

Cornerstones -Victoria Road

Inspection report for Children's Home

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| Inspector | Sarah Oldham |
| Type of inspection | Key |

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| Date of last inspection | 19/11/2010 |

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

The home is operated by a small private provider and is located in the north west of England. It is one of three homes providing a service to vulnerable children and young people with complex needs. It is registered as a school and provides on-site education for 11 learners from seven years to 18 years.

The home is registered for six boys who present with a variety of needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties, learning difficulties and mental disorders. However, the primary focus is to provide care and accommodation for children and young people with a learning disability and autistic spectrum disorders.

The home provides a service to children and young people from all over the United Kingdom. It is well served by motorway and major road networks. The premises include the school provision, outdoor recreational areas, residential facilities and catering provision. Staffing levels are high and each boy has a team of carers providing an agreed staffing level which ranges from 1:1 to 3:1 in accordance with the assessed needs of the child or young person.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

At this unannounced key inspection, the home was assessed against all the key national minimum standards. An education inspection was also undertaken at the same time. Three young people were present during the inspection, two of whom participated in the inspection.

The home is effectively managed and well organised providing an outstanding level of care and support to the young people with complex needs. Staff support young people to develop appropriate daily living skills in accordance with individual needs. Staff follow excellent procedures to promote the safety and wellbeing of the young people. Training for staff is comprehensive and includes all aspects of care and support for young people with complex needs. The home has a school onsite and staff work closely with education staff to enable young people to develop their individual educational needs. Communication systems are in place to ensure that all young people are included in all aspects of their care and education.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection, the home was judged to be outstanding. There were two minor shortfalls and recommendations were made. These related to ensuring that there is a written record of a complaint and the outcome of the complaint. The

second recommendation was to ensure that staff files contained information regarding qualifications for staff. Both of these recommendations have been addressed in full. The complaints record demonstrates that clear outcomes of complaints are recorded. All staff files contain full details and copies of staff qualifications.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive outstanding support to be healthy. Menus have been designed and developed, with input from the young people, to provide nutritious meals offering a wide range of choice, including foods from different cultures. Menus are available in written and pictorial versions. This enables all young people to have involvement and choice of meals. Meals are eaten in the dining room and mealtimes are relaxed and sociable occasions. Young people have the opportunity to plan, shop for and prepare their own meals as part of preparing for independence. A small kitchen area is available for the young people to use. This ensures that young people have access to facilities to make drinks and prepare food with support from staff.

Each young person has a comprehensive health care plan. These plans identify all aspects of health care needs and staff are proactive in seeking medical attention and guidance from health care professionals. This ensures that all young people are effectively supported with their health care needs. Staff have received training in medication administration and first aid. Appropriate first aid equipment is available within the home. The home has detailed procedures in place for the safe storage, administration, recording and disposal of medicines, this promotes young people's good health. Medical advice is sought to ensure that any homely remedies administered are suitable for each young person. Young people receive the treatment and support they need when they are ill or injured. Young people also have access to complementary health therapies. These are agreed with the doctor, young people and parents, and undertaken by an external complementary therapist.

Staff provide children and young people with outstanding support to lead healthy lifestyles through the promotion of exercise, development of independence skills in good hygiene and self care skills and through education in being healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's privacy and dignity are promoted by staff. All young people have their own bedrooms with en-suite facilities and the staff are aware of the importance of promoting the individuals right to privacy balanced with an individual risk assessments in place. Policies and procedures underpin the care and support provided to the young people in assistance with their personal care. These are known and followed by staff. Confidential information is stored securely. Children and young people are provided with information in both written and pictorial formats

about how to complain. Young people are supported through practice sessions on making a complaint to ensure that they have a good understanding and feel confident to make a complaint or raise any issues of concern. The young people also have access to independent advocate. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

Robust procedures are in place to deter bullying. Emphasis is placed on supporting young people to have respect for themselves and others and this is evident throughout the ethos of the home. Children are rarely missing from home and there have been no unauthorised absences. However, the staff are pro-active in safeguarding children and young people who may go missing. Risk assessment and individual profiles are kept up to date and staff are aware of all procedures to follow, including contacting the police.

Children and young people are safeguarded effectively because staff know what to do in the event of an allegation or a disclosure being made. Training is provided on safeguarding to all staff and updated on a regular basis. Training also includes information on the homes whistle blowing procedures to ensure that any bad practice by a member of staff or concern about a child's welfare is quickly reported and addressed. Effective external monitoring systems are in place to ensure independent scrutiny of safeguarding practices. This includes the use of physical interventions. All young people have excellent behaviour management plans in place. These demonstrate how a young person is supported to develop appropriate behaviours and also if physical intervention is used, staff are trained in and aware of the appropriate intervention for individual young people. These have been agreed as part of the overall care plan and only used if a young person is a risk of harm to self or others. Records maintained show that these are recorded in detail and appropriately monitored. Parents and social workers are provided with full information about the home's behaviour management policy.

The safety of children is actively promoted, through practices and support from staff. There are a wealth of risk assessments, which have been regularly reviewed and updated for each child. Risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises are in place, including fire, electrical and gas safety. Fire records indicate that weekly checks on the system and appropriate fire instruction and drills have taken place, to ensure appropriate measures are in place, to keep children safe.

Recruitment and selection procedures are robust. All appropriate checks are completed prior to staff commencing employment to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. All visitors to the home are required to sign the visitors book and identification sought. These procedures ensure that children and young people are safeguarded from potential abusers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The home provides an outstanding level of support to enable children and young people to explore their potential. This is achieved by giving them choices and opportunities through social interaction, play and promoting and developing life skills. For example, young people have a dedicated allowance to plan for independence and are supported with this. They have the opportunity to shop, prepare meals and contribute their wishes and views to the activities undertaken.

The home is registered as a school and provides a good standard of education with outstanding features. There is individualised assistance for young people, with appropriate assessments and plans in place. Through the individual education and residential targets identified, focused support is provided to each young person to assist their achievement and progress. Carers support children and young people well in all aspects of school life. They are available to assist in school if necessary and they provide support to complete homework. Children and young people make good or excellent educational progress and enjoy school. Parents are kept informed of all aspects of achievements and progress and this is reflected in their responses to questionnaires received by Ofsted.

Children and young people enjoy living at the home. They participate in a wide and diverse range of activities in accordance with their individual interests. These include community based activities, for example attending youth clubs , leisure centres and attending football matches. They also have a range of activities at the home including games consoles, games, computers and outdoor games equipment, for example a trampoline and football goal posts. Young people enjoy an annual summer holiday and frequent days out with their carers. Celebrations are held for birthdays and other occasions, including bank holidays and religious festivals. They are encouraged to participate in choosing, planning and preparing for activities so that they learn to influence their own lives and make decisions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Outstanding assessment of individual needs and comprehensive placement plans are in place for children and young people. This enables staff to have comprehensive information that enables them to provide excellent levels of care, guidance and support. Individual placement plans are kept under review to ensure that identified needs continue to be met and any changes required are clearly implemented. Daily achievable targets are set for each young person in line with the Every Child Matters outcome areas. These targets are personalised to reflect individual needs and are effective in supporting the young people to develop individual skills. Cultural, religious and racial needs are identified and addressed and the home and school work together to educate the young people to respect and value differences.

Young people contribute and participate to their statutory reviews. Staff work closely with the young people to ensure that their views are ascertained. They also have access to an independent advocate to further support their views. Regular house meetings are held and these enable young people to have the opportunity to comment on all aspects of the life at the home. Records of these meetings are provided to the young people in both written and pictorial formats with clear responses and outcomes to issues raised. Young people say that they feel fully involved in decisions about their progress and time at the home.

Clear and detailed information is in place regarding contact with family and friends for all young people. Staff transport young people long distances to enable them to have frequent contact with families in accordance with individual care plans. Families are also able to visit the home and say that they are always made to feel welcome by staff and that communication is excellent with the home.

Pre-placement planning is exceptionally good. Consideration is given to the individual needs of any prospective child and also the needs of the children and young people currently living at the home. Pre admission visits are encouraged and information about the home is tailored to the individual child. It is also provided in the preferred format of communication, for example, written or pictorial. When a young person is planning to move on from the home, great emphasis is placed upon planning for their future and high levels of support are provided through this transition period.

Young people benefit from excellent relationships with staff. Young people say that they are happy at the home, and that they are looked after well by the staff.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are effectively supported to prepare for independence. Each young person has a comprehensive independence file that clearly outlines aims and objectives. The independence programme consists of three different levels and provides young people with the opportunity to break individual learning tasks into appropriate levels. Staff work closely with young people to help them to achieve individual tasks in accordance with individual abilities and record achievements clearly. This enables young people to develop their skills for independence.

Children live in a well appointed, comfortable, clean and homely environment. Each child has their own bedroom with en-suite facilities. Bedrooms are tastefully decorated and personalised to meet the individual child's needs and interests. The two lounges, dining room and kitchen provide ample space for each child to engage in activities of their own choice without interfering with other children's needs. Equally, rooms are sufficiently large to allow children to spend time together, should they wish. Externally there is a garden area with trampoline, football posts and other play equipment that enables young people to play either together or individually. The gardens are maintained to a high standard and plans are in place to further develop the gardens to provide sensory equipment.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

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The detailed Statement of Purpose provides comprehensive information about the aim and objectives of the home. This document is provided to parents, carers and placing social workers to enable them to have a clear overview of the home and how it operates. Young people are provided with an individualised children's guide in a format that is appropriate for them. Staff work through the children's guide with the young people on a regular basis to ensure that they are familiar with the contents.

The manager has extensive experience and knowledge within social care and is suitably qualified to manage and lead the staff team in providing care and support to young people. When the manager is absent, there are suitable arrangements in place to provide managerial cover. These arrangements are known to staff and ensure that there is designated management cover available. Senior management work towards developing the service to continue to exceed the national minimum standards in promoting the welfare of young people.

Children benefit from having a consistent team of dedicated carers whom they know well and learn to trust. The home is committed to providing a highly competent staff team and over 90% of carers are suitably qualified. All are well trained and experienced. This gives them the confidence and competence to meet children's needs. Very good management support and supervision ensures staff provide high quality, individualised care to children.

Children's care files are comprehensive and extremely well organised. Children are supported to contribute to their individual care files and there is clear evidence of any progress made. Parents view the home as an exceptionally positive experience for the young people. Comments received included 'the children benefit from a consistent, caring and dedicated staff team. This enables them to develop their skill for their future'.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The home promotes inclusion with the young people by ensuring that information is provided in appropriate formats. This enables young people to fully contribute to how the home operates and functions. Carers value and accept each child for their differences and encourage them to value themselves and respect others. The home promotes an awareness of diversity and provides children with frequent opportunities to learn about other cultures, races and religious groups.