

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	14/06/2012
Inspector	Kevin Whatley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	24/11/2011
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is registered with Ofsted to provide education and care to a maximum of 11 young people. It is a small privately owned independent residential school and children's home for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, often combined with moderate learning difficulties.

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**.

The home provides a good standard of care throughout with outcomes for young people being outstanding.

The care approach of the home is holistic with a culture focused on ensuring young people's individual needs are placed first. Young people benefit from extremely positive relationships between themselves and staff. They make excellent progress in addressing their behaviour, improving their self-esteem and achieving in their education.

A comprehensive care planning system ensures the physical, social, behavioural and emotional needs of young people are identified and incorporated into plans of care that guide staff well in supporting young people. Staff continually seek the views of young people and take them into consideration when providing them with care. .

Young people said they feel safe and are suitably aided to address their problematic behaviours. This home's robust approach toward safeguarding ensures young people are as safe as can be expected, without limiting their opportunities to engage fully in the things they enjoy.

The home is managed extremely well with a paramount goal of assisting young people to make progress in their lives. A comprehensive system of monitoring is in place which objectively assesses all areas of the care provision. Staff are committed and knowledgeable. A stable care and education team provide a high and consistent

standard of care, support and guidance.

Four recommendations are made as a result of this inspection; none impact significantly on the levels of care provided. Records of sanctions, restraints and homely medicines are not accurately kept, while minutes of formal young person's meetings are not recorded in detail.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure details of restraint are recorded accurately and in line with the homes own documentation including details of the length of time of each hold and the comments of the young person concerned (NMS 3.18)
- ensure records of sanctions are completed accurately and in line with the homes own documentation and include the comments of young people concerned (NMS 3.18)
- consider formalising a process that records young persons' meetings with the Registered Manager and responsible individual and their outcome (NMS 1.2)
- ensure that the stock control of homely medicines is maintained accurately. (NMS 6.15)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

Outcomes for young people living at the home are outstanding. For many young people the progress made given their starting points at the time they moved in, is exceptional. Young people feel extremely well looked after with a majority of placements being stable and long term adding to a strong sense of community that provides excellent routines, structures and consistency of care.

Young people are very positive on the care they receive. They said, 'staff really care about you here...I have made major improvements in the time I have lived at the home...I have really grown up and learned loads.'

Young people share extremely positive relationships with staff. They accept staff's support and guidance. Their behaviour, attitudes and self-esteem are improving significantly as a result. Young people benefit from individualised support which helps them grow in confidence and to understand their past. A highly effective key-worker system enables young people to focus on their goals and to make progress. Regular key work sessions provide an opportunity for them to discuss their feelings, thoughts and aspirations. Staff are fully aware of young people's strengths and

vulnerabilities and work hard to nurture their talents and interests. Such as a joined up approach to providing care, education and promoting social inclusion ensures that each young person feels valued and assisted to make positive choices in their lives.

Young people receive the routine and specialist services they need that ensure they are kept healthy. Young people are supported to lead a healthier life style. Staff guidance and encouragement leads to high levels of participation in sport and physical activities. . Young people have their emotional needs met particularly well. The emotional well-being of each young person is a key focus of much of the individual work undertaken with them. When necessary external professional help is sought, with young people making considerable progress in developing their feelings of self-worth.

Attendance to education is excellent. The atmosphere of the home positively supports and encourages education and learning as the accepted norm. All young people understand that a key component of their placement is to attend the on site school for their statutory education. As a result, and coupled with the shared goals between the care and education teams, young people achieve outstanding progress in their education. Young people who previously struggled with poor levels of reading and writing are now undertaking GCSE exams. This is most notable given their starting points and past problems with their education. One young person said, 'I never went to school for 18 months before I came here as I hated it...I now hardly miss a day and actually want to go.'

Young people benefit considerably from having their views actively considered and responded to. During the week meetings take place every afternoon between all young people and staff following their return from school. This allows for a period of reflection whereby young people can comment on their day, their behaviour and that of others and to make requests for the coming evening. Further meetings take place between young people and the Registered Manager and responsible individual to discuss issues affecting the home, like decoration, holidays or ideas; although these meetings are not recorded in detail. The views of young people have recently led to improving the décor of the home and developing the new pool and games room.

The home's commitment to community integration and personal development enables young people to develop their self-esteem and confidence and to experience being a positive part of the local community. Young people are active members of local football, rugby and scout clubs and attend weekly. Holidays have been particularly beneficial to the young people in developing positive relationships with staff and their peers; young people said they are looking forward to going away again this summer and had chosen this year's destination.

A comprehensive and thoughtful approach ensures young people benefit from appropriate contact with parents, carers, family and friends. All contact arrangements are clarified on admission, in line with placing authority and legal agreements. Staff fully support contact with parents saying how much they appreciate the professional and sensitive manner in which they themselves have benefited. Young people have been assisted to regain and build difficult relationships

between themselves and family members. For example where young people had been estranged from their parents and carers over the course of many years, they have now have home visits. Staff provide young people with appropriate guidance to maintain friendships outside of the home with other young people in the community.

Young people are given excellent help and support by staff as they move toward and into adulthood. An effective independence programme is in place which allows young people to make successful preparation for life after leaving care. This includes learning, developing and undertaking self care skills and living more independently. Young people on independence programmes learn how to shop, prepare and cook their own meals and how to manage living t on a budget that is commensurate with the minimum amount of monies they would receive if living on their own. Young people say they are, 'brilliantly supported', through the process with the home working closely with placing authorities to offer on going support to young people once they leave.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit greatly from the strong and positive relationships they have built with staff and each other. The stable staff team consistently assist young people to learn and develop in an environment that is safe and caring. Many of the young people have lived at the home for long periods of time leading to them building meaningful relationships with each other. Behaviour was seen to be extremely good throughout the inspection. Feedback from placing authorities and parents confirm that the whole staff team work exceedingly hard to assist young people to make progress in their lives.

Young people are provided with care that is consistent with the specific needs of their placement plan. Their individual needs are fully assessed and incorporated into plans of care in line with the overall placement objective. Such plans guide staff in effectively implementing the individual aims and objectives in practice. Young people are involved in contributing to the development and review of their own plans and encouraged to attend and participate in all reviews. The home ensures detailed reports are provided for statutory reviews.

A suitable complaints policy is implemented in practice. Young people say they know how to make a complaint or express a concern with further details available, including impendent advocacy services, within the young persons' welcome pack and displayed openly in the home. Very few complaints have been made since the last inspection and those that were had been responded to swiftly with clear and appropriate outcomes for all concerned.

Young people have their physical and medical health care needs met well; their emotional needs are addressed particularly well. Health care plans are in place, which highlight the specific needs of young people, including their medical histories

and current medication. Young people always get the support, they may need from health care agencies, such the local child and adolescent mental health service.. Such close liaison ensures the emotional well-being of each young person is considered in full. A good number of staff are trained in the giving of medicines and only those that have, administer them. The storage of medicines is appropriate and written medication records are well maintained; however, one minor shortfall was identified in the stock control of homely medicines. But this did not impact on young people's welfare.

The educational needs of young people are fundamental to their placement at the home with attendance and achievement being positively encouraged and valued. The home has its own school, situated in the same grounds, which all young people of statutory school age attend. Since the last inspection all of the classrooms have been moved to the main school building culminating in a more defined and appropriate separation between the home and educational environment. Such a development has improved the structure and boundaries of the school day; with young people leaving and returning from school ensuring the living environment is kept more homely. Excellent communication is maintained between school and care staff culminating in a very consistent approach to meeting individual needs. Care staff are available to assist young people during the school day when necessary which ensures their continued engagement. Such an approach provides a holistic response to care and nurtures a sense of community and working together.

Activity planning is a strength of the home. Young people are enabled and encouraged to engage in group and individual pursuits in the home and wider community. Regular trips out of the home take place, notably during summer months, to local skate parks, swimming pools and cinemas. The home itself provides an excellent place in which to play in the beautiful grounds and enjoy an array of computer consoles, indoor games, pool table or televisions or use of the art room. Individual needs are particularly well catered for with young people assisted to attend local scout, football and rugby clubs in line with their wishes and interests.

Young people live in premises that provide an excellent standard of accommodation and facilities. The home is homely and has been furnished to a high standard throughout with a photos and pictures being displayed of current resident's from years gone by. Young people enjoy a considerably spacious environment with a number of communal areas available to allow them to rest, relax or play. Young people are supported in personalising their room to reflect their interests and individual tastes. Older young people have been provided with rooms which are deemed 'flats' with en suite facilities, thus allowing them the opportunity to live more independently. The outside of the home is particularly spacious being excellently maintained with gardens, lawns and patios, several areas have art work on display which were created by staff and young people together.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has successfully nurtured an environment where young people feel safe. A robust approach toward child protection ensures that staff receive suitable training in safeguarding matters. Policies and procedures are clear and incorporate appropriate safeguarding protocols with staff knowing what to do in the event of concerns arising. The vulnerabilities of young people are assessed on arrival and reviewed regularly with staff displaying a sound appreciation of how to keep them as safe as possible.

Young people say staff understand them very well. Young people go missing extremely rarely, with clear protocols in place which are followed swiftly in practice. No young person has gone missing since the last inspection. Young people did not raise bullying as an issue; the open culture of the home reduces the risk of such behaviours occurring unknown to staff. No issues were identified that suggests bullying as being a problem in the home. A comprehensive and safe recruitment process ensure young people are not cared for by staff until all required checks have been completed and they are deemed suitable to work at the home. No new care staff have been appointed since the last inspection.

An informed and comprehensive approach assists young people to make substantive progress in addressing and reducing their problematic and challenging behaviours. Young people have their specific issues addressed in an individualised fashion that includes involving them in seeking less destructive alternatives to expressing their feelings of fear, anger or frustration. Detailed behaviour management plans are consistently implemented in practice leading to significant improvements in behaviour, attitude and personal development. For example a number of young people arrived at the home with existing issues with violence and aggression. These young people have been helped to reduce incidents significantly where they feel the need to exhibit their feelings in such a way. One young person noted that, 'I was very difficult when I arrived and wanted to hit everyone...I was helped by staff to walk away and find space and calm down...I now know how to control myself.' The atmosphere in the home exudes a sense of community such as seen with young people helping each other to behave appropriately.

Staff are well trained to deal with situations whereby the challenging or risky behaviours of young people may require the use of physical intervention. The culture of the home encourages dialogue and communication with de-escalation a key component of strategies used to avoid the need for restraint. The use of restraint is appropriate and predominantly relates to young people being guided away from situations. Records of restraint are generally well maintained and reflect the nature of the situation and include a debriefing with the young person concerned. However several recent recordings of restraints lacked sufficient details of the length of time the restraints were carried out, although details could be found in other logs such as incident logs. This shortfall does not impinge significantly on care practices and had been identified through the most recent managers monitoring checks

An appropriate system of sanctions provides a suitable response to unacceptable behaviour. Young people said that the rules of the home are firm but fair. A majority of sanctions imposed consist of young people being given 'time out' or periods of

'supervision', which means they have to spend set time with members of staff. Young people state that the process works very well which allows them to 'chat about stuff that is bothering them...and the reasons for being angry.' Records showed that the use of sanctions were suitable commensurate to the nature of the misdemeanours. The Registered Manager reviews the implementation of sanctions to ensure fairness. However three recent entries recorded within the restraint and sanctions logs did not contain the comments of young people.

Health and safety in the home is given a strong priority to ensure the safety of young people and staff alike. Regular health and safety checks are completed, including fire drills and fire alarm checks. Routine servicing ensures all areas of the home are maintained appropriately including the testing of electrical installations and portable equipment. Comprehensive risk assessments are completed on activities away from the home which are effective in highlighting the risks, how they can be reduced further and the actions staff must take to ensure safety. Such an approach allows young people to safely enjoy and participate in pursuits such as go-karting and playing rugby.

Leadership and management

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

Young people and staff alike benefit from a home that is managed extremely well. An affective and efficient management approach ensures appropriately high standards of care are expected and implemented in practice. Strong leadership and guidance is provided by the Registered Manager and senior management team to staff within a culture that seeks to improve care provision in the short, medium and longer term. The Registered Manager is vastly experienced and leads by example in continually placing the individual needs of young people first, while simultaneously empowering staff to improve and develop their own practice and learning. For instance staff are now expected to take the lead of certain responsibilities in the home including health and safety, activity planning and community integration. Parents and placing authorities expressed considerable praise for the manner in which the home is run, the individualised programmes of care and the significant progress made by young people in their social, educational and personal development.

A rigorous monitoring process ensures every area of care provision is robustly reviewed and assessed.. The Registered Manager completes monthly checks with the subsequent Regulation 34 reports offering a good overview and assessment of standards of care including any areas for improvement. Similarly monthly inspections are undertaken which provide a thorough assessment of care from a more objective standpoint. The home's development plan highlights the levels of progress made to date with a clear and tangible improvement agenda in place aimed at striving for outstanding standards of care. As a result the home are making are able to evidence progress and continued improvement.

An experienced and stable staff team provide young people with sensitive and consistent care. Good numbers of staff are available to care for young people during the day and night. All care staff either hold or are working toward the required qualification in care. A comprehensive training programme enables them to continually update and develop their skills. Staff stated categorically that they felt fully supported in their roles and noted they receive both formal and informal supervision regularly. Comments included '...the manager has made massive improvements since taking over...I feel so supported by the manager and team...I love working here.'

The home provides a good level of information which ensures young people and others know what support they can expect and how they will be looked after. This is discussed with them during the moving in process, when they arrive and periodically afterwards. A young persons' welcome pack provides an informative and easy to understand guide to the home which includes contact details for the independent visitor. A clear, written Statement of Purpose is in place that informs parents and social workers of how the home operates and plans to meet young people's needs. The home's written records were found to be completed to a good standards being stored with due regard for confidentiality.

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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.