

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Shaun Common / Philip Cass
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This secure children's home is operated by a local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to restrict young people's liberty. Education is provided on site.

The children's home can accommodate up to eight 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**.

The positive relationships between staff and young people are a strength. Staff provide good support to young people enabling them to settle quickly, engage and make progress. Young people are able to make a positive contribution to the home and have their say about rules, routines and their care. There is an appropriate number of experienced and qualified staff on duty in order to care for young people and keep them safe.

Young people stated they feel safe at the home. Bullying is rare and challenged effectively by staff. Young people are helped to develop positive behaviour and social skills. However, records do not record the effectiveness of a sanction, although there are processes in place to show that measures imposed are supporting young people to improve their behaviour.

Young people's care needs are assessed and well planned for at the point of admission. However, initial assessments of educational needs do not always inform young people's individual learning plans to support them to achieve.

While young people are supported well to attend education, there is lack of evidence

to show their progress and achievement. The home has not gathered sufficient data with regards to young people's progress and achievement since the last inspection. Detailed data has only recently started to be collected. This shows progress is good for young people who stay at the home up to nine weeks, but only adequate for those staying longer. The quality of teaching and learning is adequate with a need to develop various teaching resources and activities to ensure all lessons are productive.

Young people have access to a range of health services. Health outcomes are good as a result of positive support and interventions.

There are strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Monitoring by managers and practice in the home help to ensure young people are kept safe. However, not all staff have up-to-date training in child protection or equality and diversity issues in order to support them in their role. There are good links with the child protection co-ordinator for the local authority and the local authority designated officer (LADO) in order to safeguard young people.

Internal and external monitoring of the home is regularly carried out and assists the improvement in the quality of care provided to young people. A strength of the home is the monitoring of any physical intervention, which is also subject to regular external scrutiny.

Further areas for improvement include: ensuring sanction records include the effectiveness of the measure used; ensuring a clear risk assessment is made in relation to searches of an individual; ensuring single separation and restraint records are kept as required.

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)	ensure that sanction records include the effectiveness of the measure (Regulation 17B(3)(f))	31/12/2013
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training; specifically, training in equality and diversity and up-to-date training in child protection and safeguarding children. (Regulation 27(4)(a))	31/01/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home carries out searches of a child in accordance with guidance; specifically, records of individual searches must clearly show the level of risk that determines the type of search to be carried out to evidence why a specific type of search has been used or justified commensurate with the level of risk (NMS 3.20)
- ensure children have a home which promotes a learning environment and supports their development; specifically, ensure young people's individual learning plans are well informed by the outcome of initial assessments and that they contain clear and specific targets that are shared with everyone in the home and are reviewed by tutors and young people (NMS 8.1)
- ensure children are helped by staff to achieve their educational or training goals; specifically, further develop the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring all lessons are well contextualised and maintain the interest of young people; ensure young people receive the appropriate balance of support and challenge to help them meet their educational and personal and social objectives (NMS 8.4)
- ensure all staff are properly managed and supported; specifically, further develop the confidence and self-assurance of the new teaching team by supporting them with clear and specific guidance on the application of behaviour management strategies that lead to improved engagement of young people in learning (NMS 19.2)
- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home; specifically, improve education outcomes for young people by establishing a comprehensive management information system that allows the home to monitor the progress and achievement young people make across the whole range of planned learning objectives (NMS 21.1)
- ensure that where staff in the home resort to any measure of control, discipline or restraint that this is recorded in a volume kept for the purpose; specifically, that incidents of single separation and restraint are kept as set out in statutory guidance. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.91)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people become better able to manage their behaviour. They develop strategies to regulate and control their emotional responses and have improved their social skills. They also become more emotionally resilient. This means that young people are better able to interact appropriately in the community and have more optimistic expectations for the future. Social workers confirm that, 'a positive outcome has been achieved' when young people are placed at the home.

The home provides a stable environment where health matters are effectively

assessed and treated. As a result, young people become healthier following admission to the centre. The progress made by young people in relation to their emotional and mental health is a key strength. Staff are effective in reducing any stigma attached to mental and emotional health. This means that all young people access the support they require in a non-judgemental and supportive environment. Improved mental health means that young people are better able to form and sustain positive attachments and have improved self-esteem.

Key working and group work are used effectively to provide guidance and information to young people in a broad range of areas. These include healthy eating, sexual health, relationships, substance misuse, and personal and internet safety. Where appropriate, the home makes good use of external specialists to ensure that young people have access to accurate and up to date advice. Young people engage well in group work. Consequently, they learn to make positive choices in relation to health, relationships and personal safety.

The home has good systems to support the resettlement of young people into the community. Where appropriate, staff visit young people following their discharge. Young people report that these visits help them to further consolidate the changes they have made during their time at the home. These visits also support youth offending workers in support of young people to reduce re-offending. Effective interagency working enables resettlement packages to be tailored to the particular needs of young people. The home liaises well with education providers to ensure that educational progress can be maintained. A Youth Offending Service worker commented favourably on how staff support young people to return to the home to sit examinations. In addition, strong links with community health services ensure continuity of health care when young people move on from the centre.

Young people make good progress in learning life skills and preparing for independence. Young people regularly complete household chores and are equipped with essential household management skills, so they learn to take pride in their environment. Individual work enables young people to learn budgeting skills. Mobility programmes help young people to re-build links in the community prior to resettlement. This means that they make effective preparation for a successful transition to independence and adult life.

The home is also good at ensuring that young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Contact restrictions are well understood by staff. A young person commented that his well-being is promoted because he is able to speak to his family every day.

There are well developed and effective systems to support young people to make a positive contribution to the home. Young people's meetings and key worker sessions are used to consult with young people. Staff are pro-active in addressing their suggestions, so young people feel that their views are respected. Following consultation with young people, the home has recently improved its menus and purchased additional leisure equipment.

Quality of care

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

Staff communicate with young people in a positive, enthusiastic manner. Over time, young people learn to trust staff and are well supported to sustain positive attachments. Strong and stable relationships mean young people feel nurtured and well cared for. Young people are quick to praise staff. They feel that staff are 'sound' and 'do all they can' to help them. Staff are consistently respectful and encouraging towards young people and present as good role models. As a result, young people learn to be well mannered and helpful. When young people are tactile, staff respond appropriately ensuring that young people experience warmth and affection. Social workers report that the staff are 'excellent'.

Care planning, sentence planning, and remand planning are of a good standard. All key areas including health, education, resettlement, family contact, behaviour and risk management are well addressed. Consequently, staff have a good understanding of the needs of young people. Separate equality and diversity plans contain detailed information about needs that stem from the culture, heritage and background of young people. The home supports young people well to understand their background and personal histories. The role of the keyworker is well defined. This means that key workers clearly understand their role in overseeing the implementation of care plans, liaising with families and external agencies and providing individual support for the young person.

Young people's progress is reviewed weekly in a multi-disciplinary forum which involves discussions with a psychiatrist and two psychologists from the local child and adolescent mental health provider. Professionals from the mental health service assist staff in their work with young people by assessing their mental health issues and needs, working directly with young people as required and supporting staff. Staff are well supported by a team of professionals who help them understand the needs and challenges of the young people and help them design individualised programmes of care and interventions.

The centre has effective health care systems. Arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and robust. Medication is stored securely and administered as prescribed. Initial health care assessment is thorough and ensures that health care needs are promptly addressed. Where urgent health conditions are identified the centre acts quickly to ensure prompt treatment is provided. The home is effective in addressing shortfalls in health care arrangements caused by the chaotic lifestyles of young people prior to admission. For example, health care professionals ensure that all young people complete their programme of vaccinations. Young people are therefore provided with high quality health care and their well-being is promoted.

Young people regularly take part in stimulating activities. They have access to a range of leisure facilities. These include games consoles, a pool table, music systems, a gym and outside play areas. The energetic and enthusiastic staff team engage young people well in sporting activity. Young people also benefit from professional

sports coaching. Staff foster the creative talents of young people through activities such as painting, craft, cooking and creative writing. This supports young people to use their leisure time constructively and reduces the impact of boredom.

Young people know how to make a complaint and feel very comfortable in raising concerns with staff. Staff are good at listening and responding to the views of young people, therefore complaints are few. Young people report that their complaints are taken seriously and addressed promptly. They value that managers are approachable and always make time to try to resolve their problems.

The home uses restorative justice approaches well to resolve disputes between young people. This means that young people can learn to interact appropriately in a supportive, non-punitive environment. Young people are also supported by independent advocacy. Staff understand the role of the advocate and encourage young people to make best use of this service to address their concerns and provide support.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

On admission to the home, each young person's needs are fully assessed with regards to their vulnerability. A risk assessment is developed, which is very regularly reviewed and this clearly highlights any concerns about suicide and self-harm. Staff understand these documents well and implement them to help keep young people safe.

Young people stated they feel safe at the home. Bullying does happen occasionally and this is always challenged effectively by staff and addressed. Sanctions are used and support is provided to the victim as well as work undertaken with the perpetrator so they develop understanding of the effects of their actions on others.

Young people are helped to develop positive behaviour and social skills through an incentive scheme that they understand. The scheme has rewards for positive behaviour. Those young people who maintain a good level of behaviour move to the 'graduate scheme' and have increased levels of rewards to reinforce their achievements and progress.

Where young people display negative behaviour, staff may impose sanctions which are varied and appropriate to the misdemeanour. However, the effectiveness of the measure is not recorded. Managers do monitor records and ensure the effectiveness of sanctions is assessed at regular management meetings that are recorded. It is therefore known and clear that the sanctions imposed are having the desired effect of stopping poor behaviour and supporting young people to develop positive behaviour and social skills. Young people are encouraged and do have the opportunity to have their comments recorded about any sanctions so that they develop an understanding and responsibility for what they have done.

Physical intervention is used when required by trained staff to help to keep young people safe. It is used appropriately with no pain-compliance methods employed. A full record is kept of each incident. These records are kept electronically and paper copies are also available and provided to young people so they can make comments about the incident. However, these records are not 'barred' so that alterations cannot be made at a later date, though the impact of this matter is minimal. Every incident is viewed by a manager on closed-circuit television (CCTV) and the reports are scrutinised. The management team also meet each month where incidents are again reviewed for any issues, trends, themes or patterns. Additionally, the child protection coordinator from the local authority comes to the home every three months and randomly views incidents on CCTV. This close monitoring and external scrutiny helps to promote the safety and well-being of young people.

The home's policy in the use of single separation is commensurate with government guidance in that young people are only placed in single separation when there is a risk to themselves, others, or there is significant damage to property. Staff use single separation appropriately and any use over 30 minutes has to be approved by a senior manager. Full records are kept of any incident, and there is close monitoring of young people, in line with their risk assessment to ensure they are kept safe. However, these records are also kept electronically but are not 'barred' so that alterations cannot be made at a later date, though the impact of this matter is minimal.

An appropriate child protection procedure is in place for staff to follow if they have any suspicion that a young person has been harmed. Staff understand the procedure and the action to take to ensure young people are safeguarded. There have been a number of child protection concerns since the last inspection, however the majority of these have related to matters that have happened before young people were admitted to the home. All concerns have been referred promptly to the local authority child protection team or the local authority designated officer (LADO) as appropriate. Records kept of any matters are clear, detailed and robust and show the process followed, in line with best practice, to keep young people safe.

The Registered Manager has strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). There are clear and established links with the child protection co-ordinator for the local authority and the LADO in order to promote and improve the safety and well-being of young people. The child protection coordinator works with the Registered Manager to provide information on physical restraint to the LSCB. This ensures the Board maintains oversight of practice at the home, helping them to improve service provision to young people.

There have been no incidents of absconding since the last inspection. A protocol has been developed, which is in line with the with the local authority and local police force's protocols and procedures. This shows how they will work together to ensure robust action is taken if a young person absconds, to help keep young people safe.

The home has policies and procedures relating to individual searches of young people, their rooms and the searching of communal areas in order to keep young

people safe. All searches are conducted in line with the policy; however, there are odd occasions where, for individual searches, the risk assessment that determines the type of search to be carried out is not clearly recorded. This therefore does not always evidence why a specific type of search has been used or justified commensurate with the level of risk. The impact of this issue is minimal as searches are conducted appropriately with due regard for young people's dignity and to promote their safety.

Nine new staff have been employed since the last inspection. The home has a procedure in for the safe recruitment and selection of new staff. This helps ensure that the right people are employed to work with vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

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

The home's Statement of Purpose is a detailed and comprehensive document that sets out what the home intends to provide and achieve for young people placed. The document provides good information for parents, professionals and others.

A children's guide is available for young people, which provides them with good information about the home and what to expect. The guide is in an appropriate format and can also be translated into other languages for young people whose first language is not English. This means that it is accessible and easy to understand for all young people admitted to the home.

At the last inspection, one requirement and two recommendations were set. The home has addressed all matters to promote service improvement. Independent visitors under Regulation 33 now inspect all required matters and produce a report that shows the quality of care provided. Managers have recruited to education posts and this provides stability of teaching and relationships between young people and teaching staff.

The staff team has a good mix of experience and is sufficient in number to provide good care to young people. Staff are mostly qualified and those without a qualification are undertaking a relevant course. Induction processes are good and prepare new employees well for the challenges of the role. A range of training relevant to the role is provided for staff to ensure they have the skills and support to provided good quality care to young people. However, child protection training is not up-to-date for all staff and training in equality and diversity has not been provided. However, the impact of this is limited as staff understand child protection well, implement procedures fully and provide effectively for young people's diverse needs.

External monitoring of the home is good. The home is visited each month by an independent person and a report is provided to the home and Ofsted. Additionally, reports of these visits are scrutinised by the local authority's corporate parenting board. The reports provided of such visits, along with the support of the corporate parenting board, assist managers to improve the quality of care provided to the

young people.

Internal monitoring is thorough and helps to improve the care provided to young people. Managers routinely check a range of matters and records identifying shortfalls and areas for improvement. The Operational Management Team formally meet every month and close scrutinise a range of information and practices across the centre to identify any trends, themes and patterns. This helps to improve practice and to ensure good outcomes for young people.

A development plan is in place for the home that is detailed and clear. This plan shows objectives of intended improvements to the quality of service provided to young people and details of how this will be achieved.

Outcomes in education and related learning activities

The outcomes in education and related learning activities are adequate.

Education attendance is good and the education timetable has been appropriately planned to offer a good number of learning hours in the day. This resembles mainstream education and promotes a positive ethos of engagement in learning.

The home has not gathered sufficient data with regards to young people's educational progress and achievement since the last inspection. However, this has improved with the appointment of the new education manager. Data on the progress young people make in English and mathematics is now gathered and analysed, although there is still a need to breakdown this information into the different elements of each curriculum area.

Data for the last 21 weeks indicates that young people who stay in the home for a short period of time make very good progress with their English and mathematics. This is over and above the national averages for this type of provision. However, for those young people who stay in the home for longer than nine weeks, progress is not as good. Currently, the majority of young people are making particularly good progress with mathematics and their progress in English is slightly below that of the national averages. Under the recently formed, new education management structure, there are well advanced plans to increase the focus on recording the achievement of planned learning goals. This will provide a better picture of the outcomes and progress made by each young person.

Not enough progress has been made in developing the vocational provision for young people. This is partly due to the lack of consistency in the management and delivery of education. Since the recent appointment of the new education manager, some links have been formed with the life long and skills co-ordinator to deliver a vocational programme for the young people and to create work experience opportunities. However, only a few young people have accessed a placement in the community. Two young people have been particularly successful, undertaking further education and obtaining and remaining in full-time employment.

Young people access a particularly good range of enrichment activities. Well designed and carefully planned, activities ensure that young people extend their learning and attain specific and meaningful outcomes centred on improving their English and mathematics. There has been a shift in the focus of enrichment activities from keeping the learners safe and occupied to engaging them in interesting activities that link history, religion and law topics seamlessly while beginning to embed the use of information technology particularly well.

Staff have the appropriate teaching qualifications. They are very patient and manage to remain calm even in lessons where young people are displaying challenging behaviours. Teachers make persistent efforts, with varying degrees of success, to engage all young people in learning. In the better sessions, the learning aims are clearly highlighted and topics are well contextualised in daily life tasks that show young people the relevance and application of learning outside the classroom. Most young people contribute well in these sessions. However, there is a need to develop further the teaching resources and activities to ensure new staff deliver lessons that are contextualised and productive. Young people benefit from reasonable support in the classroom. The education manager has plans to establish guidance for staff with regards to support roles, and to continue developing the new teaching team.

The use of the results of initial assessment requires further development. The outcomes of the young people's initial assessments of education do not always inform their individual learning plans appropriately. Young people are not set challenging and realistic targets for the improvement of English, mathematics and their personal and social skills, and plans fail to record the progress made. Resettlement targets or actions are not adequately highlighted in the individual learning plans. English and mathematics are not consistently well embedded across all learning activities. Some spelling mistakes are not corrected by tutors in the young people's work contained in their portfolios. Teachers do not always offer young people effective feedback to help them identify how they could improve and progress better.

The home promotes good behaviour in education well. This is achieved through the use of a system of merits and vouchers that young people access after reflecting on their behaviours at the end of each lesson and self-assessing their progress. However, many young people do not perceive it as having a bearing on them as they rely on receiving merits from care staff. There is a greater need to rebalance this so that the system can be used as an incentive to engage in lessons.

The good strategic planning by the new education manager has led to an extension of the learning day and a comprehensive curriculum that focuses well on the promotion of English and mathematics. There is an emphasis on undertaking physical activity every day, which young people enjoy participating in. The timetable offers a well-balanced range of activities including science and humanities and life-skill activities such as cooking. Activities that further promote reading have been very effectively integrated in the daily timetable of education.

The availability and effective use of information learning technology to support teaching is limited. The new education manager has a vision that holds very high aspirations for the young people in the home to access the learning technology that is available in mainstream education. Barriers to accessing technology such as the fabric of the building or security issues have now been overcome after carrying out the appropriate risk assessments, and it is expected that internet use will be available imminently.

There are limited displays recognising success and progress and celebrating young people's achievements to encourage other young people to work to the best of their ability to achieve their potential. Some classrooms and communal areas are sparsely decorated showcasing little work produced by young people. However, the centre are aware of this issue and are in the process of addressing this, as far as possible given limited space within the education areas.

Teachers and learning assistants are very committed to support young people. However, the teaching team is very new and in some instances lack the necessary confidence to apply the existing behaviour management strategies to ensure young people remain engaged in the lessons and that this leads to meaningful learning.

The home has undergone a strategic refocus on achievement of education outcomes. A full education team has been recruited and a head of learning who share a vision to provide a full and purposeful day that meets the diverse needs of learners. The education team has begun to form well but it is not yet embedded due to the short period of time since it was created. The education board has the necessary expertise and knowledge to challenge the home constructively to ensure the education provision continues to improve.

Outcomes in education and related learning activities

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

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.