

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC059203
Inspector	Colin Imrie
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Northumberland County Council
Registered person address	Northumberland County Council County Hall Morpeth Northumberland NE61 2EF
Responsible individual	Daljit Lally
Registered manager	Susan Elizabeth Ghulam
Date of last inspection	14/03/2014

Inspection date	31/01/2015
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	outstanding
Leadership and management	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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The home is led by an outstanding manager who is not only clearly skilled and experienced but who has a genuine desire and ability to offer an exceptional service. The manager has been able to develop a staff team who are highly child centred, dedicated and motivated. Care of the children and young people is planned in detail and actioned thoroughly and they are able to achieve significantly. The children and young people who stay at the home clearly enjoy the experience and are relaxed and happy. The children and young people are safe at the home and when they leave the home with supervising staff and take part in a wide range of activities. They are safe because staff are well trained and experienced and work well together. The consistency of work is vital to achieving so much success. The management of the home is efficient and well organised as well as ensuring child centred practice at all times.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides short breaks for six children who have a learning disability. The home is operated by the local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/03/2014	Interim	good progress
18/11/2013	Full	outstanding
11/02/2013	Interim	good progress
23/07/2012	Full	good

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Children and young people were achieving excellent outcomes according to the parents interviewed. Parents said that they were highly impressed and gave clear examples of where their children had achieved successes. These ranged from dressing and personal care skills through to socialising and making friends. Others said that children started to be much more adventurous with trying new food and new activities. One parent said of her son, 'I am convinced he wouldn't have been anywhere near where he is today without their care'. Another parent said of his daughter, 'She truly looks forward to her weekends', "she wants to stay more nights". Another parent said, 'I can't praise them enough, they are absolutely fabulous, everything they do is good'. One other parent said, 'when she comes back her mood is always improved and she is eager to tell me what she has done and what she has eaten'.

Children and young people make progress with the goals set for them around achieving independence. Staff have a system of care planning and goal setting that is highly individualised. One young person was making significant progress with tooth brushing and speech, another with toileting and eating, another with personal hygiene and road safety. Some of these achievements are exceptional. One young person spoke for the first time while at the home. One parent reports that her son has made 'exceptional progress with his confidence'. Other young people were very isolated prior to attending and now socialise well. Although some of the progress recorded might seem like small steps it is often an exceptional achievement for the individuals concerned and assists greatly in developing their independence.

Children and young people try new foods and activities all the time as well as getting plenty of exercise and eating well. Their health is also improving because medication is given a high priority and the administration of this is precise and thorough. The home is only open at weekends and there is no formal education in place. However children and young people's educational achievements are improved because staff clearly keep in close touch with schools and understand their educational needs. Children and young people take part in activities which promote basic maths and language skills whenever they can. Children and young people visited an ice cream parlour and staff reported that they were encouraging them to order and pay for goods and to count and check change where possible.

Children and young people achieve the goals set because staff often go to great lengths to come up with innovative ways of helping. One young person with a fear of tooth brushing was helped a number of times to buy his own toothbrush. He was also encouraged to take the brush to the bathroom and staff downloaded a tooth brushing song from the internet sung by this young person's favourite cartoon character to encourage him. After some time he is now improving his ability to do this skill independently

Staff work closely with parents and all work is planned and agreed at reviews. Much of the work at the home is around working towards independence. As one parent said

of her son, 'he needs life skills and social skills as much as education and this is what they do'.

Children and young people's self-esteem and resilience undoubtedly benefit from the time they spend in this home.

Children and young people are able to transfer newly learnt skills back to their home environment. For example, a parent said that their child now shared better with her siblings at home, and another said their daughter was now able to go out with the family on activities without fear.

Quality of care

outstanding

The quality of care is exceptional. Staff are dedicated to forming positive relationships with the children and young people. Staff do this by making the environment entirely child centred. Children and young people are asked for their opinion on every aspect of the running of the home. They help choose decoration and fittings, they take part in choosing all meals and activities, and are able to participate in the running of the home throughout their stay.

Meal times are especially important times where staff engage the group of children and young people and plan the weekends in detail. Group activities are arranged in order to help promote social skills and these work well. Children and young people go food shopping after tea on Fridays and clearly love this activity. They are able to buy some provisions each. One young person wanted to buy an item that the home already had in stock but was still encouraged to buy it as it was his choice. All children and young people get an activity choice every weekend they attend and this often involves trips out to the local area. Children and young people are able to access the outdoor environment by going walking, or to the beach, going to the ferry in Newcastle or visiting outdoor museums. They are also able to take part in a range of indoor activities as well, such as bowling or cinema. This helps the children and young people tremendously in terms of confidence, self-esteem and relationship building.

Individual placement plans are detailed and there is clear evidence that these are carried out fully.

Staff clearly respect children and young people. One parent commented, 'Staff spend extra time looking for better ways to communicate with young people, they are constantly looking for new ideas. She said, 'young people are not just looked after they are respected'. A staff member said, 'Staff are good at thinking outside of the box and thinking of alternatives and are also happy to try new ideas'.

The level of care is exceptional. During both meals which the inspector observed, where there were five young people and three staff, the entire conversation was child centred throughout.

Staff are ambitious with children and young people. The range of activities that they are willing to try is impressive and adds greatly to their experience. Many children and young people are introduced to activities they have never been able to take part in before and this helps develop independence. Staff are knowledgeable about children and young people needs around health and education and deal with these

well. One parent says of staff, 'nothing fazes them'.

The home is well designed and maintained and is individualised as much as is possible in a short break setting.

The inspector observed by the manager offering the opportunity for one parent to book an additional weekend for their daughter, at short notice, when a vacancy had arisen. This demonstrates genuine care and thoughtfulness for parent and daughter. The parent had already said how much her daughter clearly enjoyed the breaks. Staff were gentle and concerned at all times when dealing with the children and young people but could be firm if the need arose. Because of this the mealtimes and activities were calm, relaxed and fun and were enjoyed by all, but also provided a learning experience.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

The home is staffed with skilled and motivated staff who supervise all the children and young people extremely well. There is no recorded bullying and no child or young person has gone missing. Although some of the children and young people have some challenging behaviour this is successfully managed by staff and therefore impacts very little on others. The manager and staff take a very proactive approach to behaviour management and work hard to keep children and young people engaged and busy. Staff hardly ever use sanctions and no restraints have been used. As a result children and young people are safe in this home.

Every parent the inspector interviewed said they felt their children were completely safe. This was clearly of the utmost importance for parents and clearly a real strength of the home.

Although many of the children are unable to comment on how safe they feel it was clear by their demeanour and behaviour that they felt relaxed and comfortable at all times. One parent said she would be able to tell immediately if her daughter returned home upset or worried but that this had never happened.

The manager has built a very strong team of dedicated and enthusiastic staff and says she is very pleased with the existing team. One staff member said the team was 'the best it had ever been'. The manager has taken time to build a team this strong and has a clear view about how to maintain it. Although there are two current staff vacancies the manager will only appoint when she finds the right person and is happy to continue supporting the team in the interim. This approach to recruitment not only provides consistency but means that safety and well-being are given top priority. When one member of staff was asked why the work was so successful she replied that 'all staff want to be here'.

The home is secure and well maintained and is free from health and safety hazards. The home is in a good location and is set in its own substantial grounds. The manager has made a comprehensive risk assessment of the location and it is clear that the area is as safe as it can be. When children and young people leave the home to take part in activities staff take equally great care to assess and manage all risks. This high emphasis on safety means that these vulnerable children and young people are kept safe at all times.

Leadership and management

outstanding

The manager is a highly skilled and effective manager who is inspiring to others. She has created a very strong team of staff who are highly proactive and dedicated to their work. The manager and staff want to do the best they can and this means that the children and young people get an excellent service. The manager is constantly striving to develop and improve the service and has plans in place to do this. The manager has plans to put a greater emphasis on care planning and achieving good outcomes and this demonstrates commitment. One parent commented that she felt the 'service was particularly well led' and described the manager as 'excellent'. Both internal and external monitoring is comprehensive. Whilst the inspector was at the home the external monitor visited the home and accompanied the staff and children and young people out on an activity. This ensures that the visitor gets an accurate picture of what is happening and how the children and young people enjoy their stay.

The home is well resourced and the manager goes out of her way to apply for additional grants and funding to add to the facilities. Recent examples have included the purchase of an outside play area and a second mini bus. This undoubtedly enhances the experience of the children and young people.

There are no obvious weaknesses at this home and the strengths revolve around the quality of the manager and the staff team. Staff are provided with good quality training and supervision on a regular basis and the manager spends a significant amount of time sourcing the best training that is available. This all goes to ensure the staff team are well prepared to care for all the children and young people to a very high standard. Staff are knowledgeable about a range of disabilities and medical conditions and excel at using a range of communication techniques with the children and young people. The recording and administrative systems are of a similar high standard.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
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.

Information 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 framework of inspection for children's homes.

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