

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	3 June 2010
Inspector	Susan Mullin
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	24 November 2009
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This home provides care and accommodation for two young people aged from 10 to 17 years, who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The company also have their own independent school.

The registered school provides the young people at the home with an individual weekly programme of activities and a substantial amount of this timetable is devoted to educational input.

The home is a large detached property, located within easy walking distance from the local centre and all its domestic and leisure facilities. The home provides transport for the young people to access nearby towns, which are within easy travelling distance. There are parking facilities to the side of the house and in a nearby car park.

Summary

This was a key announced inspection of the service to assess compliance with the national minimum standards for children's homes. The home was assessed under the headings of Every Child Matters. Being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and organisation received a judgement of outstanding, whilst achieving economic well-being received a judgement of good. Overall, the home is judged as outstanding.

The home's Registered Manager submitted young people's questionnaires, staff questionnaires and completed a pre-inspection self-assessment form. Information from these are included in the main body of the report. Two young people were resident at the time of the inspection but both were out on activities during the day and unable to participate in the inspection process.

The home provides an outstanding service to young people. Strengths include the robust nature of the care planning process, which is very clear about how the needs of young people are to be met. The staff team are very knowledgeable about individual young people in their care and strive to get to know them really well. There is also a high value placed on establishing the wishes, views and feelings of the young people, who in turn are actively encouraged to be involved in the planning and implementation of their own care plans. There are robust procedures in place to ensure the safety and welfare of young people and the staff work exceptionally well with other professionals to ensure safety at every opportunity.

The management of the home is very strong and records are scrutinised to ensure that the home is running at optimum levels. Staff morale is high, supervision and training requirements are fully met and individual development of each member of staff is high on the agenda.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The food provided for the young people shows that the staff have a very good understanding of what makes up a good balanced diet and they put this in to practice. Menu planning is adventurous, integrates culturally appropriate food and encourages young people to try new dishes. Young people are generally seen to treat mealtimes as enjoyable social occasions and accept good standards of behaviour as routine. Flexible arrangements are made to take account of young people's choices. Young people are actively encouraged to be involved in planning menus, in food buying and preparing meals.

Young people's individual health needs are identified and assessed at an early stage. This is recorded in a clear, easily accessible plan for each young person, detailing how their specific and general health issues are to be addressed. Particular health needs which may impact on future outcomes for the young person are identified at the earliest opportunity and staff actively seek out the services needed to address these. For example, involvement of specialist health workers from the child and adolescent mental health service. Young people are actively involved in recognising their health needs and have an input into their care plan. Staff encourage young people to take an interest in looking after their health and promote healthy ways of living. Staff make sure that young people have access to information about health and social issues and support them in using such advice. Health issues that relate to ethnicity, race; sexuality, faith, belief are fully assessed in respect of each young person and these issues are also addressed in individual care plans.

The home operates to an effective medication policy, procedure and practice guidance which specifically addresses the use of prescribed medication. Staff understand their role and responsibilities and all have the required medication training, which is updated regularly and their competence to administer medication assessed. Quality assurance systems confirm that policy is put into practice. All staff members have completed a first aid course, the result being that there is always a first aider in the home should the young people need assistance with a medical issue. Staff ensure at all times, that the young people are well cared for and that they remain healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy a high level of privacy. They have a single bedroom where they can spend time alone if they wish. The staff are good at respecting privacy in a way that good supervision levels can be maintained. Personal care is dealt with in a way that promotes dignity.

All young people are able to let staff know if they have a problem. This is because their communication is well understood by staff and the young people know them well and feel able to talk to them. This helps to ensure safety and well-being. There is a central record of complaints in the home and there has been one complaint made by a young person since the last inspection. This had been addressed swiftly and satisfactorily, no other complaints have been received.

Young people's needs and behaviour are well understood by the staff and staff are positive about the way that communication links to behaviour. They are good at communicating with the young people and difficult behaviour can be minimised. Staff also work as a team and with consistency so the young people can develop and progress as a result. Staff have completed training and are competent in diffusing situations to try to avoid the use of physical intervention.

They try to find the root of the problem and understand how in turn, these issues impact on the young people's emotions and on their behaviour.

Young people have their needs and risks identified in the home's records. These detailed documents are well understood by staff and are clear about how risks can be minimised as far as possible. They therefore help to keep the young people safe. The staff at all levels understand and are clear about what they should do if there is a safeguarding issue because they have been well trained. The culture in the staff team enables them to identify safeguarding issues quickly and they are vigilant about the safety and vulnerability of children in residential care.

There are exceptionally clear lines of communication with other professionals and the openness this creates ensures that that maximum information is shared, and that professional's work together to keep young people safe. All aspects of safety are scrutinised by the management team and the process for the exchange of information is extremely good.

The Registered Manager ensures that the building is safe for the young people, staff and visitors. Fire drills have taken place with robust recording. Tests on all fire equipment in the building are in line with the requirements of the fire authority and inspection of the gas, electric and portable appliance testing are all up to date. This ensures the safety of the staff, visitors and young people using the building.

There is a recruitment system in the home which maintains good levels of safety for the young people. This includes Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks at enhanced level, proof of identity and references prior to employment. This helps to ensure that all staff and visitors to the home are safe to work with the young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There are high staffing levels in the home, this has allowed for quality time to be spent with young people and therefore good relationships have been developed. Staff know young people extremely well and there is a robust system for ensuring that they receive the relevant personal support in the home.

The placement plan for each young person explicitly identifies how support for individual needs will be provided and which person or agency will respond to that need. Staff ensure that they are very approachable and try to find and usually succeed in finding the support the young person needs. Young people know about outside agencies and services that they can use without reference to staff.

Staff are very positive in their approach to education and its value for young people. Staff ensure that education is an integral part of life at the home and not just limited to school or college. Daily attendance at school or college and moving on to higher education is a well-established part of the pattern of daily life at the home. Staff give very active practical and emotional support to young people who have difficulties with school attendance, in addition to the normal level of support provided for all the young people at the home. Each young person's placement plan describes how a young person's educational needs will be met. The young people attend the home's school and staff attend school visits and education reviews so that consistency can be achieved. This helps young people progress and develop.

Young people are actively encouraged by staff to take part in leisure activities both inside the home and in their community. Staff share their own interests and enthusiasms with young people and encourage them to try out new activities and interests. Young people's own individual interests are actively encouraged and supported. The staff ensure that both the needs of individuals and the group are met and spend time on a daily basis carefully planning activities. Trips out are facilitated and young people regularly have access to paid activities in the community. There is a good link between developing independence skills and activities where it is safe and appropriate to do so. Young people can practice accessing activities without the supervision of staff and these circumstances are appropriately risk assessed.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The care plans are excellent and keep staff up to date with the changing needs of the young people. They are regularly updated and set out the care to be provided. Staff ratios are organised around the identified needs of the group and this allows for a very high quality service to be provided.

Young people are supported when they move into and leave the home. There is a rigorous risk assessment process which ensures that good decisions are made about whether young people's needs can be met and to ensure that compatibility is managed safely. Staff are particularly good at supporting young people when they move to other placements, they invite prospective carers to the home and go to the new environment with them until they get to know the staff there. They are incredibly supportive to young people through this process which ultimately helps young people with some difficult transitions.

Arrangements for young people to maintain contact with families are good and parents feel well informed about progress. Staff are well aware of any sensitive information with regard to contacts and help young people with issues of separation during their stay.

Staff consult regularly with young people and this is integral to their day. They demonstrate that they place great value on the views and opinions of the young people and spend a lot of quality time with them to ensure that their views can be established and where appropriate acted upon.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged by staff to develop their independence, providing them with confidence and skills that will support their future economic well-being. This is covered well in care plans and the progress that young people make is celebrated.

The home is comfortable, warm and well-maintained; it is clean, tidy and extremely well suited to the needs of the young people. There are several areas for quiet time and relaxation, which allow young people to spend time alone doing activities or in groups. The facilities in the home include a wide variety of outdoor activity equipment and plenty of books, games and DVD's inside. The young people enjoy a mature garden where they can grow their own produce and enjoy the fresh air.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The Statement of Purpose is current and up to date. It is regularly updated and reflects the work that is taking place. There is also a young people's guide. The emphasis when there is a new young person is to ensure that they are presented with information in a timely way that is suited to their needs.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The home is part of the community and young people are actively involved in activities within the community. The manager plays an active part in educating people about the needs of children to ensure they are not discriminated against and have equal opportunities within the wider community. Religious, cultural and other needs are addressed through care planning, individuality is promoted and young people are encouraged to have a wide range of experiences.

Staff are well trained and are extremely familiar with the needs of individuals. As a consequence, they know how needs should be met. They are very committed to ensuring that they create a fun, warm and caring environment. Staffing levels are high so that they get to know the young people exceptionally well and time spent with the young people is quality time. Staff work well as a team and communicate effectively. Professional handovers, team meetings and supervision sessions are organised which ensure that they are working with the most up to date information.

The management and organisation of the home delivers very positive outcomes for young people. The Registered Manager is a very effective manager and she understands the operational issues of the home and the needs of the young people well. The support and management of staff is extremely competent. The manager is supported by a deputy manager and there is a robust system in place for monitoring young people's progress and operational issues. This ensures that the home continues to provide good and safe care to young people and that they directly benefit from their stay in residential care.

Records are well organised and presented. They provide an accurate record of young people's progress and of the operational running of the home.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

There are no recommendations.