

Alderwasley Hall

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mark Ryder
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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 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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately run school that is a registered children's home as it accommodates young people for more than 295 days a year. The school is part of a larger organisation. It accommodates up to 38 young people and specialises in the care and support of young people with autism, Asperger's syndrome, or communication difficulties between the ages of eight and 18 years. There are currently seven young people in residence.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

This setting provides young people with a high level of care and support. Parents report that their children have made significant improvements since their placements began. Young people feel valued, respected and safe. The service does particularly well in providing a 24-hour curriculum and enabling young people to develop essential independent skills to move into adulthood. Staff are responsive to the needs of young people and utilise their communication skills well. Relationships between staff and young people are friendly and positive. The management team is responsive to feedback and has a good awareness of their strengths and areas for improvement. The residential area is effectively managed through a detailed and realistic development plan. Two recommendations are made as a result of this inspection although none impact on the quality of care provided.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where there has been physical restraint, children's homes must be able to call on medical assistance as requested and children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- ensure that entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish as far as possible between fact, opinion and third party information. (NMS 22.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from their placements at this residential school. The ethos of a 24-hour curriculum and the close working practices between the school, parents, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and residential staff enables young people to achieve and reach their individual potential. Young people and parents play a central part in education review meetings and feel fully consulted. Educational targets are realistic and achievable. Young people's communication needs are very well met by staff who have specific skills in this area. A parent wrote 'my child has made great progress since being at this school'. Young people's attendance at school is very good.

Young people live a healthy lifestyle. Meals are nutritious and balanced with good quality home made food with menus reflecting personal choice. Health care plans are assessed, updated and reviewed regularly. This ensures that each young person's health needs are considered and acted upon. Specialist health care is managed well. Parents commented that the staff were very helpful during a period in which their child was unwell.

Young people access local resources and find enjoyment and interest in doing so. There is a wide range of recreational activities that young people participate in. For example, the school provides young people with a fully equipped gym and wall climbing facilities under appropriate supervision. Staff encourage young people to engage within the community. A young person wrote that the best thing about living here was 'going out on trips to Drayton Manor, Alton Towers and go-carting'.

Young people are encouraged to develop independence skills to help them with the transition into adulthood. For a number of young people this means that they need to progress to a level in which they are able to live within a supported living environment once they leave the school. There is a strong commitment by the multi disciplinary staff team to help young people to achieve this. For example, young people are encouraged to prepare meals, shop and budget. Young people are able to independently travel after assessment of the potential risks. Many young people have made significant improvements in this regard and enjoy the opportunity to exercise their independence. A child wrote that 'I love going shopping and I like the staff'.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between staff and young people are friendly, good natured and supportive. Positive behaviour is recognised and promoted whilst negative behaviour is challenged appropriately. Young people respond well to this. A young person wrote that 'the staff are very understanding and supportive'.

Complaints are addressed without delay and are handled appropriately, fairly and sensitively. Young people and parents are aware of the complaints procedure and use it whenever they wish to. Complaint records are regularly monitored and practice reviewed in light of any areas identified that could be improved.

Placement plans detail all aspects of the young people's needs and preparation for their care. Plans take into account the wishes and feelings of young people. This includes religious persuasion, gender, age and ethnicity, but also behaviours and strategies to support the young people in crisis. Staff use the strategies within these integrated plans to ensure the young person's needs are addressed and progressed. All staff who are involved with the young person are consulted in the assessment of these plans through discussion with their keyworkers and during review meetings. This ensures the plan remains up to date and accurate. A parent commented that they felt listened to and that staff are receptive to their ideas'.

Mealtimes are social occasions in which all staff and young people sit together to eat. The benefit of this is that young people experience routine in a social environment and assists appropriate behaviour. Young people have choice over the type of meals they like to eat with staff suggesting healthier options if required to do so. A member of staff commented that a young person who has special dietary requirements is now able make positive choices over the food they order when eating out.

Young people are given the opportunity to partake in purposeful and enjoyable activities as part of their daily routine. This allows young people to gain confidence in learning new skills and also benefit from new experiences which develop their self-esteem. These are appropriately risk assessed in order to allow for reasonable and appropriate risks as part of normal development. A parent wrote that their child 'enjoys going on the weekly outing e.g. golf, bowling and has recently learnt to ride a horse'.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe living at this residential school. Staff provide young people with a safe and stimulating environment. Risk assessments are current, informative and regularly reviewed in line with presenting needs. For example, the integrated placement plan combines the views of parents, young people and staff from the multi disciplinary team to consider issues around safeguarding.

Young people respond well to the positive and realistic boundaries put in place to keep them safe. Assessment of risk to young people with regards to their behaviour to other residents, themselves or staff is regularly reviewed. This means that staff have a good understanding in diffusing situations between young people. Young people indicate that they get on well with each other and have good relationships with the staff. The use of physical restraint is low. Such incidents are fully recorded and monitored by a senior member of staff. However, it is not always apparent if young people are asked if they wish to see a nurse or medical practitioner after a physical restraint has taken place as this is not recorded. Therefore, it is unclear whether young people understand their rights in this regard.

Young people missing from the home are reported in line with local and national guidance. The staff are mindful of each young person's level of vulnerability and recognise the need for immediate action to reduce the possibility of young people being at further risk. Incidents of missing from care are very low at this setting.

Recruitment and selection of staff is conducted in a way that supports the provider's Statement of Purpose and function. Staff are robustly recruited to identify and employ those individuals that will effectively work with children in a safe and suitable way. Visitors are suitably checked before they have access to young people. Young people are therefore, kept safe in this environment.

Leadership and management

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

This is a well-organised and effective service that meets the complex needs of young people. The Statement of Purpose clearly identifies the aims and objectives of the service which are visibly achieved. The children's guide is written in a user-friendly version and provides young people with details of what to expect when living or staying at this school.

There is very clear development plan in place which refers to consultation with young people about the running of the residential area. It identifies the strengths of the service and also where there is room for improvement and development. There were no requirements or recommendations from the previous inspection.

There are good monitoring practices in place used by the manager and regular external audits. The home is well managed and shifts are effectively and efficiently planned by the care team.

Staff are well trained and competent in the care and support of the young people. Staff understand the varying needs of young people well and approach the work in a positive and enabling way. They receive regular training, supervision and annual appraisal. A parent wrote 'the care staff are very efficient and keep us informed by email or phone'.

Daily records of young people's presenting behaviour, their activities and achievements are maintained to a good standard and stored securely. These records help staff handover from one shift to another as well as providing more detailed reports on a monthly basis. However, in some entries, the language used is overly negative and not considered balanced. This means that young people who may access their records in the future would have a distorted view of their time at this school.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.

