

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	25/03/2014
Inspector	Denise Jolly
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Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	16/04/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by a national organisation. It offers accommodation for seven children and young people who experience autistic spectrum disorder and a possible learning disability. Young people who access the service attend the organisation's school.

Placements in the home are generally provided during term time, with accommodation being provided on weekdays. Periods of short-break care are agreed on an individual basis. Children and young people who access this service can be aged between 5 and 19 years.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **satisfactory progress**.

At the last full inspection in April 2013 the service was judged as adequate. The home has made satisfactory progress to address the requirement and most of the previous recommendations to improve the practice of the home. Reports of monitoring visits to the home are sent regularly to Ofsted and provide information about areas for improvement. The Registered Manager acts on any recommendations that the visitors make. For example, they have improved routines for the effective handover of information between the home and school, to ensure consistency of approach to meet young people's needs. All staff who work in the home have obtained, or are working towards, an approved child care qualification.

A development plan for the home is in place that identifies major areas for improvement such as new garden equipment. The Registered Manager and deputy are reviewing the plan, to ensure that it includes the views and wishes of young people and other stakeholders. In addition, they are creating short-term goals within the plan, to assess more reliably the progress the home is making. Some areas of the home are showing signs of wear and tear caused by young people. Although the common areas of the home are pleasantly set out and well maintained, some bedrooms require attention to ensure that minor repairs are completed in good time, and that décor is made good after damage has been repaired.

Key workers oversee improved plans of care and records about the lives of young people. This enables staff to access important information about each child's education, behaviour and communication support strategies. Staff provide young people with consistent approaches to meet their needs. They use up-to-date plans that set out how they will be cared for, have their health and welfare safeguarded, and their development promoted. Managers oversee the records. They ensure that staff are informed about any changes arising from a review of young people's needs, such as revised guidance to respond to changing behaviour patterns.

However, monitoring of some aspects of the records is still inconsistent. For example, the personal support plan for one young person has not been updated, to include reference to recently published guidance for staff about how to redirect emerging, unwanted behaviour. This has not impacted on the ability of staff to care effectively for young people, due to staff handover of individual strategies and approaches. However, it prevents an up to date and complete record of the care plan being available for scrutiny, by those who monitor the conduct of the home.

New staff benefit from a thorough induction programme that helps them to acquire the skills necessary to provide good quality care to vulnerable young people. All staff participate in training to understand the organisation's approach to meeting the specific needs of young people with autism. In addition, staff are trained in a specific behaviour support approach. The approach focuses on redirecting young people's anxiety or behaviour, towards constructive activity that minimises the need for restrictive physical measures. This helps young people to learn to make positive choices when they are confused or anxious.

Managers have worked with behaviour management trainers, to revise the systems that record incidents of restraint. This ensures that staff enter all the information necessary to oversee the use of such measures. Managers monitor the records, but in a minority of entries they have not addressed with staff the occasional shortfalls found. For example, on one occasion when the description of the measure used was not in line with the published behaviour management policy for the home, managers have not clarified the action taken by staff. Although young people have not been harmed by the measure, lack of a full debrief about the measure prevents staff from reviewing their practice in order to improve. It inhibits staff from developing a truly consistent approach to the support of young people in crisis.

Young people are safe and happy in the home. They benefit from a broad range of

activity and experience opportunities, such as going to youth club, playing appropriate video games, or learning about other cultures through food, related places of interest and customs. This enables young people to learn about a range of interests and activities that support and increase their confidence in building friendships and interacting positively with community resources. This enhances their knowledge and understanding of the world, and helps them to understand how to interact with it.

During planning meetings photographic records of young people's experiences and achievements represent them demonstrating their interests and abilities. This particularly assists children with limited verbal communication. Parents and social workers praise the efforts of staff. For example, one parent said, 'We really appreciate the effort that staff put into providing a homely, stimulating and happy environment and activities. A social worker said, 'The young person has progressed so much.'

Key workers and the Registered Manager liaise well with other professionals and family members who support each child. Key workers provide regular reports about the progress young people make, and contribute well to professional planning review meetings. This ensures the views of parents and professionals are captured in any proposed changes to young people's care plans. Minutes from reviews of care plans confirm the progress young people make in areas such as socialisation, independence, and activity participation.

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
34 (2001)	ensure that there is a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, particularly compliance with the placement plan, and the records of measures of control used in the home (Regulation 34 (1a))	16/05/2014
17B (2001)	ensure that the home implements the written behaviour policy in regard to the measures of control and restraint which may be used. (Regulation 17B (1a))	16/05/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated, particularly in regard to the children's bedrooms (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the manager takes immediate action to address any issues raised by monitoring of records relating to measures of control used in the home (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that staff only use the home's agreed techniques for physical restraint. (NMS 3.15)

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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection*.