

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	23/10/2013
Inspector	Liz Driver
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	07/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home forms part of the services provided by The Children's Trust. The Children's Trust provides holistic services for children with multiple disabilities and complex health needs and those with acquired brain injury who require rehabilitation.

The school provides 52-week placements for learners and is, therefore, registered as a children's home. This is in addition to being registered with the Department for Education as a non-maintained school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties with an age range between five to 25 years.

The school has 44 educational placements. The registered children's home accommodates 33 pupils, in single or twin bedrooms. The residential accommodation comprises three separate houses. At the time of this inspection there were 31 residential learners, of which 12 were over the age of 19 years old and 19 are under the age of 19 years old.

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 **outstanding**.

This service continues to be an outstanding service throughout. It is ambitious and energetic for continuous improvement. The recent appointment of a new Chief Executive and his vision for the future is very positive.

Strong leadership ensures continued high standards of practice and continued development of the service. The Registered Manager continues to offer a calm and steady influence. Relationships between staff and children and young people are professional and caring.

Overall the practice is so good that the waking curriculum continues to be shared nationally and internationally. The setting also develops and hosts national conferences sharing their knowledge and expertise. Children and young people benefit from high standard personalised, well-planned care taking full account of

individual complex needs. The impact the setting has in supporting outcomes is clearly evidenced and hugely significant. Sadly at times, due to life limiting conditions the setting experiences the death of a child which has a significant effect on all who work there. Support systems in place for families and staff at these times are tremendous.

Parents said 'It's like heaven on earth here' and 'boundaries are healthy and well-being is paramount'. Parents stated they leave their children here knowing they are safe and protected.

This is a setting that continually strives for further improvement through research findings plus evaluative and reflective practice. Achievement across the school is outstanding due to the total education, therapy and care package it offers, plus exceptional management and a committed staff team. Although communication with children and young people was difficult, it was clear they enjoyed their time spent in the company of staff and engaging in activities. Staff are clearly focused on ensuring children and young people enjoy and achieve to their full potential; in many cases exceeding it. Safeguarding and protection is of the highest standard and a priority across all aspects of care; continually taking the enhanced vulnerabilities of children and young people into account.

No breaches of Regulations were identified during this inspection; two recommendations have been made.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- further develop monitoring visits to ensure the person undertaking the visits has the skills to communicate with the children and young people (NMS 21)
- ensure consistency across all houses in the recording of the effectiveness in fire evacuation drills. (NMS 10)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Children and young people make excellent progress taking their complex communication and health needs into consideration and their individual starting points into account. Individual outcomes do improve significantly for children and young people across the curriculum, communication and social areas, for some this may take a considerable length of time. Expertise, guidance and support from a wide range of professionals assist children and young people in making progress. Some children and young people make exceptional progress, despite at times having to

recover skills lost through illness. Children and young people are not able to self-engage and thus rely on the staff to facilitate their involvement in activities which they enjoy. These are delivered in the environment that will have the greatest impact on their learning and where their disabilities will not hinder them from embracing the experiences on offer. Children and young people enjoy a wide range of activities both on and off site such as accessing community venues, galleries, bowling, cinema, theatres, libraries plus holidays. The school recognises that it is part of a far wider community to which it can contribute and actively seeks to ensure that all children and young people participate in that community.

School attendance is excellent with the only days being lost due to ill health or attendance at health related appointments. Children and young people access the education provision as part of the waking curriculum which offers them a wide range of learning and social activities. They are able to attend the on-site school with staff reinforcing education and learning via a range of activities in pastoral time. Many of the children and young people have conditions that cause regression or periods when they are medically unstable which can have an impact on development and outcomes. Children and young people at the school generally function developmentally up to 12 months. In order to meet their learning needs the school's curriculum is extended to cover five core areas: communication, sensory cognitive, social, motor and life skills. They also enjoy a curriculum that covers music, creative arts, leisure activities and religious education. Children and young people benefit from a curriculum that is delivered in an integrated manner (incorporating learning, therapy and health needs). Overall educational achievement is excellent taking into account the individual progress from their starting point at time of placement.

Children and young people and their families are involved as actively as possible in reviewing and decision making about their adult life. Arrangements for transition take place as part of individual education plans. The children and young people receive intense care and support to assist them towards independence. However, due to the profound nature of their disabilities, most are limited in what they can achieve in comparison with more able children and young people. Nevertheless, the inputs made by staff and the programmes implemented are commendable in that they learn basic life skills as far as individually practicable. This may include independence regarding mobility, eating, dressing, toileting and washing and other basic aspects of development; for example a child or young person being able to feed independently, aiming to load a spoon and take it to the mouth three times a meal; and a child or young person being able to make a choice between two things through eye movement or finger pointing. Achievements like these are huge for the children and young people and can take many months of specialist input for them to succeed.

Children and young people benefit from family involvement where possible. Staff positively encourage families to be fully involved in the total care and education packages in place for their children. Overall feedback from parents and carers supported the outstanding levels of communication between families and the setting.

Children and young people receive outstanding health provision with easy access to a wealth of health-related professionals including on-site doctors. The high level and

complexity of care and support systems in place are a necessity for the children and young people who live at the setting. Their complex health needs are fully understood by all staff who keep comprehensive records of any presenting symptoms. Any concerns around health issues are referred directly to the on-site doctor, the out of hours doctor on call practice or straight to the local hospital to ensure all children and young people receive outstanding continuity of care.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people receive high quality care delivered by a wide range of skilled practitioners. Relationships between the children, young people and staff are highly caring, sensitive and professional.

Due to complex communication needs the children and young people require specialist communication methods that are unique to each of them. Communication passports which include information about how children and young people can communicate enables people working with individual children and young people for the first time to understand how they communicate and to be able to communicate with them. The school is continually developing the use of new technology and has recently introduced an Eye gaze system for some children and young people.

Due to complex communication needs it is not possible for children and young people to make a complaint; however staff know each individual so well that they know when they are not well or feel uncomfortable or are anxious. A local advocacy service, suitable to the needs of the children and young people at this service visit regularly and any concerns are then raised with the manager. The deep understanding staff have of individual's character, personality and frustrations enables staff to respond quickly if they are not happy. Complaints or concerns raised by parents/carers are also dealt with swiftly and appropriately by senior managers with excellent outcomes.

The children and young people receive and enjoy excellent nutrition provision that meets their varying complex dietary needs. Specialist feeding programmes are professionally delivered, recorded and reviewed as necessary. The menus offer a varied and balanced diet, with choices from culturally different foods available. All staff at the setting have a good understanding of the dietary needs of each child or young person and what equipment may be needed to further support their independence. Regular multi-professional clinics are held to review individual eating and drinking regimes. Children and young people are well nourished and thrive with input from the speech and language therapist and regular visits from the dietician, who liaises directly with the catering department. Staff receive training relating to food hygiene and feeds, and their observed practice was highly professional. Since the last inspection the main catering provision has been subject to major alterations resulting in improved facilities and improved catering arrangements. Plans to employ in-house catering staff are actively being addressed which will provide a more family

type provision. Food champions meetings are held regularly every three months enable staff to feedback on behalf of the children and young people any issues relating to diet and food provision. The last environmental health officers visit was in March 2013 and the school was awarded five stars; the highest award.

Children and young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plans and decisions made involve people who are significant to them. Individual care plans are of a high standard and very regularly reviewed and compiled by a wide range of professionals. The high level and complexity of care and support systems in place are a necessity for the children and young people who live at the setting. All health needs are identified, assessed and planned for and delivered by competent, committed and sensitive staff. Children and young people have access to a large range of specialist health-related professionals who are involved in the health and education provision, and deliver care of an outstanding standard. Staff in school time and after school time work closely to provide a waking curriculum. Staff of all disciplines have realistic aspirations for the children and young people. Some children and young people who present with more complex health needs such as tracheostomy care are provided with the same excellent standard of care. Staff have received appropriate training to meet these needs and deliver appropriate care in a competent and highly professional manner. Medical cover is available during the week by the on-site doctor and, in the evenings and at weekends, by the local general practitioner cover who also visits the houses every Saturday and Sunday and attends clinics during the week.

Children and young people benefit from medication procedures that are robust, very well organised and delivered by competent staff. Safe practices, including robust monitoring and reporting enhances protection for the learners. Consents are in place for each child or young person to cover all medical procedures. Individual medication programmes are reviewed weekly or daily if necessary, by the on-site doctor. A very high number of staff are first aid trained. Robust systems are in place to identify, record and take action if any errors occur; although this occurs very infrequently.

Children and young people do not experience discrimination in any form and are therefore able to have a rich and varied quality of life. Individual cultural background and personal identity are positively addressed. All children and young people's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is implicit within the daily life of the school and is expressed in weekly assemblies. Evidence of equality and diversity can be seen throughout the provision and is embedded in all policies, procedures, aspects of the care and practices at the setting. There is a multi-faith room on site available for children, young people, parents/carers and staff to access. Overseas families are enabled to take part in reviews by way of conference calls with support from interpreters.

The children and young people live in houses that are well resourced, appropriate in design and maintained to a high standard. Children and young people have access to communal and private space that includes well-equipped sensory rooms and specialist equipment such as a hoist tracking system that results in very good manual handling practices. All communal areas are decorated and furnished to a high

standard with a range of pictures, photographs, ornaments and art work displayed, which also include positive ethnic images and representations. Children and young people have either single or shared bedrooms decorated and furnished to a high standard and are personalised to an excellent degree with many large soft toys and personal photos. Bedrooms have a range of specialist equipment which is also maintained to a high standard. All equipment is regularly checked and is very suitable to meet individual needs. Hygiene standards are outstanding with very regular housekeeping audits taking place in addition to infection control nurses allocated on each of the houses. The current upgrading of external walkways around the site provide a more child friendly and visually and sensory stimulating environment in addition to new colourful pictorial signage. The new astro-turf play area is a great asset. There are plans in place to further enhance outside areas such as creating a low level maze and wilderness walk.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people are provided with high levels of protection which take into account their very high levels of vulnerability due to their poor communication skills and complex health needs. Staff's knowledge of individual needs and vulnerabilities enable them to recognise when a child or young person is unhappy or not feeling safe. They are cared for by staff who are trained in child protection and safeguarding and who are supported by on-site qualified and experienced social workers; led by a newly appointed lead social worker. Excellent procedures are supported by policies that have been shared with external agencies. Very close liaison with all agencies for advice or referrals enables openness and enhanced protection for children and young people. Parents state that their children are safe and feel safe at the setting and they have confidence in staff keeping their children safe.

Due to their profound disabilities the children and young people do not bully intentionally. Any aggressive behaviour that may occur is usually a result of individual disabilities and frustration rather than malicious or calculated intent. In any event staff are alert to such conduct and deal with behaviours promptly. Clear individual risk assessments and the high standard of management of risks protect children and young people. Proactive and creative practices mean all children and young people are not at risk of harm and do not engage in damaging or risk taking behaviours.

Policies and procedures are in place for unauthorised absences although the children and young people's profound disabilities result in their very limited mobility. Children and young people's inclination and likelihood to be absent without authority is extremely low.

The children and young people's behaviour is managed by positive reinforcement, encouragement and praise given verbally or by pictorial and signing methods. The emphasis is placed on ensuring that the overall environment is one likely to foster development through appropriate behaviour rather than to inadvertently encourage

negative ones. Sanctions are not used as they are inappropriate due to profound disabilities of children and young people. There is a clinical holding policy and procedure which clearly outlines the use of skilled minimum pressure and age-appropriate techniques, including splinting and wrapping, if required for specific interventions.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the needs and characteristics of the children and young people. The setting delivers the highest quality of health and safety procedures with audits and monitoring fully implemented across the site. Systems in place offer the highest level of security. Across the whole site designated staff have responsibilities for the safety and upkeep of the site; they fulfil their roles exceptionally well. Children and young people are cared for by staff who know what to do if there is a fire and are fully informed of individual fire evacuation plans. Recording of the effectiveness of fire drills is not consistent across all the residential houses.

The Trust's recruitment procedures are highly organised and robust ensuring maximum protection for children and young people. All volunteers undergo the same robust recruitment procedures as employed staff. Visitors are closely and suitably supervised.

Leadership and management

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

The overriding strength of this service is its capacity to continually improve and its ambition to continue to provide an exceptional service. It is a service that is always moving forward, which is a real demonstration of its ability to invest in the future lives of children and young people.

Children and young people benefit from highly effective and efficient leadership management. Since the last inspection a new Chief Executive has been appointed and he has a clear vision of the service and the areas needing development. The head teacher and Registered Manager are fully supported by a strong senior management team that includes the deputy head teacher and senior therapists. They too have a clear view of the future for the service; and they are fully aware of the numerous strengths and very few weaknesses of the service.

The number of staff is very suitable and is continually monitored to ensure changing needs are met. There is an excellent gender and age mix in the current staff team. Staff training is structured, of a high standard and delivered by specialists. Specialist training enables staff to meet the complex health requirements of the children and young people. Qualified nurses are supported by care staff providing high standards of practice. All staff and volunteers receive an excellent induction programme followed by further training opportunities. All staff receive regular supervision together with annual appraisals.

The setting has a wealth of information available for parents. Children and young

people's disabilities are such that a formal children's guide is not appropriate. There is a guide, in pictorial format, that briefly gives information but realistically no child or young person would be able to benefit from it.

Monitoring of practice and records is robust with very regular audits carried out across the Trust by different departments. Monthly reports are submitted to Ofsted and comment on practice and quality of care; although do not evidence communication with the children and young people regarding their feelings as well as it could.

Senior managers across the Trust have the focus and drive to continuously monitor and improve. Targets for development are ambitious, challenging and address the changing needs of children and young people. Managers clearly understand the setting's strengths and weaknesses and these are highlighted in their improvement plan for 2013-2015.

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.