff when planning activities for the holidays; and ensuring young people have a choice and 'a voice' in plans for both the school and residential unit.

Other areas for improvement have been recommended which include ensuring: the confidentiality of complaints sent to advocates; that young people are involved in physical activity; that young people can see a medical professional on request after an incident of restraint; records of sanctions, incidents and restraint include accounts from young people; that independence plans are robust and highlight activities; and that records are obtained from local authorities and proof of the pursuit of such records is evident. One requirement is made, relating to the need for the home to provide clear and concise records pertaining to complaints.

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
24 (2001)	the registered manager shall ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation. (Regulation 24 (5))	29/07/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure children are encouraged to participate in a range of positive activities that contribute to their physical and emotional health (NMS 6.3)
- ensure there is an appropriate means for sending complaints or representations directly and unopened to a designated complaints officer outside the establishment or to an advocate for the child (NMS 23.13)
- ensure where there has been a physical restraint, children are always given the

opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)

- ensure where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure the registered person works with the responsible authority to ensure effective sharing of information held in the home's records about the child and information held in the responsible authority's records (NMS 22.7)
- ensure the home contributes to the development of each child's care plan including the pathway plan for 'eligible' care leavers (NMS12.2)
- ensure children are provided with appropriate education while in the home with reference to the availability of science and performing arts and music within the curriculum to provide a more balanced curriculum offer (NMS 23.10)
- ensure children are provided with appropriate education while in the home with reference to the improved collaboration between education and residential staff in developing after school and holiday programmes (NMS 23.10)
- ensure children are provided with appropriate education while in the home with reference to more formal opportunities for young people to have a voice in the planning and development of education and residential services. (NMS 23.10)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people benefit from excellent individualised support which helps them grow in confidence and to understand their past. The key work system enables young people to focus on their goals and progress. Regular key-work sessions provide an avenue for them to discuss their feelings. Staff are aware of young people's strengths and vulnerabilities and help to nurture their talents and interests. This approach ensures that each young person feels valued and that the care and support they receive really helps them make positive choices in their lives. One young woman said, 'Staff help you recognise when you have done well and help you feel better about yourself.'

Young people enjoy a variety of activities. Staff plan ahead, especially for holiday periods, ensuring that young people are engaged with interests that they enjoy. Young people take an active part in choosing and planning activities. However more emphasis needs to be placed on physical exercise to encourage the young people to improve their health and well-being.

Young people are consulted about and actively contribute to menu planning. A new system of plating food has been implemented to look at portion control and reduce wasting food. Young people's likes and dislikes are considered, and their dietary needs in relation to health, religion and culture are catered for.

Young people benefit from very well planned health services which include access to psychological and psychiatric assistance if required. The young people particularly benefit from having their emotional health and well-being promoted to a high standard by the staff team. External services such as those relating to drug and alcohol misuse and sexual health are commissioned by the home. This benefits young people as they begin to understand the effects alcohol, drug misuse and sexual behaviour can have on their health; young people are therefore supported to develop a healthy lifestyle and avoid risky behaviour.

Young people benefit from contact with family and other people important to them. Positive feedback received from visitors shows that the unit works flexibly and energetically to facilitate and promote regular contact. One young person said: 'They are really good with family contact. When families visit they go out of their way to welcome them and provide food if needed and make them feel welcome, as they know how hard it must be for them.'

Young people receive comprehensive and carefully thought out support to develop their independent living skills as appropriate to their age. More formalised independent skills plans need to be in place to document achievements in this area. Support offered to those young people in transition and preparing to move on is very good, with staff finding the right level of support for each individual young person's needs. One young person said: 'They really helped me to prepare for moving forward. I had a lot of mobility's [time in the community] and lots of fun. I can always ring the unit and talk. They are very kind and made a book for me with photos of my time and it is right by my bed.'

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from the excellent relationships and attachments they make with staff, who communicate positively and sensitively with them. Staff provide a caring and nurturing environment for the young people with clear expectations of behaviour. Staff are also aware of the young people's changing emotions and ways of responding to challenges they face. They work closely with the young people from the early stage of admission regarding the most appropriate ways of handling frustration and anger and to reduce anxiety, stress or volatile responses to situations. Young people learn that the boundaries to behaviour and the expectations of them are clearly set and will be reinforced by staff. This structure is not always easily accepted or understood by the young people, but progress is made and responses to frustration and anger are altered as the young women are taught different coping mechanisms. One young person who has recently left the home said, 'Staff never turn their backs on you when times are tough.'

Young people are provided with information on how to make a complaint and confirm they are confident to use the system. However, forms are not readily available for young people to make a complaint to external agencies, or complete the internal 'I just want to say' form, without asking staff. In addition, there is no clear

recording of outcomes or whether the young people are happy with the outcomes of the complaint.

Young people are safeguarded by strong links with external advocacy services. One agency representative stated, 'I was very impressed at the outset at the dedication of the staff. I am impressed at how much advocacy is in the home.' Another advocate said, 'It is clear that the home makes sure all young people have full information about advocacy and their rights to an advocate.'

Young people's individual and diverse needs are comprehensively assessed by a range of relevant professionals, including nursing staff, mental health practitioners, teachers and the care staff. The assessment of need and level of functioning leads to highly individualised planning for each young person, which covers all aspects of their physical, emotional and mental health needs. The identified holistic needs of each young person are clear to all staff involved with their care.

Care planning for young people includes an awareness of their cultural backgrounds and abilities, including learning disabilities, and how best to meet these. Staff ensure that they continue to explore with each young person their understanding and preferences in relation to religion, the celebration of festivals, and their understanding of their identity and family history. Young people in the past year have been baptised during their time at the home, after undertaking detailed instruction from a local priest. This is an excellent example of responding to the changing needs and wishes of young people.

The young women have access to a range of experienced professionals who can work with them directly or support the care staff in providing individual interventions to meet their identified needs. Care plans are regularly and robustly reviewed and revised to ensure a good quality of information and detail is contained in the document. Care plans are organic and consistently evolving to ensure the young women's immediate needs are addressed. The progress the young people make during their stay in the secure unit is exceptional, considering the very severe state of distress many young women present when they are admitted.

There is considerable evidence of the young people's involvement in their care planning. The home has its own review process in place, with weekly discussions taking place with all external health partners and the case-management team. Each young person is discussed each week, with specific attention given to those young women who face the most challenges in terms of their care needs, with a focus on direct work and interventions. Young people are active partners in their care planning and meetings. Their views are well represented by staff.

The processes in place for the oversight of the young people's care plans and targeted interventions are excellent. These are completed by the individual case managers and the case management weekly multi-disciplinary forum. However, the quality of monitoring electronic case records and the challenging of local authorities for information is not systematically sought or thoroughly evidenced.

Young people have very good access to health services during their stay at the home, which are provided through nursing, psychology, psychiatry and counselling services. The services provided by external partners result in positive and well integrated interventions with young people that improve their emotional, mental and physical well-being. Although young people do have opportunities for activities that include physical exercise, this is not sufficiently addressed through the care planning process.

An appropriate, balanced diet is provided for young people, which helps promote their health and well-being. Young people are consulted about menus and actively contribute to them. Young people's likes and dislikes are considered and their dietary needs in relation to health, religion and culture are catered for.

Young people are provided with medical appointments to see health care professionals, such as doctors and dentists. Medication systems are overseen by the nurse. Trained staff distribute medication to the young people when it is needed.

The home's location, design and size supports its purpose and function as a secure children's home. The standard of maintenance, décor, fixtures, fittings, furnishings and equipment are of a good standard, providing young people with a safe and relaxing environment. They can spend private time alone in their bedrooms if they wish, which they can personalise to suit their personal tastes.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people state they are safe and feel safe within the unit. Thorough assessment processes on admission ensure that any area of vulnerability is identified. Staff understand how to keep young people safe. Strong behaviour management plans ensure young people's holistic needs are individually identified and well planned for. As a result, triggers for behaviour and stress are identified and young people are sensitively supported to make sense of past experiences. A young person stated, 'I've come such a long way and I recognise how important my safety is now.'

Staff know young people in their care well and identify when there are tensions between individuals. A rigorous approach is applied to any bullying behaviour. As a result young people have confidence that staff would intervene if necessary, thereby providing further safeguards.

The excellent use of a reward system, coupled with comprehensive behaviour management plans, promotes positive behaviour and allows young people to fully benefit from the progress they make. Young people take evident pride in achieving 'higher levels'; these afford them the opportunity for more privileges within the unit, as well as being able to go on 'mobility' within the community. In addition, young people develop an understanding of their harmful behaviour leading to a decrease in such incidents. One young person stated, 'They helped me to stop self-harming.'

Staff are well trained in the use of physical restraint and their training is kept up to date. A comprehensive risk assessment process ensures staff are aware of any physical or health concerns a young person may have, for example asthma. In addition, staff undergo specialist 'First Aid for Physical Intervention' training assuring young people's safety and well-being is monitored carefully throughout any restraint. Excellent de-escalation steps, developed together with the young people, allow them the time and space to learn to manage their own behaviour. Good monitoring processes are utilised to examine every episode of physical intervention. These steps ensure that practice is safe, of a high standard and that staff learn from each episode. However, young people are not recording their views following physical interventions. Therefore the opportunity for them to learn from the experience and develop more appropriate ways of behaving is being missed. In addition, young people are not routinely being given the opportunity to be examined by a medical practitioner following an episode of restraint.

A range of varied and relevant sanctions are used appropriately. Strong recording evidences that young people take the opportunity to share their views following receipt of any sanction. As a result young people develop an understanding of the consequences of their actions and start to take responsibility for their behaviour. Some of the young people's comments include, 'I deserved it for being rude;' 'I feel I deserve the frozen points. I feel bad for what I said;' and 'Sorry for my keyworkers and thanks.' Room searches and physical searches are undertaken appropriately including searching for missing items and possible contraband.

Excellent 'Reflective Accounts' sessions with young people are well utilised. These allow young people the opportunity to discuss incidents, reflect on the impact of negative behaviour and identify coping strategies for the future. Consequently, young people's behaviour improves as they develop confidence in their abilities to negotiate, while building self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.

Strong working relationships with other professionals, including the local authority designated officer, ensure that child protection matters are managed effectively and promote young people's safety. Staff are trained in and knowledgeable about the home's child protection procedures which are complementary to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures. The safeguarding manager has strong links with the LSCB. A local authority designated officer commented, 'They took allegations against staff very seriously, even those that didn't meet the threshold, they always check.'

There has been one episode of a young person going missing while out on a visit to a family member. Staff immediately implemented the strong missing young people policy and procedure and the young person was located very quickly. Young people are assisted in keeping safe by this procedure which is bolstered by close working relationships with the local police.

There is a clear process for the robust and safe recruitment of any new staff to ensure they are the right people to work with vulnerable children. No new staff have been recruited since the last inspection. Young people have been involved in the

recruitment of staff currently undergoing assessment for potential employment, which is commendable.

Young people are safeguarded by strong health and safety practices which assure their well-being. Proactive, strong relationships with partner agencies, such as the fire service and the police, ensure that specific measures are individual to the setting. Young people are protected from harm by the good implementation of appropriate legislation, ensuring the building they reside in is fit for purpose. A local authority designated officer stated, 'They are allowing young people to have a childhood within a secure setting.'

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager has now left. An acting manager, who was a long-term senior member of the team, has been appointed and has applied to become the new registered person. The senior staff team work together to develop systems and strategies to move the unit forward and improve outcomes for the young women.

A comprehensive Statement of Purpose is available at the home. The children's guide is produced in an appropriate format. Young people confirmed they were supplied with a copy on arrival. The Statement of Purpose is available to social workers, parents and carers. The home operates in line with its stated objectives and is efficiently and effectively managed.

Young people benefit from a home which is very effectively and consistently managed. Robust monitoring and reflective practice ensure that the acting manager and senior staff communicate an expectation to the staff team that the care given to the young people must be of a very good standard. Members of staff report being very committed to the well-being of the young people and very well supported in their role by good management. This approach is underpinned by having thorough systems to monitor the quality of care.

Regular training and supervision practice is of an excellent standard overall and contributes to young people benefiting from a consistent, supported lifestyle at the home. All care staff are qualified. All staff have undertaken a range of fundamental, important and varied training that ensures they are skilled to meet the needs of the young people they look after, appropriate to their role. For example, as well as mandatory training in child protection, first aid and fire safety, staff have undertaken training in diversity, substance abuse, sexual exploitation and attachment, self-regulation and competency. Staff stated they are very well supported by the manager to attain further and higher qualifications relevant to their work, such as diploma level studies.

There is good compliance with external monitoring reports, which have been used to further improve practice and meet any areas of weakness. Monthly monitoring visits are undertaken as required by Regulation 33. Reports reflect and take account of the

views of young people and staff. The management team undertake regular Regulation 34 monitoring of practice. A report on their findings helps the provider identify and evaluate trends and issues that may need to be addressed. The home has a clear development plan in place for the next year which continues to look at further improvement.

The staffing complement ensures that there are always sufficient staff on shift to be able to respond to young people's needs. The low staff turnover and the stability of the staff team ensures that the young people benefit from consistent care by a motivated staff team.

Records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the young people's lives. All significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person of the home to the relevant authorities and appropriate action is taken following the incident.

Outcomes in education and related learning activities

The outcomes in education and related learning activities are **good**.

Young people make good progress, often from a low starting point. Many come with very low levels in English and mathematics. A wide range of subjects, which lead to accreditation opportunities from entry level to level 2 qualifications, is now provided enabling all learners to achieve at least one nationally recognised qualification. The rate of educational progress in English and mathematics is good, exceeding national levels within the first six months of their stay. More young people are now aiming for higher levels of accreditation particularly in vocational areas such as Business and Technology, Education Council level 1 and 2 awards in child development, food preparation, hair and beauty and animal care. Other qualifications include Assessment and Qualification Alliance unit awards, Award Scheme and Accreditation Network awards in sport and fitness and humanities, Edexcel functional skills, OCR entry level in science and Information Communication Technology.

Young people develop good practical skills in physical education (PE), food technology and art. They also participate well in vocational studies such as child development where they work towards skills they could use as they progress into adulthood. Confidence and self-esteem is often at a very low ebb when the young women first arrive, so the focus early on is on finding the right level of attainment and the most appropriate style of learning that will help them thrive and achieve well. The young people are very proud of what they achieve and their success is routinely celebrated in lessons, in displays around the unit, through weekly assemblies and at special events.

Attendance at 94.5% is very good. Young people generally enjoy their time in education and participate well. Incidents of disruption and withdrawal for care interviews have reduced markedly since the last inspection. This has led to more

settled teaching periods and therefore better outcomes for young people.

Most young people settle down quickly to work in the lessons. They can explain what they are learning and the level they are working at. Questions and discussion are encouraged throughout lessons and this is helping young people to understand topics and ideas with confidence. Young people are respectful of teachers and the atmosphere in lessons is generally calm and purposeful. Behaviour is mostly good and well-managed. Inappropriate language and behaviour are challenged and dealt with quickly and in most cases effectively. Overall, teaching assistants provide good support to help diffuse situations and divert attention to more focused, individualised activity when this is required. However, on the very rare occasion when behaviour was unacceptable support from the teaching assistant lacked urgency and did little to support the teacher. Time out of lessons, however, is rarely necessary.

Initial assessment is prompt and effective. Information is used well to set personal targets and to ensure the foundation blocks for learning are established quickly and entry to education is prompt. Additional learning needs are identified through a range of diagnostic assessments including for dyslexia. Where there is a statement of special educational need in place, this is used to plan appropriate learning programmes. Good attention has been given to enhance functional English and mathematics and this has become well integrated across all subject areas. Literacy support is provided to those learners with low literacy levels and a range of techniques are successfully utilised to help improve their literacy skills. The quality of this work is high.

Recording of attainment levels and progress is thorough and up to date. The academic progress of all young people is tracked carefully and regularly monitored and reviewed. Subject-based improvement targets are set for each learner and recorded manually in student individual learning plans and on a shared database. This is, with support from the local authority, a significant improvement on the previous system. Key education information is shared across staff teams and can be readily collated for planning meetings, reviews and for reports to send to other institutions when young people leave.

Teaching and learning are good. The quality of teaching in the large majority of lessons was good. Improvement work has entailed developing a robust lesson observation programme and implementing regular learning walks and peer buddying. These activities have been timely, effective and are now well established. Teachers receive regular and structured feedback to support continuous improvement. Schemes of work and lesson plans are thorough and demonstrate good attention to SMART objectives and target setting. Marking of work and feedback to learners are consistently clear and constructive, supporting improvement. Teachers work hard to ensure equality and diversity issues are reflected in their planning, delivery and use of resources.

All lessons are planned appropriately to ensure work is accessible and achievable for all learners. Individualised learning is prioritised and in the best lessons work is introduced to ensure that each young person can make the level of progress

expected of them, or can surpass this, which they often do. Expectations set by teachers are high and consistent praise and motivational activities support good participation and progression.

Young people work enthusiastically and with genuine interest. The quality of work files was consistently high. Learners are encouraged to take pride and care in how they undertake and organise the work they are doing. Good examples of this were seen in Art, English, vocational studies and child development. A mathematics lesson with learners at a very low level of numeracy was well resourced and delivered. This ensured each learner could complete the tasks successfully and explain at the end what they had learnt. In a minority of the lessons the teachers did not provide a clear introduction at the start of the lesson in order to establish clear boundaries and to set the right tone and pace for the work to be achieved. On these rare occasions learners failed to engage from the outset and quickly became disruptive.

The curriculum has been extended with the addition of a wide range of vocational subjects while the school maintains a strong focus on the core subjects, such as information computer technology, English and mathematics. Science remains under-developed and there are no formal arrangements or resources for the teaching of performing arts and music. PE is enjoyed by most young people and is used successfully to develop young people's confidence, skills and self-esteem. Sensory work has been recently introduced. This focuses on the development of sensory skills through physical play and challenge for young people who have been subjected to multiple incidents of chronic trauma. Young people have been assessed carefully to match their specific needs with the activities and a number of teaching staff have been trained in this area of work. Although in the early stages of implementation, there has been recorded improvement in the behaviours and emotional resilience of young people who have been receiving these daily sessions since their arrival.

Vocational subjects are popular and include animal care, hair and beauty, performing arts, hospitality, caring for children and horse care. The new hair and beauty salon, together with other work related subjects provide good opportunities to gain the necessary skills and work experience, both in-house and in the community, to progress to higher qualifications linked to employability and further training. There is good use of mobility which links well to the curriculum, vocational work and accreditation. This includes theatre visits, trips to vocational centres and work places, and shopping excursions.

Learning space is used well to maximise learning opportunities. Classrooms and workshop areas are spacious, well equipped and well maintained. There is very good use of displays to support learning. Books are provided through the school library support service and are widely available in teaching areas and in the residential units. Outdoor sports and play areas are attractive, well maintained and enjoyed during education time and more widely for leisure and recreation. Access to information computer technology is good. The range of teaching aids and resources, such as video links, power point presentation and white boards, are used effectively to stimulate interest and encourage good participation. Two laptops are available for young people to complete education work during evenings and weekends. Young

people are made aware of safety issues and use equipment and learning spaces safely and with confidence.

Five teacher assistants (TAs) provide effective classroom and teaching support across the curriculum. One TA has responsibility for additional learning support which is of exceptional quality and has enhanced this area of work significantly. In addition TAs provide learning support to young people if they need individual support and provide this on the units if they cannot attend education. Those learners who are high achievers receive additional work and extension activities within lessons and after school to ensure they are sufficiently stretched and challenged to achieve higher personal targets. This has worked well and enabled more young people to achieve higher awards than in previous years.

A review of careers information, advice and guidance in 2012 has led to more formal input of this guidance within lessons. The vocational education teacher now includes careers work within lessons. This includes writing curriculum vitae, interview skills, exploring careers options, work experience in the community and developing employability skills. An external careers adviser provides individual guidance interviews as required.

Leadership and management arrangements are good. The head teacher has driven significant and important changes to the staffing, curriculum and working practices. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. The head teacher has established good systems to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to embed a robust performance management system. Data collection, analysis and performance of young people are regularly reviewed to ensure progress is carefully monitored and action is taken when appropriate. The outcomes of these processes are strongly influencing and informing planning and have enhanced provision and improved outcomes for young people.

Support from the local authority school improvement service continues to be good and is very supportive of the changes already made and the on-going focus on further improvement. Staff development and training opportunities are good. These are in-house and external, often linked to the local authority, are well attended and reflect the training needs of the staff as well as the learners.

Communication and relationships within the education team and between the residential and education staff are good. Safeguarding issues and concerns are prioritised and cross-establishment information is shared at daily meetings, where on-going concerns that might affect a young woman's participation in education are discussed. However, currently joint work to deliver enrichment and learning related activities beyond the education day and during holiday periods is limited. This is an area that all managers recognise requires improvement and discussions have already begun to address this. Similarly opportunities for young people to be involved in planning and discussion about how the unit provides services and support are ad hoc. The work to improve arrangements to give young people a voice across the education and the residential unit is in the early stages of development.

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.