

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gaynor Moorey
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict young people's liberty. As well as the living accommodation, there are facilities for administration and education available on the site.

The children's home can accommodate up to five young people, who are aged between 10 and 17 years. Admission of any young person over the age of 10 but under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

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 restrict 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**.

Comprehensive assessment and planning ensures that individual needs are identified and the work required 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 nurture 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. However, staff had used a non-approved and non-risk assessed restraint technique on two occasions.

Enriching activities are promoted to a good standard. Young people have achieved successes especially bearing in mind their starting point when admitted.

The manager and senior staff communicate an expectation to the staff team that care given to the young people 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 young people. The home as a whole has gone through a large transition due to moving into a much larger and more sophisticated secure building. This has been managed very well and the management team have supported the staff in making the transition and in ensuring the safety and security of the young people.

The home received one requirement at this inspection which relates to the use of an unrecognised restraint technique. Within education there are three recommendations made which concern: the cross-over of education and the home in providing enrichment and activities; ensuring that all areas of vocational training are fully functional and appropriately staffed; and developing staff's understanding of information learning technology to further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17B (2001)	the registered person shall prepare and implement a written policy (in this regulation referred to as the "behaviour management policy") which sets out -(a) the measures of control, restraint and discipline which may be used in the children home. (Regulation 17 (1) (a))	01/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure children are provided with appropriate education while in the home, build capacity in the teaching staff to be able to expand the curriculum and fully utilise the areas designated for vocational training (NMS 23.10)
- ensure children are provided with appropriate education while in the home, improve the linking of enrichment taking place in the home to education (NMS 23.10)
- ensure children are provided with appropriate education while in the home, continue to develop the use and understanding of ILT to further improve the

quality of teaching learning and assessment. (NMS 23.10)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make significant progress and are achieving in all respects during their stay at the home. Staff work at the young person's pace, but are mindful of the short length of time for some secure orders which means that work with some young people can be time limited. Staff continually readjust the focus of their approach with young people as issues arise. They are very responsive to the needs and wishes of the young person, while also understanding strategies some young people employ to avoid and deflect important matters. This ensures a number of positive outcomes for young people. One young person said 'I can handle my anger much better and do not get in as much trouble with staff as I used to do.'

Young people are helped to regulate responses to their emotions and alter their behaviour. This approach is very much at the core of the child care philosophy at the home. Staff understand the importance of building young people's emotional resilience as a key element of improved outcomes. Young people understand that they live in a nurturing and supportive environment and quickly learn how to remain calm and confident when dealing with difficult emotional matters. As a result, young people interact positively and calmly with others and begin to develop a deeper level of personal understanding and self-awareness.

The arrangements to promote and improve young people's health are good, with all aspects of health promoted positively. The only exception is the weight gain some young people experience during their time at the home. Staff work closely with young people to deal with any issues of over or under-eating, which is also occasionally the case. Young people say the quality, quantity and choice of food served is good. Any special dietary needs, including those relating to culture, are noted at admission and are catered for. Attention is paid to nutrition and healthy eating when menus are considered. Mealtimes are well-ordered social occasions where staff and young people sit together at one large table and discuss various issues and topics. Young people have good opportunities to share how their day has been and plans they have for activities and mobility out of the secure unit. This also provides a good incentive for other young people to take the appropriate steps to reach a level where mobility will be available to them.

Young people are supported to keep in touch with their families and others of significance to them. Staff recognise the importance of promoting positive relationships between young people and their families and carers, particularly in relation to developing a support structure for when they leave the home. Direct work is done with young people to help them rebuild important relationships which may have previously been difficult. There are recent examples that have resulted in much better family relationships. Young people have regular opportunities to make and receive telephone calls. However, the current arrangement for them to make and receive calls in private involves using the dining room when this is vacated by all

other young people and staff. When the second phase of the new build is complete, young people will be able to make telephone calls in the privacy of their own bedroom, which is much more appropriate to their needs.

There is a good focus on preparing young people for moving on with a leaving party arranged for the young person. Managers and staff are proactive in ensuring young people move on to an appropriate placement when they leave the secure setting. Staff are very good advocates for young people.

Young people are helped to develop skills for independence. This is done on an individualised basis with young people at an appropriate time. Staff have access to specific programmes and resources to use with young people when they are ready to be prepared for moving on from the home. The development of basic cooking, cleaning and self-care skills are encouraged with all young people and form part of the normal routines of the day. One young person has received considerable input in this respect and has learned a number of life-skills. For example, planning a trip and arranging transport, sewing and repairing clothes, budgeting for household equipment and furniture, and cooking on a budget. Good use is made of mobility to help prepare a young person for moving on from the secure facility.

Quality of care

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

The quality of care provided for young people is good. This view is supported by the young people and various external professionals and parents who were contacted during the inspection. One young person said, 'Staff are good they care and always listen to what you have to say.'

The ability of the staff team to develop positive, trusting and supportive relationships with young people is strong. Managers and staff are very clear and consistent in their focus on encouraging respect and consideration for others. This is modelled well by an experienced and committed group of staff. Positive peer interaction is very much a part of the philosophy of care at the home, with staff regularly and consistently reminding young people about the importance of respect for others. Staff are considerate and nurturing in their approach with young people, while also consistently providing boundaries for their behaviour and being clear about expectations. As a result, young people develop trusting relationships and are considerate of the needs of others, including the adults working with them and other residents.

The complaints process is easy to understand, readily available and used by the young people. They know the various adults to whom and organisations to which they can complain. The manager and complaints manager for the local authority addresses complaints promptly and ensures that the young people are happy about and understand the resolution to any complaints they have made. Young people were observed to be confident in expressing their feelings and opinions. If a complaint is found to be founded, the manager addresses this to ensure the

complainant understands their rights and seeks to resolve the situation.

Young people's needs are robustly and comprehensively assessed. There is a well-established multi-disciplinary approach to the assessment process. This involves external partners assessing young people's needs in relation to their primary health and mental health needs and any substance use. Young people's records contain good information about their background and histories. Excellent work is done by staff, supported by the child and adolescent mental health service, to define planning objectives and interventions required to address all identified needs for each young person.

Young people's health and medical needs are thoroughly assessed and systematically addressed. Access to a range of health services, advice and support are provided both at the home and in the community as required, which leads to positive health outcomes for young people. However, one young person was not yet receiving the quality and level of direct work that had been identified as required. Although the young person was relatively new to the home, staff had not adequately used opportunities to intervene and address emotional and historic issues.

For the majority of young people their highly individualised care and placement needs are addressed through a range of strategies and interventions. These include individual one-to-one sessions with qualified counsellors, art therapy sessions, drama and play. The direct work undertaken with the young people is widely evidenced, reflecting incremental progress in a number of areas. These include: physical health issues; the management of their emotions and feelings; and their improving emotional resilience.

Young people's diverse needs are well met. For example, young people are encouraged to understand the backgrounds and cultures of family members. This is done with care and sensitivity and at the pace of the young person. As a result the young person is more likely to engage positively and gain a sense of pride in their cultural background. Cultural needs related to diet and dietary preferences are taken into account. Young people are actively involved in formulating their plans. They decide upon objectives for direct work. They also confirm if they are satisfied with reports shared with relevant parties such as social workers at review meetings. As a result, young people accept the care plans as theirs, and not something imposed by adult.

Staff work extensively with the young person, their social workers and carers or staff from the next placement to ensure a smooth transition. A transition plan is produced, which includes visits to the placement and whenever possible overnight stays. The home provides outreach support to young people in their new placement, if this is required and approved. Young people are encouraged to maintain contact with staff at the home and many of them do. Contact is agreed in advance with placing agencies and parents or carers. Young people are asked to give their views on the care and service they have received through the completion of the 'moving on' booklet. This and other methods of tracking young people once they have left the home provide managers with a wealth of data on the views and feelings of young

people, their carers and social workers. The processes in place for tracking and measuring outcomes for young people are a positive, although fairly recent, development. However, they are not yet collated and analytically reviewed to systematically contribute to the further enhancement of the service and improved outcomes for young people.

Young people are encouraged and enabled to contribute to the running of the home in a number of ways. For example, they participate in twice-daily meetings to plan the day and the evening. They also meet each week with the Registered Manager who takes any issues or ideas they have to the weekly staff meeting. Staff then feedback the outcomes to young people. Young people helped choose the colour schemes and furniture for the new building. The manager meets individually with each young person and asks how they are doing and if they have any requests or concerns. He keeps in regular contact with each young person's social worker and family or carers. He records all points raised and feeds this back regularly to the staff team working with each young person. This is an excellent example of listening to young people and giving them a voice in all aspects of the care and service they are receiving.

Young people enjoy a broad range of activities that are available to them during evenings, weekends and during education holiday periods. The holiday periods are used by care staff to educate young people in various matters, such as understanding different countries, including specific cultures and issues. During the most recent holiday period young people chose a specific country, prepared a model depicting that country and researched issues and native food preferences. One young person made a range of mountains reflecting the Swiss Alps; another created a cricket ground reflecting the favourite sport of countries in the Indian Ocean. Young people were also expected to present the information to the group and to cook a meal from the different countries.

Staff consistently ensure that young people are made aware of groups with diverse needs, such as those with physical and learning disabilities. They are also encouraged to raise funds for a number of charitable groups. Young people are expected to structure their time positively and are awarded points on the incentive scheme for their efforts in this respect.

The home is a new purpose-built secure facility which has now been operational for four months. There is a second phase to the building development which will be concluded in November 2013. There are a number of outstanding issues that require attention and the authority have given an undertaking that these will be addressed by the conclusion of the second phase of the new build. The home is very well maintained and security achieved to an appropriate level. Young people are able to personalise their own bedrooms with personal items and posters.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they feel supported cared for and protected in the home. They feel that they can share any fears or anxieties with the staff and that these will be treated seriously and acted upon. Members of staff are aware of what to do in the event that they have concerns about a young person's well-being. Records show that in such instances effective action is taken promptly and that the manager robustly checks and monitors records in relation to safeguarding issues. The home keeps up-to-date with any emerging safeguarding issues such as sexual exploitation and offers training to staff to ensure the young people's possible safeguarding needs or disclosures are understood.

Young people confirm that bullying is not a problem. However, if there are issues, for example, difficult peer relationships, young people find these are dealt with fairly by the staff. Young people are advised and informed about the issues of bullying and understand that it is not acceptable in the home.

There is clear policy and procedural guidance in place should a young person went missing or fail to return while on mobility. No incidents of this nature have occurred since the last inspection. Young people are assisted in keeping safe by the implementation of this procedure which is bolstered by close, working relationships with the local police. This ensures in the event of a young person going missing, the staff would respond appropriately and, where possible, ensure the safe return of the young person.

Room and physical searches are undertaken routinely to ensure the safety of the young person, staff and other residents.

The effective management of the young people's behaviour is a strong aspect of the home and situations are dealt with through discussion and communication. The young people say that the rules are fair and they understand their purpose. Positive relationships between staff and the young people help ensure that physical restraint is only used as a last resort. Records of restraints and sanctions are detailed and are very well maintained.

All staff are trained in safe restraint techniques. However, recently particular behaviour has become dangerous and staff have been injured. On two occasions staff have used an unapproved restraint on a young person. The reasons for its use were documented and no injuries were sustained as a result. However, no risk assessment was carried out and the technique was not part of the young person's behaviour management plans. This had the potential to pose as a risk to the young person.

The home has a robust recruitment policy which ensures that only adults who have been assessed as suitable to work with young people are employed. Young people are involved in the interviewing process of new staff.

Risk assessments and safety checks of the premises and fire equipment help ensure that the young people live in a safe environment. Fire drills are undertaken at regular periods to ensure that everyone is up-to-date with emergency procedures. The safe

systems operated in the home and the detailed attention given to each young person's needs and vulnerabilities help ensure that safety is promoted to a good standard.

Leadership and management

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

A comprehensive Statement of Purpose for the new building is available at the home. 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. The children's guide is produced in an appropriate format. Young people confirm they are supplied with a copy on arrival.

Two recommendations were made at the last inspection. The recommendations were related to revising the children's guide to include telephone numbers for the Children's Rights Director; this has now been acted upon. The other recommendation related to improving the quality of the recording of supervision sessions has been addressed and records clearly show that the quality of the supervision is good and that staff are well supported in their role.

Young people benefit from a home which is very effectively and consistently managed. This is evident in the way the transfer from the old to the new building has been managed. The new building is much larger and has new procedures and practices that management have supported staff in getting used to. This has ensured the safety and security of the young people during the transition. Robust monitoring and reflective practice ensure that 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 young people's well-being and that they are 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 of practice is of a good standard overall and contributes to young people benefiting from a consistent, well-supported lifestyle at the home. More specific, up-to-date training in areas such as sexual exploitation has taken place. All staff will have also all received new child protection training by November 2014. A large majority of the staff are National Vocational Qualification 3 qualified and newer staff are just finishing the diploma course.

There is good compliance with external monitoring reports which have been used to further improve practice and meet any areas of weakness. Clear, comprehensive internal monitoring reports are undertaken by the manager.

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, 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 an incident.

Outcomes in education and related learning activities

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

Young people benefit from a good initial assessment that prioritises their learning needs and helps settle them into education quickly. All young people attend education. Staff are teaching a group of young people who have a wide range of needs and different abilities. Young people are consistently learning even though they are taught within a mixed ability group. Support from the special educational needs co-ordinator is good in helping develop strategies to overcome barriers to learning and dealing with a range of complex learning needs. Information on previous attainment and assessments are, where possible, obtained to inform the assessment process. Tutors are experienced and skilled at working with groups of young people who are difficult to engage and have specific learning needs.

Most young people achieve their personal learning goals during their stay and are successful at attaining qualifications that are appropriate to their level of ability. The vast majority of young people are successful at achieving accredited awards during their stay. The tracking and monitoring of the progress young people are making on an individual basis has improved since the last inspection, although the overall analysis of performance data needs to better inform the self-evaluation. Young people's progress in developing their personal and social development skills is excellent. Most are developing independent learning skills which they effectively use to research projects set for them. They have a very positive attitude too their learning. Improvements in young people's reading and spelling, considering their starting point is good, however, progress made in mathematics are not routinely analysed. The standards of young people's work is good, they take pride in their work and are confident to talk about the progress they have made.

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Lessons provide sufficient challenge to young people and staff are skilled at adapting sessions to ensure that the needs of a wide range of abilities are met. The planning of learning is very effective. Staff have high expectations of young people and encourage them to progress. A wide variety of learning activities are used effectively to engage and motivate young people. The pace of learning is good with tutors using question and answer effectively to evaluate understanding. A high level of individual support is in place and the use of the newly appointed teaching assistants is proving effective. Care staff in most cases are utilised effectively to support learning. A good emphasis is placed on the development of functional skills in English and mathematics. In a pottery class, development of young people's use of IT and communication was linked to a project where they were encouraged to research the type of pottery they wanted to make and then presented this to the group using a PowerPoint

presentation. Young people receive timely feedback on their work; this is effectively provided by tutors in a constructive way to help them progress.

Classroom accommodation is excellent with a variety of resources to promote learning. The most recent information learning technology equipment is in place, but staff are not yet sufficiently confident to utilise fully its potential to support innovative learning activities. The education facilities are new and classroom walls are not yet fully used to display or celebrate young people's work. Standards of behaviour is excellent and staff are skilled at defusing potentially disruptive situations. Staff have a good rapport with young people and there are high levels of mutual respect. The education provides a harmonious and positive learning environment with young people enjoying their learning.

Young people are involved with reviewing and monitoring their learning and are help set their own individual and personal learning targets. Time is provided each day for young people with their tutors to set their learning objectives which are well understood by young people. Points are awarded at the end of each lesson to recognise where personal and behaviour targets have been achieved; this is linked to an awards system. Young people have their work mapped against national curriculum sub-levels which for those returning to mainstream school is a good indication of progress.

Good use is made of learning activities to raise awareness of equality and diversity. For example, in one activity cookery was used to celebrate different cultures through food with young people learning about and preparing different foods and the part they play in culture.

The staff are well qualified and have good opportunities for staff development, sharing professional development opportunities with other schools within the federation. The operational and strategic management in education is very effective and clear about striving to meet its vision of 'providing learning experience for pupils within the diverse range of abilities, ages and previous educational experiences with which they present'. The recruitment of an additional two teaching assistants has taken place which is supporting learning well. Senior managers have an appropriate focus on improving the overall quality of teaching and learning with a clear process for the observation and evaluation of teaching learning and assessment in place. The management of the very recent move to a new education premises has been good with little disruption to learning. Governors are provided with sufficient information on performance to provide sufficient challenge to senior managers.

The curriculum that is available to young people is adequate in meeting their needs. The focus is on developing English and mathematics skills alongside other core subjects such as geography French history and ICT. Subjects such as pottery, cookery, textiles design technology (DT), and physical education (PE) theory are also available. Personal, social and emotional development is integrated well within the subject areas, with timetabled sessions with this as a specific focus. Opportunities for young people to experience taster courses in vocational training are very limited, senior managers are currently recruiting tutors to expand the vocational

opportunities offered. Accommodation for vocational training in hairdressing and beauty and DT is excellent horticulture is planned to become available when the current building work is completed within the next few months. Young people have four time tabled sessions for PE which provides opportunities for team games in the sports hall. Young people have access to a small room which provides cardio vascular equipment of a good standard. However, access is limited due to the requirement of sessions needing to be supervised by an appropriate qualified member of staff.

Enrichment activities provide appropriate opportunities for young people to engage in a range of leisure activities that they enjoy and that extend their knowledge and understanding. This helps their personal development. Enrichment activities are planned well but need to be better co-ordinated with education to complement and extend learning further. Young people talked enthusiastically about the projects they had enjoyed and undertaken during the summer. Plans are in place to further develop enrichment with a specific themed focus. External agencies including the police, Royal National Institute for the Blind and the NHS have provided opportunities for young people to develop their knowledge and understanding of such topics as health and well-being. Young people have access to independent careers information, advice and guidance which is sufficiently flexible to ensure that young people have timely access when required. Information on progression into further learning was good with transition planning being well managed.

The standards of behaviour of young people are excellent with young people developing skills in team working and taking instructions. Young people are moved promptly to education with punctuality being outstanding. Classes start promptly with young people ready to learn. Attendance is good with very little absenteeism. Recently the education day had been extended with an earlier start time. Young people have responded in a positive way to the change. Rarely are young people removed from education and returned to the living unit. When is necessary it is managed well.

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.