

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC394025
Inspector	Keith Riley/Jennie Christopher/Nicola Lownds/Suzy Lemmy
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	Sarah Trotter
Date of last inspection	09/10/2014

Inspection date	27/02/2015
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Previous inspection	sustained effectiveness
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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A key strength of this home is the holistic, collaborative approach by health, care and education staff. The support that young people have to meet all their needs is exceptional. Care planning is an exemplar of outstanding practice. Outcomes are excellent. Young people with complex needs make considerable progress in their physical health, emotional well-being, education and independence. Young people, some with life threatening disabilities, are extremely safe. They say they feel happy, safe and secure.

Staff are unreservedly committed to meet the needs of the young people in their care. They are central to practice. Relationships are warm and loving. With a solid, predictable base in their lives, young people are able to form secure attachments. They have a strong voice in the home. Staff are skilled at communicating with young people, some of whom have severe communication difficulties.

The Registered Manager, together with the senior management team, is showing exceptional leadership. A culture of excellence has been generated with total focus on the needs of the young people living at the home. Rigorous monitoring ensures outstanding care continues and young people make excellent progress. There is ambition and energy for continuous improvement and development.

Minor shortfalls were found around some record keeping and training certificates.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The setting has recently registered the residential special school with the children's home, which is on the same site. This is the first inspection under this arrangement.

The home provides education and residential care for up to 60 young people, aged from 8 to 18 years old, across eight separate homes. Young people access the organisation's special school, which is approved by the Department for Education. Young people, with a variety of disabilities, primarily learning difficulties, autism, complex health needs and physical disabilities, are accommodated for 38 weeks or 52 weeks. Young people who stay at the home do not necessarily have a diagnosis of epilepsy.

An adult college and some houses exclusively for 18 - 25 year olds are on the same site. These are separately regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

The provider organisation is a registered charity.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/10/2014	Interim	sustained effectiveness
03/02/2014	Interim	good progress
30/08/2013	Full	outstanding
20/03/2013	Interim	good progress

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Recommendations

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

- review the missing person policy with regard to runaway and missing from home and care protocols and procedures maintained by the police (NMS 5.6)

- review, in accordance with published guidance, the training documents to certify the approval of staff to provide appropriate care for children with complex health needs (NMS 6.8)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality of record keeping and take action when needed. (NMS 22.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

There are excellent outcomes for young people who live at this home. Their unique and complex health needs are met to an exceptional level through a close and collaborative multi-disciplinary team of professionals who have the needs of the child at the centre of practice. Parents comment most positively about progress, such as '(name of child) was having heavy seizures but now the epilepsy is controlled'. Other young people have not had any seizure activity for some years since being admitted into the home. Parents notice improvements in physical health, such as their child's legs becoming stronger or their child being able to move toys from one hand to another. A professional said, 'Staff have managed well in supporting complex students to carry out physiotherapy programmes'.

As well as their physical health, the emotional well-being of young people is of paramount importance to staff. Young people are supported to come to terms with their disability and that it is no barrier to engagement in the wider world, such as being able to participate in a wide range of activities. Their self-esteem and confidence is built up, for example by participating in canoeing or rock climbing. A young person said, 'I love coming here'. Young people are optimistic and see a bright future for themselves. A young person spoke proudly of training for the paralympics.

Positive and constructive relationships are formed. Young people form secure attachments with staff. They relate extremely well to staff who are attentive to them, for example staff may kneel when talking to young people so they can engage at eye level. Young people feel safe and secure, confident that their needs are met. They make friends with each other. They are able to visit others in their homes or go to youth group together. Young people's self-esteem and confidence grows considerably through their time here.

Meticulous attention is given to meet the needs of each young person. There is a close, cohesive working approach by health, care and education staff. The environment is carefully considered, for example the décor, furnishing and specialised beds, to ensure the unique needs of young people are met. The health of young people significantly improves as a result of living in this home. The behaviour of young people is exemplary as a result of the careful care planning, such as noise reduction measures for young people who are hypersensitive to noise.

This holistic approach means that attendance at school is excellent. Young people enjoy the education experience and are highly motivated to engage in their education. This includes doing homework in the residential environment. Any absence from school is short lived and is most often due to health needs, such as an epileptic seizure. Young people are able to return quickly to school, often within a few hours after a short rest.

Education achievement is exceptional in relation to starting points. There is close working between education staff and care staff. Individual education plans are linked to daily objectives within the home environment. Young people are making progress day by day toward their long term goals. Young people learn about teamwork through shared activities. There is a sense of healthy and fun competition through the award of a house cup by the school.

Young people have excellent contact with parents and other people who are important to them. Staff support young people to use a variety of methods, including video conferencing and digital media, to communicate with their family. Parents spoke most positively of the communication and that any significant events are quickly notified to them.

Young people learn independent living skills such as cooking or personal care. Some young people are able to progress to a level where they have some independent travel around the site. A parent said, 'The children are taught independence through daily living skills. My child has flourished since being there'. Transitions are well planned with most young people transferring to the organisation's college, which is also on the same site.

Quality of care

outstanding

There is excellent, collaborative working in a multi-disciplinary environment spanning health, education and care. Young people benefit from an individualised and personal approach by staff who are genuinely interested in them and are highly motivated to meet their needs to the best possible standard. There is excellent communication with parents and placing social workers. A placing social worker said the young person is in the right placement, their health needs are being met extraordinarily well and they are happy with the communication of the home.

Staff are skilled in communication. Young people, some of whom have severe communication difficulties, have a strong voice in the home. They take advantage of the regular opportunities to express their views, wishes and feelings. This may be the choice of an activity or making a contribution to their annual review. Key work staff pay particular attention to their key child. They talk to them about the pertinent issues, such as how they feel about the opposite gender, or their progress towards targets in their placement plans. Other specialists are readily available, for example for advice on diet or the emerging sexuality of young people.

Placement plans are of an excellent standard. They are succinct and provide comprehensive guidance to staff, such as clear protocols to guide staff in the administration of emergency medication. There is a robust and comprehensive approach to the management of medicines. Any incident, however minor, is taken extremely seriously and investigated by senior staff.

Health care is a particular strength of the home. Specialist facilities and health professionals are regularly available on site. This includes nurses, occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists and play therapists. Meticulous attention is given to serious and complex health conditions that, on occasion, may be life threatening. A wide range of strategies are used to ensure each young person is kept as safe and healthy as possible. Mental capacity and best interest practice are discussed and agreed with all relevant professionals and parents. Detailed health protocols are under regular review, for example epilepsy management plans are reviewed by the consultant paediatric neurologist. Staff are fully trained and aware of what to do in an emergency. They were observed to respond calmly and professionally, retaining the dignity and privacy of the young person at all times.

There is an intricate assessment of the level of supervision young people require to meet their complex health needs. Consents are obtained, such as the use of audio monitors for young people with epilepsy. Although health professionals and parents may agree on the use of video monitoring to fully safeguard young people, it was found in one case, written consent was not kept on file. There is no negative impact.

The admissions process is extremely robust with flexibility to meet the individual needs of young people and their families. Young people are able to have an initial stay in the residential home while parents stay nearby on the site. There is a comprehensive assessment of health, education and care needs prior to admission, as well as talking to parents and observing the idiosyncrasies of each young person during their visit. A parent said he was very impressed with the process.

There is an excellent approach to equality and diversity for both staff and young people. Disability is not seen as a barrier. Young people are able to access activities in the community, such as horse riding and swimming, in addition to stimulating and constructive activities within the home, such as model making. Managers ensure that all reasonable adjustments are made so there is equal opportunity for all, for example by ensuring an interpreter is available for an annual review.

Catering arrangements are excellent. There is an individual approach by each house. Young people enjoy their meals in their own environment. Meal times are a warm, social occasion. Staff demonstrate a thorough knowledge of each young person's dietary requirements, for example due to health, religion or culture.

The environment is excellent. Communal areas are clean and decorated to a high standard. There is a homely feel. Young people are proud of their rooms which they are able to personalise. This gives them a sense of identity and belonging. There are ample areas for young people to go, such as a sensory room, games room or art room.

Keeping children and young people safe **outstanding**

The organisation is an effective specialist centre for children with epilepsy. Young people who experience complex seizures that may, on occasion, be life threatening, are kept as safe as possible by a multi-disciplinary team. Immediate medical procedures are readily available to stabilise young people in such an event, while waiting for paramedics. Staff demonstrate a professional, calm approach, in a stressful situation, utilising their skills and knowledge of each young person to provide the best possible care. Bedroom location is assessed according to risk. Night time arrangements are excellent to keep young people safe, with nurses on call who are present on the site.

An experienced, well trained staff team receive refresher safeguarding training regularly. They are able to demonstrate their understanding of their role and responsibilities to keep young people safe. The dedicated safeguarding team retain excellent links with external agencies that are tasked with keeping children safe. Any issues of a potential safeguarding nature are referred appropriately and in a timely manner to external agencies. Strategies are agreed to investigate any incident of concern while keeping everyone safe. A small shortfall was found in a minority of written records to evidence the agreed actions and chronology. There is no negative impact on young people.

The psychology and behaviour support team demonstrates an intimate and detailed knowledge of each young person. In addition to regular meetings, the therapy team ensures that they observe and model practice in each one of the homes. Young people benefit from having their behaviour carefully monitored and analysed as to any underlying psychological or health reasons. Detailed behaviour support plans are developed and under regular review. This gives the best possible chance for staff to understand and meet their unique needs. Behaviours that challenge are minimised and any incidents requiring physical intervention are rare. There is a creative, innovative approach for promoting positive behaviour. An example is a former day student doing work experience at the home to model and support good behaviour. A parent said, 'I cannot believe the wonderful progress (my child) has made, his behaviour is much better and he is so much more relaxed in himself '. Young people show remorse after any aggression and are able to develop self-management competences.

Bullying is not an issue in this home. Young people enjoy positive relationships with each other. Likewise, missing from care is not an issue in the home. Close supervision and support for all young people makes an unauthorised absence episode extremely unlikely. There is a policy in place but this does not have regard to local police runaway and missing from care protocols.

There is a superb approach to e-safety. The home has got an excellent balance of safeguarding young people without restricting them, for example by allowing pupils to use electronic devices. Software, supervision and support are used to effectively safeguard pupils in the cyber world. Staff work closely with parents to ensure the ongoing safety outside the residential environment.

Recruitment and vetting are robust. Certificates of good conduct are obtained for overseas applicants. The procedures in place ensure that only suitable adults are employed to work with the young people.

Young people live in a safe and secure environment. Health and safety are carefully considered with regular audits to check and promote ongoing safety. Any adjustments to rooms, such as the provision of padding, are assessed for each young person's individual needs. This means there is not an institutional feel.

External contractors certify the safety of the home, such as fire protection. Risk assessments clearly identify the hazards and the risk reduction measures that are in place. Personal emergency evacuation plans clearly guide staff how to keep young people, who will require assistance, safe in the event of an emergency such as fire.

Leadership and management

outstanding

The senior leadership team are of an outstanding calibre. They bring a wealth of qualifications and experience and are a key strength in setting and driving high standards from staff. Considerable work has been done to ensure they are not remote from the workplace and are accessible to staff. Senior leaders have worked in partnership with others to further their knowledge of epilepsy, for example by conducting research to identify educational problems in childhood epilepsy.

The Registered Manager is showing exceptional leadership. She is registered with Ofsted and has vast experience in the field of residential care as well as the necessary qualifications. She has recently re-written the Statement of Purpose to reflect the changes to the registration. She has responded to changes in regulation, such as putting a location risk assessment in place.

Staff morale is high. They say they feel well trained and supported, for example through regular supervision and appraisal. A parent said, 'The staff are superb, there is excellent communication and they go above and beyond the call of duty'.

Arrangements to deploy staff are excellent. A tier of five managers supervised by the Registered Manager oversee two of the residential houses each. They are well qualified and work toward a level 5 management qualification. Staff 'belong' to an individual home and are able to get to know the young people very well. This provides for a consistent approach and the forming of solid attachments. Staff shortages are managed extremely well. Bank staff and agency staff on fixed term contracts provide cover. Strategies are developed to attract and recruit skilled individuals, such as recruitment days and online applications. Young people are involved, for example a group of young people do a presentation to interviewees on what it is like to live at the home.

There is an excellent learning and development programme. New staff undergo a comprehensive induction programme during a probation period. This provides a solid base for further development, such as the relevant qualification in health and social care. Staff spoken to, who have been employed since the last inspection, were extremely positive of their induction experience. Senior managers ensure that staff are up-skilled for the cohort of young people who are admitted into the home, including those who may not have a diagnosis of epilepsy, for example through autism training. Residential staff are trained to understand why young people on the autistic spectrum need certain strategies and they are able to apply them in practice. A minor shortfall was found in health training. This is not in strict accordance with the regulatory guidance on delegated health care tasks. Although staff receive excellent training by health professionals, such as gastrostomy feeding, their training certificates are not formally signed off for a named child, as recommended in Care Quality Commission/Ofsted joint guidance.

This is an inclusive working environment. Young people are supported by staff from a diverse range of backgrounds. The Registered Manager ensures that reasonable adjustments are made so there is equal opportunity for all. The senior management team accept formal complaints verbally, so as not to discriminate against anyone who may find a formal written system a challenge. Complaints are handled extremely well. Low level complaints are dealt with swiftly and effectively by each house. More serious complaints are investigated by senior managers. There have been no serious complaints since the last inspection.

There is extensive monitoring of the home that is centred on the child. This consists of the formal evaluation by the Registered Manager as well as an independent visitor. In addition, daily and weekly monitoring practices are substantial. Staff consistently record the key indicators of each young person's well-being on a daily basis. Education, health, care and therapy professionals meet weekly to discuss in detail the emerging needs of young people. Strategies are amended and agreed by all professionals and with close involvement of parents.

The senior leadership team recognise the future challenges to continue to develop and respond to the range of complex needs that young people present. Ambitious development plans are underway, such as the construction of a new school building designed to support children with the range of disabilities the home caters for. There are imaginative plans to develop outside areas. A telephone help line has been set up so parents can access the psychology team on a regular basis. They are able to discuss the current and emerging needs with the professionals who are working with them.

The previous requirement to only use audio monitoring for young people who need such close supervision is fully met. All notifications of significant events are notified to the relevant authorities.

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.