

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC055780
Inspection date	10/12/2013
Inspector	Chris Scully
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	13/02/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

All young people considered for placement experience autistic spectrum disorder with associated communication and sensory impairment and possible learning disability. The home is owned by a national organisation. Young people who access this service access the organisation's school.

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**.

Young people continue to make good progress, as they live in a supportive and caring environment. Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff which help them feel safe and secure. The home makes a positive difference to young people's lives and provides them with the tools and opportunities to achieve positive outcomes. Social workers and parents are complimentary about the home. They say young people are making 'wonderful progress' and that they are doing things that parents never thought were possible.

Young people receive a highly personalised care package which is tailored to their individual needs. Staff work well in partnership with other agencies to review and adapt plans to ensure young people's needs are met well in day-to-day care planning. Young people are central to everything the home does. They feel valued as staff listen to them and take their choices into consideration when planning activities.

The home is well managed. The Registered Manager and staff have addressed most of the issues from the previous inspection. Monitoring of the home is generally sound and helps promote improvement. There are some shortfalls arising from this inspection relating to some records, staff training and maintenance. These matters are already being addressed by the home.

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
21 (2001)	ensure suitable arrangements are in place for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medication received into the children's home (Regulation 21 (1))	17/01/2014
17B (2001)	ensure within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control or restraint or discipline and record is made in a volume kept for the purpose in particular, a description of any injury to the child or staff and confirmation that the child and member of staff carrying out the measure have been spoken to. (Regulation 17b (g) (h))	17/01/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home is well maintained and decorated in particular young people's bathrooms, the décor in some bedrooms, the door frame in the lounge, the rear door and maintenance work is carried out swiftly to reduce identified issues (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that all existing care staff, have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. This was previously the National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People and from September 2010 is the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma or be working towards the diploma within 6 months of confirmation or employment (NMS 18.5)
- ensure young people's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan in particular their health care plans contain all the required information (NMS 6.5)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action where needed in particular all records are signed and dated by staff, the marks on children form and recording of staff supervision records (NMS 22.1)
- ensure there are clear and effective procedures in place for the monitoring of the home, in particular reports by the Registered Manager are evaluative and record any identified shortfalls. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are very happy and settled in the home. They enjoy positive relationships with staff which are built upon trust. Social workers and parents comment upon how the home has improved the outcomes for young people as they are they are more able to cope with things happening around them. Consequently, young people are growing in emotional resilience, confidence and self-esteem. This means that they are more able to engage with staff and the opportunities around them.

Young people develop a good awareness of healthy lifestyles. Young people's disabilities are not a barrier to them enjoying healthier lifestyles. They enjoy the opportunities to be fit and active and make good use of the outdoor play equipment. They are consulted about the meals provided through various consultation methods, such as discussion and alternative communication systems. Young people's individual and diverse dietary requirements are met well and they are encouraged to try different foods to enhance their dietary repertoire.

Young people take more responsibility for their own personal care needs. For example, understanding the need to brush their teeth and doing so with minimal reminders from staff. They feel safe to attend hospital appointments, which mean their health is effectively monitored and supported.

Young people's attendance at school is very good. They are making good progress with regards to developing their various communication systems and take part in wide range of learning opportunities in school. Young people sometimes struggle in school, but this is not a barrier to them attending. For example, a young person chose to walk to and from school each day as they found the journey in the mini bus stressful. However, due to their own determination and the support of staff they now feel able to travel with their friends on the minibus. This is a massive achievement and has opened so many more life experiences and opportunities to the young person.

Young people respond positively to the opportunities to become more independent in ways appropriate to their age, level of understanding and disability. As a result, they take more responsibility for their personal care and complete tasks around the home, such as helping with their laundry and going shopping and paying for personal items.

Young people are active in the local community and take pleasure in attending local youth clubs where they can meet with their friends. Parents say the opportunities to take part in activities in the community are 'wonderful' and something they 'never expected my child to be able to do.' This has broadened the young people's horizons and introduced them to wider range of life experiences and social interactions.

Contact with families is supported extremely well. Families enjoy positive relationships with staff. They say they are confident that they can contact staff at any time to discuss their child. Parents and carers are carefully consulted and

included in all aspects of their child's care. Parents say their children enjoy coming home, but are always happy to return to the home. They say they know their children are safe and happy here because of their response to coming back here.

Parents say it was a difficult decision for them to place their child here, but it was the right one for their child. Parents views are respected and valued and are, as far as possible, acted upon. Social workers say the home provides good support to families; they keep in regular contact which means families are reassured that their child is safe and well.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a caring, structure environment which effectively meets their diverse needs. Social workers are complimentary about the care provided. They say young people are able to engage with their education and they feel safe here because staff manage transitions very well. Parents say they have 'excellent' relationships with staff. They say staff are always there for them and 'it is brilliant here, X is a lot calmer and seems a lot happier.'

The ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity of all children and young people is fully recognised, valued and promoted. Imaginative and creative steps ensure that they do not experience any barriers in being able to participate in activities within the home or community.

Staff are very knowledgeable about individual children's levels of understanding and comprehension associated with their disability. As a result, staff engage appropriately to provide the support and reassurance children need to reduce their anxieties. Staff are skilled at helping all young people feel safe and relaxed. Consequently they are able to enjoy their time here and engage in a range of activities of their choice.

Staff get to know young people very well. They use effective communication systems which allow young people to have a voice and clearly communicate their wishes. As a result young people's views and wishes are integral to the running and organisation of the home.

Care planning is highly personalised and allows the uniqueness of each young person to shine. The Registered Manager and staff work closely with parents and social workers to ensure plans truly reflect the care and support each young person needs. Parents say, 'I am more than happy with the home and I am confident in the Registered Manager and staff to care for my child.' Young people enjoy a wide range of offsite activities, because transitions are carefully planned and managed. Care plans are updated regularly to ensure they reflect the day to day care needs of each young person.

Young people's health care needs are met well. However on a small number of occasions health care plans are not clear with regards to specific needs. The impact

of this is minimised because the Registered Manager and staff have a good understanding of each young person's needs. The systems for administering medication are usually sound.

However, on some occasions staff have not double signed the entries as per the homes guidance, or recorded when young people are on home contact. This is a recording issue and does not impact on the care provided to young people as it is clear that they receive the medication that they need. Personal care needs are managed very well. Consequently young people's privacy and dignity is respected and effectively supported.

Young people are able to participate in their education because of the home's routines. This enables young people to wake in their own time and prepare for the school day. Staff work well with school to ensure they continue to support young people's educational needs in the home. Social workers comment that young people's attendance and engagement in school has significantly improved since residing here.

Young people live in an appropriately maintained environment. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms, which are designed to meet their individual and specific needs. There is a rolling maintenance programme in place, however, some young people's bedrooms require attention, the damage around the door frame in the lounge does not lend itself to creating a homely environment and on some occasions repairs are slow to take place. This is in part because of the needs of the young people and the times available to carry out the work. Young people thoroughly enjoy using the play equipment in the garden and also spending time on their swing seat.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff consistently ensure the welfare of young people is paramount. They effectively enable them to overcome any difficulties they may face so they have an opportunity to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people live in a safe environment where they are protected from harm and have a strong sense of safety and well-being. Parents say that they are reassured as they know their children are happy and safe here.

Children and young people are safeguarded because staff have a secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and child protection procedures. This means they are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns. They are committed to preserving the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of young people. Positive relationships with social workers mean staff are fully aware of any issues which may impact upon young people's safety or well-being. Therefore they are able to take appropriate action when necessary.

Young people do not go missing. This is due to the high staffing ratios which mean young people are effectively supervised at all times. Comprehensive risk assessments

are in place to help keep young people safe. These effectively balance the need to keep young people safe while allowing them to take safe risks, such as endeavouring to use public transport. Also, staff effectively support young people's understanding and competence in road safety which further enhances their growth and development.

Staff are very aware of each young people's behaviour and how these impact upon them and other people around them. This means they are able to intercede quickly and help diffuse any anxieties the young person may be facing. Some young people are becoming more able to regulate their own behaviour which results in the minimal use of physical intervention to support them. Interventions do occasionally take place and always involve the minimal amount contact to support the young people. Records of these incident are in place, but they do not always record if staff or children were spoken to following the event or make clear if there were any injuries.

Staff are aware of the effect each young person's disability has on their social and emotional development and behaviour. Staff work effectively and sensitively with young people to manage their behaviour constructively and reduce their levels of anxiety. This may be as simple as explaining to them what is happening and what they are going to do next, or providing them with regular experiences in the community to help them to feel confident in different surroundings. Staff are skilled at communicating with young people. They use consistent statements such as good walking or good talking to help young people know what is expected of them and to offer them praise and encouragement.

Young people live in a safe environment. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills with young people to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency. The recruitment and selection of staff working at the home is thorough to make sure children are protected. Also, there are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised; which protects children.

Leadership and management

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

The home is led by a qualified, committed and competent Registered Manager. Staff are well supported and have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They demonstrate a commitment to delivering good childcare practice tailored to each young person's needs. Staff feel empowered as they are actively involved in the planning and organisation of the home. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the good progress young people are making.

The Statement of Purpose is shared with young people's families and placing authorities. The Statement of Purpose provides a picture of the home's aims and objectives. This means placing authorities and young people's families are aware of the care and support young people can expect to receive.

Staff are held accountable for their performance and their individual development needs are identified through regular professional supervision. This means they are able to reflect upon their performance and consider ways of further enhancing this. However, for some new staff it is not always clear in the supervision records that they have had additional supervisions in line with company policy. This is a recording issue and does not impact upon the care provided to young people. Staff say they work well together as a team and have regular access to training.

Two recommendations were raised at the last inspection in relation to the maintenance of the home and staff qualifications. All existing staff now hold or are near to completion of a level three qualification. This has improved upon the confidence and knowledge of staff. However, it was noted that staff appointed since the last inspection have not yet commenced a level 3 qualification. The Registered Manager took swift action to address this during the inspection and to follow up their earlier request for the staff to commence an appropriate course. Young people's health and safety is enhanced because the flooring in the ground floor shower room has been repaired with non-slip flooring.

Records and documentation are generally appropriately maintained. However some, such as the record of injuries or marks on young people do not always reflect all of the action taken by the home in response to these. Also on occasion records are not appropriately dated which means it may be hard to track specific events if necessary. These are recording issues and do no impact upon the care provided to young people.

Monitoring of the home is generally sound. An independent person for the organisation regularly monitors the home and provides detailed written feedback to the Registered Manager which enables them to rectify any issues. The Registered Manager monitors the home on a monthly basis; however, reports of their findings are not evaluative and lack detail. This means any shortfalls, although discussed, are not always identified within the reports. There are clear systems in place for notifying Ofsted of any significant events.

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.