

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC032154
Inspection date	25/09/2013
Inspector	Simon Morley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	24/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is part of a residential special school, which provides education and residential care for children with autism, learning difficulties and associated challenging behaviour.

The school offers residential provision on two sites. This home on the school site offers care for 52 weeks per year for up to 16 children. It comprises four separate living areas that are all interconnected enabling children and young people to freely move between them and socialise with friends. The outside areas are equipped with modern play facilities. All bedrooms are single with en-suite facilities.

Another house located off-site, offers term-time residential provision only and does not require registration as a children's home. The school also caters for day pupils as well.

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 is managed well, with the best interests of children and young people at heart. There is a good approach to the planning of individual care. The home environment is caring and nurturing. This helps children and young people benefit from living in the home and to experience positive outcomes. Children and young people are provided with a range of opportunities to develop their self-esteem, confidence, abilities and skills. There is a suitable admissions process but this does not always guarantee the staff team have access to full background information about children and young people.

Children and young people's attendance at school is very good and they generally achieve well. Educational progress is rigorously monitored and reviewed. Children and young people are safe living at the home, encouraged to have healthy lifestyles and develop positive relationships with staff. Children and young people progress well in developing good behaviour.

There are suitable staffing levels to help ensure children and young people are supervised and supported well. The overall competence of staff as a group and on individual shifts is of a good standard so that children and young people's needs are met. Staff receive appropriate training and supervision to meet the needs of young people. The quality of evidence regarding background checks on agency staff was not sufficient but this was put right at the time of inspection. Quality assurance systems are thorough with plans in place aimed at continually improving the service children and young people receive.

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
26 (2001)	ensure that for all staff who work at the home there is full and satisfactory information available in relation to him in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2 (Regulation 26 (3) Schedule 2)	29/11/2013
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated, a record in permanent form which includes records specified in Schedule 3, in particular: a copy of any plan for the care of the child prepared by his placing authority, and of the placement plan (Regulation 28 (1) Schedule 3)	29/11/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Staff work hard to provide a safe, nurturing and low arousal environment, which is beneficial to children and young people with autism, who have experienced previous difficulties. Stakeholders commented, 'this is a good home, children and young people progress with their education, independence, behaviour and social skills'. Children and young people are able to build their self-esteem and improve their confidence. Parents said, 'there is a lovely, happy environment, children are happy and settled'.

All children and young people regardless of their needs have very good school attendance. They generally achieve well and different individual strategies are used when progress is not so good. Children and young people benefit from the integrated work between care and school staff, in particular with their progress in

communication and behaviour. Levels of self-harm and damage to the environment significantly reduce contributing to the positive experiences children and young people have in the home.

Children and young people participate in a wide range of different activities to help develop their potential, they help with tasks around the home and follow their chosen lifestyles, hobbies and interests. Children and young people develop their independence according to their needs. For example, practical life skills, self-care, shopping, using community services and develop relationships to be more sociable with peers, relatives and staff. Parents commented, 'staff encourage independence, children learn a lot of independence skills'.

Children and young people improve their lifestyles following more healthy diets and taking regular exercise. They have good access to health services and any medication they take is regularly reviewed. Children and young people also benefit from specialist services to meet their needs, for example, counselling and mental health services.

Children and young people benefit from safe, appropriate and regular family contact. Stakeholders commented 'the staff are very supportive to parents and help with family contact'.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people are well cared for by enthusiastic staff who have a positive approach to their work. Parents commented, 'staff are friendly, there is a caring supportive atmosphere'. Staff have developed consistent, appropriate boundaries and daily routines which help children and young people know what to expect. This promotes good behaviour and positive relationships with each other and with staff.

Children and young people all have individual placement plans, written in a person centred style which focus on their needs and the support they require. These plans are based on information from placing authorities and assessments completed by the provider. Frequently children and young people are already known to the home as day pupils. This makes up for when there is a shortfall in obtaining all the required information from placing authorities prior to admission to the home. The manager strives hard to ensure that admissions are appropriate so that new children and young people moving into the home fit in well. Good use is made of available beds to limit the impact of admissions on existing children and young people living in the home. This plays a key part in ensuring all children and young people's needs are met and they receive good quality care.

Children and young people are able to see their placement plans and enjoy looking at the photographs of their achievements. Staff use a range of different communication methods including signs and symbols to include children and young

people in writing their plans and making decisions about their care.

Staff ensure children and young people's plans are effectively implemented. Parents commented, 'The level of care is excellent, staff go out of their way to help and support our child'. This includes effective partnership working with parents, other agencies such as placing authorities, general and specialist health services. Stakeholders commented 'there is very good partnership working'. This helps ensure children and young people's diverse needs are met and they have good access to additional support services.

Children and young people enjoy a range of activities based on their individual interests and hobbies that include football, swimming, bug hunts, nature walks, cooking, shopping, youth clubs and trips out. Staff encourage children and young people to develop their skills and try out new experiences. Positive comments from parents included this aspect of care, 'staff organise activities and encourage new ones'.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people are safe living at the home. Staff work hard to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which children and young people are free from bullying. In particular, attention is given to the impact of group living. This is particularly important to children and young people with autism who benefit from the low arousal environments provided. Parents commented 'there is a quiet and safe environment'.

The home is also suitably maintained and provides children and young people with a safe physical environment.

Children and young people's care plans identify risks to their welfare and safety. This includes specific individual risks based on individual needs. Staff are knowledgeable about these and recognise children and young people's vulnerabilities related to their diverse needs. Staff follow effective strategies for example with regard to self-harm, challenging behaviour and misuse of electrical equipment to keep children and young people safe. This also includes an excellent track record with regard to children and young people not being missing from the home.

Staff receive safeguarding training and know how to report any concerns about a child or young person's welfare. The manager has developed relationships with children and young people's placing authorities and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Any concerns are reported swiftly to the appropriate authorities to help ensure young people are suitably protected from any harm.

Children and young people's good behaviour is promoted well through praise, incentives and rewards. There is no use of sanctions, which are considered inappropriate to children and young people's understanding of their own behaviour. Staff are sensitive and manage any incidents well encouraging children and young

people to behave well. Good care practice, which focusses on individual needs, strengths and progress helps children and young people develop their social skills and behave well. One parent commented, 'staff go out of their way, despite behaviours that have been exceptionally challenging'.

Physical restraint is very rarely used as a means to manage children and young people's behaviour. It is always a last resort to ensure children and young people are safe. All permanent staff are trained in behaviour management including how to physically intervene safely. The manager and provider monitor the use of any physical intervention to ensure there is good, safe practice.

There are good recruitment procedures to ensure staff are properly checked and vetted before starting to work in the home. Evidence of checks for the small number of agency staff used in the home were not as robust. Action was taken during the inspection to remedy this. On this occasion the identified shortfall has not impacted on children and young people's safety.

Leadership and management

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

There is an experienced manager who is effective in ensuring home is well run. Children and young people benefit from the strong management arrangements which focus on their individual needs and progress.

The manager is clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the home and enthusiastic about continually improving the service. The registered provider has good arrangements in place to monitor the running of the home. This has improved since the last inspection with better details about children and young people's views, their progress and views of their parents. This contributes well to the focus on continuous improvement.

The manager ensures that significant events relating to the welfare of children and young people are communicated well to the appropriate authorities to ensure their safety. The manager also ensures appropriate action is taken following any such event to keep children and young people safe.

There are clear deputising arrangements in the manager's absence to help ensure continuity in the care of children and young people. Staffing levels are suitable providing children and young people with support they need to meet their care needs and ensure safe levels of supervision. As a result children and young people are safe, achieve well at school, develop their skills, enjoy a range of activities and enjoy seeing their relatives.

Staff training and supervision is good. Staff receive a range of training to develop their skills and knowledge to ensure children and young people benefit from positive outcomes in their lives. Staff value supervision and supportive teamwork which helps ensure children and young people benefit from being looked after by a competent staff team.

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.