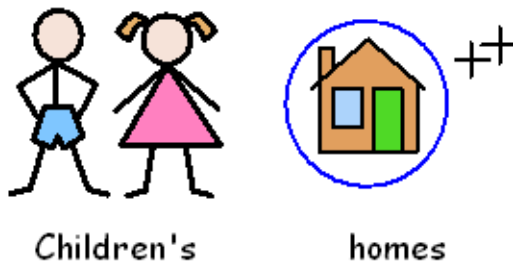


Inspection of children's homes

Framework for inspection from 1 April 2015

This document sets out the framework and evaluation criteria for the inspection of children's homes.



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Introduction

1. Ofsted regulates and inspects all children's homes in England. We know that the residential care sector supports some of our most vulnerable children and young people and so inspection must shine a spotlight on what works well. We must drive improvement in those homes where children are not safe or their welfare is not safeguarded and promoted. This document sets out how we apply the principles and processes of all our inspections, the statutory basis for inspection, how we will make judgements and a summary of the main features of the inspection process.
2. Inspection acts in a number of ways to drive and support improvement. It:
 - raises expectations by setting the standards of performance and effectiveness expected of children's homes
 - provides a sharp challenge and the incentive to act where improvement is needed
 - clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses
 - recommends specific priorities for improvement for the children's home and, when appropriate, checks on and promotes subsequent progress
 - promotes rigour in the way that children's homes evaluate their own performance, thereby enhancing their capacity to improve.
3. The framework and the inspection judgements are underpinned by the regulations and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.¹ The inspections are intended not only to test compliance but also to raise standards and drive improvement in the sector. These will require a strong focus on improving outcomes for children and young people. Inspectors will evaluate how the service contributes to children and young people's experiences and supports them to make progress.
4. There is more detailed guidance on our inspection methodology in the 'Inspection handbook'.²
5. This framework and guidance are subject to periodic review.

Legal basis for inspection

6. Under the Care Standards Act 2000 Ofsted has powers to regulate and inspect children's social care services including children's homes.^{3,4} As well as setting

¹ The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents; *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*, DfE, 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide.

² Inspection handbook: children's homes, Ofsted, 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-childrens-homes-guidance-for-inspectors.

out Ofsted's powers to register, inspect and, where necessary, enforce compliance with the Act and relevant regulations, it also defines a children's home.

7. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires Ofsted to carry out its work in ways that encourage the services it inspects and regulates to:
 - improve
 - be user-focused
 - be efficient and effective in the use of resources.⁵
8. When inspecting children's homes, Ofsted considers knowledge and understanding gained from previous inspections, and:
 - the Care Standards Act 2000
 - the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015⁶
 - 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'⁷
 - other statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE).

Frequency of inspection

9. The frequency of inspections is set out in regulations.⁸ All registered children's homes will have a minimum of two inspections in a year (between 1 April and 31 March – the inspection period).
10. All inspections will be unannounced. In most instances, one inspection will be a full inspection and the other will be an interim inspection.⁹
11. Newly registered children's homes that register between 1 April and 30 September will receive at least one inspection between 1 October and 31 March.
12. Newly registered children's homes that register between 1 October and 31 March will receive their first inspection between 1 April and 30 September of the following inspection period.

³ Section 5(1A) of the Care Standards Act 2000 provides that HMCI is the registration authority for children's homes and other establishments and agencies to which Part 2 of that act applies. The functions were transferred to Ofsted under section 148 of the Education and Inspections 2006.

⁴ The Care Standards Act 2000; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents.

⁵ The Education and Inspections Act 2006; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents.

⁶ The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015; www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents.

⁷ *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*, DfE, 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-the-quality-standards-guide.

⁸ Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (Fees and Frequency of Inspections)(Children's Homes etc) Regulations 2015; www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/551/contents

⁹ Different patterns of inspection may occur where homes have been judged inadequate or where homes are not currently operating.

13. The timing of any inspection will be influenced by an assessment of:
 - the outcomes of previous inspections
 - any current complaints or enforcement action
 - notifications received from a children's home
 - other relevant information received by Ofsted.

Types of inspection

14. We carry out the following types of inspection of children's homes:
 - A **full inspection** is carried out usually at least once annually. This inspection is conducted against the grade criteria as set out below and will result in a set of graded judgements. The inspector will normally be on site for up to two days.
 - An **interim inspection** is carried out usually at least once annually. The focus of this inspection is on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection. The judgement will be made on a three-point scale: improved effectiveness; sustained effectiveness; or declined in effectiveness. The inspector will normally be on site for one day.
15. Within each inspection period, every children's home will have at least two inspections. At least one of these will be a full inspection.
16. There are further specific inspections related to particular children's homes.
17. Where the children's home provides education, we inspect its educational provision once every three years. We do this at the same time as the full inspection where it is sensible and practical to do so, but always publish a separate report.
18. If there is an incident, a complaint or concerns, we conduct:
 - a **monitoring inspection** – we may also carry out monitoring visits to review any building work, to ensure that the design and layout remains suitable for achieving the aims and objectives set out in the children's home's statement of purpose or, where we wish to gather information on a particular aspect of care or service provision, monitor specific issues or compliance with a notice.
19. To support our survey work, we conduct:
 - **thematic inspections** – these gather evidence on a particular theme, issue or aspect of good practice that we are examining with the intention of publishing a report on the findings.

20. We will not conduct a thematic inspection at the same time as a monitoring inspection.
21. All inspection reports are published.

Inspectors

22. Children's homes are inspected by suitably experienced social care inspectors and normally by a single inspector. Where the children's home provides education or is also registered with the DfE as a school, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) (Education) will inspect the educational provision.

How we will inspect¹⁰

23. Inspectors will track the experiences of children and young people to evaluate the quality of practice, care and management and the difference this makes to the lives of children and young people.¹¹ Inspectors will take into account children and young people's starting points, their abilities, any barriers to participation and the length of time they have been living in the home.¹² In all cases, they will expect to see high ambition for children and young people and a positive contribution from the home to the development of secure and permanent plans for their futures.
24. To prepare for inspection, inspectors consider the information that Ofsted has about the service. This includes:
 - previous inspection reports
 - the home's statement of purpose
 - concerns and complaints received
 - notifications of serious events received
 - written reports following a visit by an independent visitor
 - any quality assurance reports required by regulation
 - any changes to registration, including change of manager
 - any current or recent enforcement activity.
25. When inspectors arrive on site for a full inspection, they will request additional specific information from the registered manager or person in charge (see

¹⁰ The full details of how the inspection will be conducted are published in the inspection handbook.

¹¹ In small children's homes, inspectors will usually track the cases of all children and young people. In larger homes they will track a sample of cases. Where any children or young people have been missing from the home, inspectors will always track their experiences and the response of the home and local authority responsible for the child or young person.

¹² Inspectors will also take into account the frequency of stay for children and young people using short break services.

Annex A). This information is required under Section 31 of the Care Standards Act 2000.

26. Inspectors will investigate how the manager and staff:
- understand each child or young person's starting point
 - measure success
 - know they are making a positive difference to children and young people's lives
 - understand and act on the strengths and areas for improvement in practice.
27. Where children and young people are new to the home, inspectors will expect to see effective planning for their arrival and that the statement of purpose for the home shows they are likely to be able to meet the young person's needs. Action to meet those needs should be taken without unnecessary delay. Where children and young people have recently moved from the home, inspectors will want to understand the progress these children and young people have made, the reasons for their move and the contribution of the home to that transition and to plans for their future.¹³
28. Inspectors will:
- meet with children and young people
 - contact parents or carers (where appropriate and in the child's best interest) and key professionals such as the allocated social worker, the independent reviewing officer, police, teachers (including on-site school staff), youth offending teams,¹⁴ Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (or equivalent role) and health professionals to hear their views about the quality of care and practice in the children's home
 - interview the registered manager, care staff and, where appropriate, the responsible individual.¹⁵ The inspector is likely to interview the responsible individual when:
 - there are concerns about the quality and effectiveness of monitoring arrangements
 - evidence indicates that the home is failing to protect children and young people
 - there are concerns about how the home is resourced

¹³ This can be through records, discussions with children and young people and/or discussion with stakeholders.

¹⁴ For secure children's homes this should always include contact with the Youth Justice Board and the Local Authority Designated Officer or equivalent role.

¹⁵ Where the home is an organisation this will be the responsible individual. Where the home owned by an individual, this may be the proprietor.

- contact other professionals working with the child or young person/other professionals working with the home
- contact the police in all instances where children or young people have been or are missing and to understand the nature and extent of their involvement with the home
- observe staff in their day-to-day work, including mealtimes, evening routines and when children and young people return home from school
- observe practice in meetings between young people and staff, staff handovers, team meetings and children's reviews if they are happening at the time of the inspection and it is appropriate to do so
- request a range of information (including records of incidents where children and young people have gone missing, critical incidents, records of restraint¹⁶ and children's case files) at the start of the inspection to inform the inspection process
- develop initial lines of enquiry before they arrive, based on reports from the independent visitors and the report from the home of its own review of the quality of care, previous inspections, notifications, complaints and responses to Ofsted's annual questionnaires.

User and partner views and questionnaires

29. In this context, users are the children and young people who are supported by the home, and their parents or carers.
30. Inspectors take account of the extent to which service providers have asked for and acted on the views of children and young people, and their parents or carers, in reviewing and improving services and outcomes. Inspectors also consider the views of those users and partners they speak to during on-site evidence-gathering.
31. We will use online questionnaires to gather the views of children and young people, parents and families, staff and other interested parties, such as placing social workers, independent reviewing officers, and health, police and education colleagues. These questionnaires will be made available at the beginning of the inspection year within a defined window. The responses will inform any inspections in that inspection year.

Communication and feedback

32. Inspectors will provide regular opportunities for dialogue and feedback to providers during the inspection. Where inspectors identify any concerns they will want to discuss these with the provider to ensure they have fully

¹⁶ Restraint includes restriction of liberty.

understood the issue and, where appropriate, provide an opportunity for the provider to direct the inspector to relevant evidence.

33. Inspectors will give oral feedback about draft findings, including strengths and weaknesses in practice, to the registered manager or person in charge at the end of the inspection. Requirements to be set and recommendations to be made will be clearly stated.

Making judgements and using the grade descriptors at the full inspection

34. The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to assess the progress children and young people are making and the quality of their experiences.

35. Inspectors will make their judgements on a four-point scale:

- outstanding
- good
- requires improvement
- inadequate.

36. The inspection framework includes:

- evaluation criteria to describe the characteristics of good in the judgement of **'the overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home'**, taking into account:
 - how well children and young people are helped and protected
 - the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers¹⁷
- evaluation criteria for outstanding, requires improvement and inadequate that are derived from good as the minimum benchmark.

37. The judgement about how well children and young people are helped and protected is a **key judgement**. This means that if inspectors judge this area of provision and care to be inadequate then the overall 'experiences and progress of children and young people' judgement will always be inadequate. Where the judgement is requires improvement this does not automatically limit the overall judgement to requires improvement. The influence on the overall judgement will depend on the nature and extent of the weaknesses.

¹⁷ For secure children's homes there is also a judgement of 'Outcomes in education and related learning activities'. See 'Guidance on inspecting education and related learning activities in secure children's homes' (130201), Ofsted, 2013; www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-childrens-homes-guidance-for-inspectors.

38. The judgement of the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers is graded on the four-point scale. If inspectors judge this area of provision to be inadequate, this is likely to lead to an overall 'experiences and progress' judgement of inadequate and certainly not a judgement that exceeds requires improvement.
39. Inspectors will use the descriptors for good as the benchmark against which to grade and judge performance. The judgement, however, is not derived from a checklist but instead is a professional evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the home on the experiences and progress of children and young people. Failure to achieve a single criterion for good will not automatically lead to a judgement of requires improvement. The criteria set out what is expected but they do not limit judgements where there is proper account of the progress children are making and the quality of care and support that is available to them.
40. A judgement of good will be made where the inspector concludes that the evidence overall sits most appropriately with a finding of good. This is what Ofsted describes as 'best fit'.
41. This is in recognition of the diversity of provision in the residential sector, the likelihood that no two homes will be the same, and that the factors that make a home good or requires improvement are not all likely to be the same. We recognise that to expect a children's home to fulfil all the criteria is overly simplistic. We know that in some homes, because of the nature of the home and the needs of the children and young people, some criteria will have less relevance than others. Even when all the criteria are relevant, there will always be a degree of professional judgement in weighing and balancing evidence against the evaluation criteria. Annex B sets out how the framework is likely to be applied differently based on the needs of the children and young people and the purpose of the home; for example, there are significant differences between the needs of the children and the purpose and operation of a secure children's home and a short break service.
42. The new regulations and quality standards, developed by the DfE, allow the registered person to apply their professional judgement about how they will achieve the quality standards. We expect them to explain their practice and decision-making to inspectors, including the reasons why a particular course of action is appropriate in meeting a child's needs. A professional dialogue between the inspector and those inspected should always underpin the inspection judgements. Professional judgement applies to both inspector and those inspected.
43. In addition, inspectors will identify areas of outstanding practice and priorities for improvement. For all children and young people the expectation is that care and practice are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation.

The relationship between the regulations, the government guide and the inspection framework

44. Children’s homes must meet the statutory requirements of the regulations.¹⁸ Where they do not, inspectors will clearly identify what they must do in the form of setting requirements or through enforcement action. The DfE has published a guide (‘the Guide’) that explains and supplements the regulations.¹⁹ The Guide replaces the current national minimum standards. Registered persons must have regard to the Guide in interpreting and meeting the regulations. Where the registered person does not have regard to the Guide, this may indicate a failure to meet the regulations. This may influence the inspection judgement and may result in requirements being imposed and/or enforcement action being taken.
45. Meeting regulatory requirements must equate to:
- high quality care
 - good planning
 - a safe and protective environment
 - positive experiences and tangible progress for children and young people.
46. Nevertheless, the seriousness of any failure to comply with regulations and the impact on children and young people will be considered carefully by inspectors to determine how this should influence the judgements and the outcome of the inspection.
47. A failure to meet a regulation does not automatically lead to a requires improvement judgement. Requirements may still be made where providers are judged to be good.
48. Figure 1 below shows the interfaces between the new quality standards and the Ofsted inspection framework. In addition to the quality standards there are management and administrative regulations that we will also take into account when making judgements, taking statutory enforcement action and setting requirements.²⁰

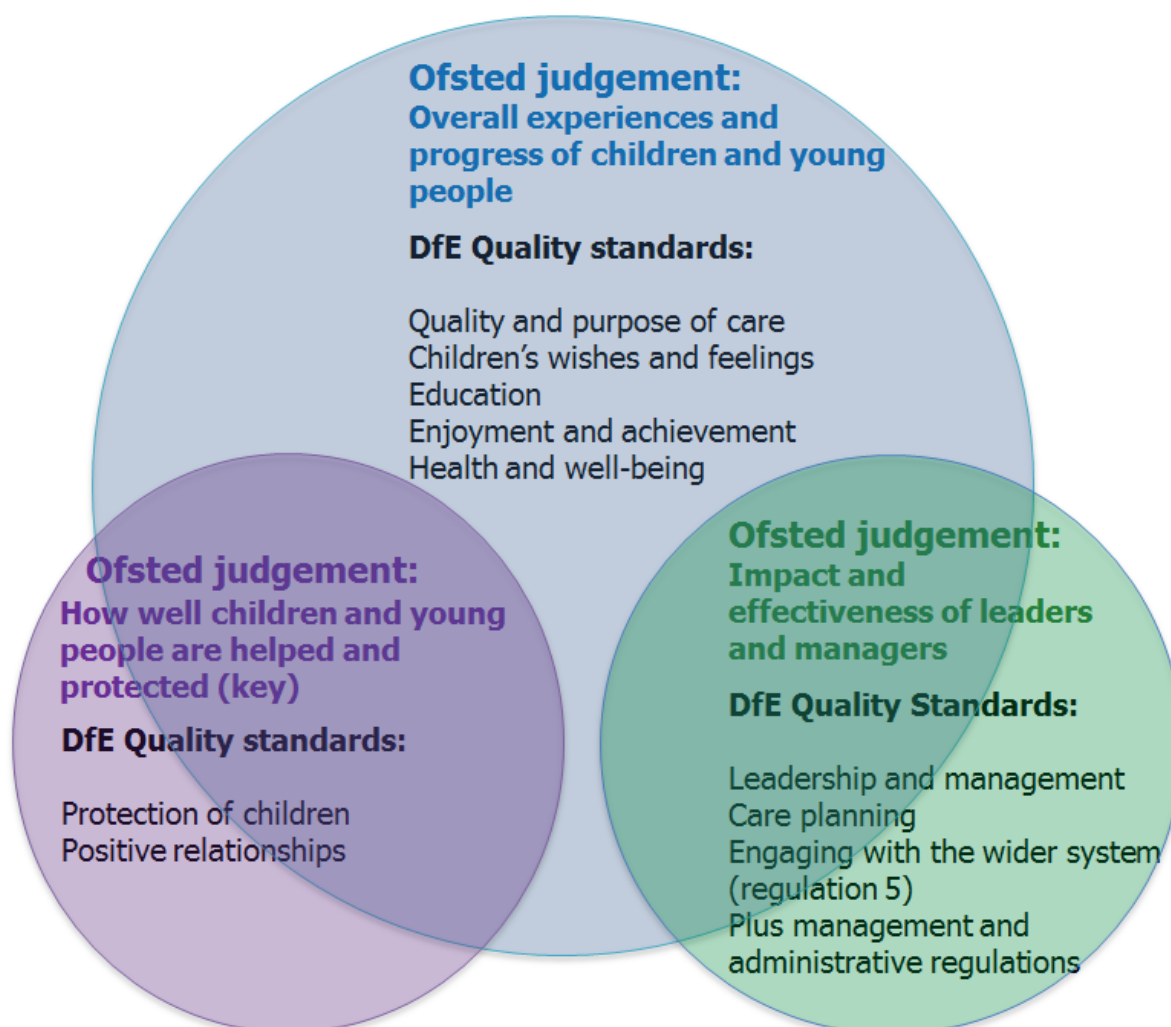
¹⁸ Secure children’s homes must also comply with mandatory measures imposed by criminal justice legislation such as sentence planning requirements for children under the supervision of youth justice services. They may also have additional conditions imposed by the DfE as part of their approval as a secure home.

¹⁹ *Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards*, DfE, 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide. This Guide is made under section 23 of the Care Standards Act 2000. Providers are required to take this guide into account and Ofsted is required to take this guide into account when making decisions under the Care Standards Act 2000.

²⁰ The Children’s Homes (England) Regulations 2015; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents.

49. We will use recommendations to indicate where practice can improve. These will always be related to the Guide.

Figure 1: The relationship between the regulations, quality standards and the inspection framework for children’s homes



The management and administrative regulations are those regulations that are not ‘quality standards’.

The grade criteria for each inspection judgement

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home

50. Ofsted considers it very important that children and young people make progress from their starting points, however slight, and that living in a children’s home is a positive experience. Inspectors will make the ‘help and protection’ and ‘leaders and managers’ judgements first so that they can take these into account in arriving at the ‘overall experiences and progress’ judgement. Children and young people’s experiences and the progress that they make are, in part, a result of how well they are helped and protected and

how effective the leaders and managers in the home are at running the home. The judgement structure reflects this, bringing together the impact of these different elements into the overall judgement for the home.

51. The 'overall experiences and progress' judgement takes account of: the judgement on help and protection and the judgement on the effectiveness of leaders and managers, and:
- the quality of individualised care provided and the influence and impact of the home on the progress and experiences of children and young people
 - the quality of relationships between staff and the children and young people
 - the progress children and young people make in relation to their health, education, emotional, social and psychological well-being
 - how well children and young people's views are understood and taken into account and how their rights and entitlements are met including the impact of delegated authority
 - the quality of children and young people's experiences on a day-to-day basis
 - how well children and young people are prepared for their futures and how well transitions are managed
 - how the home takes account of the particular needs of children and young people that live a long way from home.
52. The inspector will report on each of the areas in paragraph 51 unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so.

Good

53. A home is likely to be judged good for overall progress and experience if the following apply:
- a) Children and young people are encouraged and supported to build trusted and secure relationships with adults working at the home. They live in stable environments with consistency in their lives. Staff, who know the children well, listen to them, invest time with them on a daily basis, protect them and promote their welfare. They are interested in and listen to their day-to-day experiences, especially when they return home from school or when they have spent time with their friends or family. Children and young people are able to develop an appropriate sense of permanence and belonging.
 - b) Children and young people, including those who cannot communicate verbally, are supported to actively participate in day-to-day and more

complex decisions about their lives, as appropriate.²¹ They are sensitively helped to understand where it may not be possible to act on their wishes and where other action is taken that is in their best interests. They are helped to understand how the home works and what the adults working there will do to help them, taking into account their age and level of understanding.

- c) Children and young people understand how to talk about what is difficult and they know who they can turn to and how to complain. The complaints policy is understandable, accessible and child-focused. Children and young people have access to and are actively encouraged to involve an advocate and independent visitor. They understand what has happened because of their complaint. Their complaints are treated seriously and result in a clear response. Urgent action is taken and practice and/or services improve accordingly.
- d) Children and young people attend school or other educational provision; they are learning and making good progress.²² Those who do not attend school have access to at least 25 hours per week of good-quality registered alternative provision. When this is not the case, staff actively challenge the local authority on behalf of young people and ensure that they are provided with meaningful and considered alternatives. Staff make links with the virtual school head. Children and young people receive good support from the home to attend school. Staff know how well children and young people are achieving at school and the levels of progress they should be making. Staff are ambitious for children and liaise effectively with the school. They take appropriate action where progress is not satisfactory or school is becoming difficult. They support the completion of homework (including helping where needed) and attend school events as appropriate, such as parents' evenings (if they do not attend they are sure that someone is attending on the young person's behalf). Where they do attend parents' evenings, they are sensitive to the experiences of children who are looked after and try to ensure that children and young people do not feel like they are treated differently. Children and young people have access to the equipment they need to assist their learning such as books, laptops and desks. They can study in a quiet space in the home with access to the internet.
- e) Children and young people enjoy access to a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities in and outside the home.²³ They are actively and positively involved in activities in the local community. They are able to participate in after-school activities, community-based activities and school trips and holidays. They are supported to engage in

²¹ Such as encouraged and supported to make decisions about the décor of the home and being encouraged to decorate and personalise their bedrooms and other areas of the home.

²² Including, for older children, engagement in employment and training.

²³ Taking into account the restriction for children and young people living in secure accommodation.

faith-based activities if they wish. They are able to see their friends and have their friends visit them where they live.

- f) Children and young people develop the skills and confidence they need to successfully manage their lives as adults. Experiences will vary depending on children's starting points but could include developing self-care skills, learning to budget, having a part-time job, learning to cook, learning to swim, learning to drive and learning to manage safe relationships. They are supported to develop their independence while protecting themselves from being in unsafe situations or with unsafe people. Independence is promoted and planned in accordance with the needs and maturity of each child. The home challenges the local authority when they have concerns about the future plans for the young person, including the timing of leaving care.
- g) Children and young people are in good health or are being helped to improve their health or to manage lifelong conditions.²⁴ Their health needs (including their sexual health needs, when this is appropriate for their age and understanding) are identified. They have access to local health services when they need them. Arrangements for managing medication are safe and effective and promote independence wherever possible. Managers and staff develop effective relationships with health professionals to promote good health.
- h) Specialist help is made available according to the individual needs of children and young people and in line with the guarantees set out in the statement of purpose.²⁵ The help is available as soon as it is needed, at the intensity required and for as long as it is required. Where services are not available, or children are waiting for a long time for help, the home is proactive in challenging and escalating concerns with the placing authority and/or other partners.
- i) Any specific type of care delivered or commissioned by the home is delivered by staff who are suitably trained, experienced, qualified and supervised. There is evidence of benefits to children and young people and the care is reviewed regularly.
- j) Children and young people who receive short breaks are making progress in their development and acquiring skills and/or new experiences because of the quality of the service. They are able to enjoy relationships with their peers and a wide range of stimulating opportunities to promote their development.

²⁴ This includes emotional and physical health.

²⁵ Specialist help includes child and adolescent mental health provision, therapeutic help, youth services, voluntary sector services and other services specially designed for disabled children and/or children with special educational needs.

- k) Children and young people who are new to the home are welcomed sensitively and with careful and considered planning. Where children and young people are leaving the home, transitional work addresses their need to understand why change is happening, promotes positive endings and helps with building their 'life story'. When endings are unplanned, then the welfare and well-being of the child remain paramount and staff act at all times with this in mind. The needs and feelings of other children and young people living in the home are taken into account.
- l) Children and young people develop skills and strategies to manage their own conflicts and difficult feelings through developing positive relationships with the staff. There are clear, consistent and appropriate boundaries for children and young people. Adults understand how children's experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour. They are able to be clear with children and young people about the consequences of difficult and unsafe behaviour and the help and support they may need. Children and young people report that adults are consistent and clear about the management of all behaviour and expectations.
- m) Children and young people are treated with dignity and respect. They experience care that is sensitive and responsive to their identity and family history including age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation. The care helps them to develop a positive self-view and an ability to form and sustain attachments and build emotional resilience and a sense of their own identity. It also helps them to overcome any previous experiences of neglect and trauma.
- n) Staff place the well-being of individual children and young people at the centre of their practice, irrespective of the challenges they may present. All their achievements are celebrated and appropriately rewarded. Staff meet their day-to-day needs for routine, privacy, personal space, nutritious meals, enjoyable mealtimes and a safe and secure attachment with an adult who knows them well.
- o) Children and young people have appropriate, carefully assessed and supported contact with their family and friends and other people who are important to them. Relationships with friends are nurtured and supported and there are no unnecessary restrictions in place. Staff recognise how contact arrangements, including those of other children living in the home, may impact on both individual well-being and on group living. They offer appropriate support. Staff work proactively and positively with parents and former carers to promote meaningful and safe contact and continuity of care, where appropriate.

Requires improvement²⁶

54. The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to require improvement when the home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. The weaknesses identified need to be addressed to fully support children and young people's progress and experience and to mitigate risk in the medium and long term. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate

55. The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged inadequate if there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

Outstanding

56. The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged outstanding if the following apply:
- (a) In addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence that professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children and young people even where children and young people have complex or challenging needs. There is significant evidence of change and improvement for children and young people because of the actions of the staff working at the home. The progress of children and young people is exceptional, taking into account their starting points. The experience of living in the home enhances their life chances. For children and young people with the most complex needs, staff are able to evidence the sustained benefit they have had in making a difference to the lives of children and young people in their care. There are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of wider dissemination.
 - (b) Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children and young people.
 - (c) In short break services, exceptional consistent care adds considerably to children and young people's experiences, progress and development. This is achieved through the provision of a wide range of additional experiences and care, including interaction with their peers, opportunities

²⁶ Refer to paragraphs 39 to 41 for an explanation of 'best fit'.

to develop their independence and being able to participate in local community provision.

How well children and young people are helped and protected (key judgement)

57. This judgement takes account of:

- how well risks are identified, understood and managed and whether the support and care provided help children and young people to become increasingly safe
- the response to children that may go missing or may be at risk of exploitation or self-harm
- how well situations and behaviour are managed by staff and whether clear and consistent boundaries contribute to a feeling of well-being and security for children and young people.

58. The inspector will report on each of the areas in paragraph 57 unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so.

Good

59. A home is likely to be judged good if the following apply:

- (a) Children and young people live in a safe environment and become increasingly safe because of the actions staff take to support and protect them. They feel protected and are protected from harm, including neglect, abuse, sexual exploitation, accidents, self-harm, bullying and radicalisation. There is a strong, robust and proactive response from all those working with children and young people that reduces the risk of harm or actual harm to them. That response includes regular and effective contact and planning with the child's allocated social worker and their family, if this is appropriate and in accordance with plans for their future.
- (b) Children and young people can identify a trusted adult they can talk to about any concerns.²⁷ They report that adults listen to them, take their concerns seriously and respond appropriately.
- (c) Any risks associated with children and young people offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, self-harming, going missing or being sexually exploited are known and understood by the adults who care for them. There are plans and help in place that are reducing the risk of harm or actual harm and there is evidence that these risks are being minimised. Children and young people's behaviour is not unnecessarily criminalised. Careful, child-centred decision-making is made about reporting behaviour within the

²⁷ This may be evidenced differently for those children who have complex social and communication needs.

home to the police and placing authorities, though appropriate notifications are always made and clearly documented. Any risks are kept under regular review and there is effective liaison with the placing authority and other agencies such as the police, the host authority, school and family where appropriate.²⁸

- (d) Children and young people who go missing from the home experience well-coordinated responses that reduce the harm or risk of harm to them. Risks are well understood and minimised. There is a clear plan of urgent action in place to protect them and to reduce the risk of harm or further harm. The home is aware of, and implements in full, the requirements of the statutory guidance for children and young people who are missing.²⁹ They challenge the local authority where an independent return home interview is not offered or arranged by the local authority. The home responds to children and young people who are absent without authorisation as well as children and young people who are missing. They take appropriate steps to escalate concerns, including with the placing and host local authorities and the child or young person's allocated social worker and the police. Parents and carers are made aware of incidents where the child has been or is missing where this is appropriate and relevant to the plans for that child or young person's future care. Staff look for children when they are missing. They try to understand why the child or young person has been missing and use this information to inform the plans and action for that young person. Incidents of missing children and the associated risks are clearly reducing. Where incidents are not yet reducing, the home has a clear plan in place to reduce risk and keep children safe.
- (e) When children and young people are new at the home, staff plan well and anticipate issues, taking into account any known vulnerabilities the child or young person may have. They learn quickly from the experiences of the child or young person, and respond quickly to this learning. Children and young people are protected and helped to keep themselves safe from bullying, homophobic behaviour, racism, sexism, radicalisation and other forms of discrimination. Any discriminatory behaviours are challenged and help and support is given to children and young people about how to treat others with respect.
- (f) Clear assessments of children's needs support them to take age-appropriate risks that are discussed and considered with key workers, placing social workers and children themselves.

²⁸ It is recognised that, while children are recovering from abuse and trauma, their patterns of behaviour may change including placing themselves at increased other risks. It is expected that staff recognise and understand these patterns of behaviour and take appropriate steps.

²⁹ 'Statutory guidance for children who run away or go missing from home or care', Department for Education, 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care.

- (g) In secure children's homes, young people are not separated from their peers as a means of punishment or solely because they are unwilling or unable to participate in activities.³⁰ Young people are only separated from their peers if it is properly assessed that their immediate safety, or the safety of others, is at risk. Young people are made fully aware of the reasons for the separation and, when it is over, are given the opportunity to discuss incidents with a suitable member of staff. Recording explains clearly the reasons for the separation and includes the views of the young person involved. When used appropriately, separation from their peers has a positive impact on young people's behaviour.
- (h) Children and young people feel secure living at the home and receive help and support to manage their behaviour and feelings safely. Staff respond with clear boundaries about what is safe and acceptable and they seek to understand the triggers for behaviour. They develop effective responses as a team and they review those responses regularly to establish whether they are effective, taking into account the views and experiences of the young person.
- (i) Positive behaviour is consistently promoted. Staff use effective de-escalation techniques and creative alternative strategies that are specific to the needs of each child or young person and designed in consultation with them where possible. Restraint is used only in strict accordance with the legislative framework to protect the child or young person and those around them.³¹ All incidents are reviewed, recorded and monitored and the views of the child or young person are sought and understood. Monitoring of the management of behaviour is effective, and the use of any restraint reduces or ceases over time. Where incidents of restraint increase, staff have a good understanding of the underlying reasons for the change. They keep the situation under close review, in accordance with the social worker from the placing authority and the child's parents where that is in the child's best interests.
- (j) Conflict management is effective and includes the appropriate use of restorative practices that improve relationships within the home, increase young people's sense of personal responsibility and reduce the need for formal police intervention.
- (k) Proactive and effective working relationships with the police help to support and protect children and young people. Staff work with the police to protect the children and young people living in the home from any unnecessary involvement in the criminal justice system.

³⁰ This is 'single separation' as set out in the *Independent review of restraint in juvenile secure settings*, DfE, 2008. These principles apply where children and young people are kept separately from the group but accompanied by staff.

³¹ As set out in regulation 20 of The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents.

- (l) Staff understand the risks that use of the internet may pose for children and young people, such as bullying, grooming or abuse. They have well-developed strategies in place to keep children and young people safe and to support them in learning how to keep themselves safe. Leaders oversee the safe use of electronic and social media and take action immediately if they are concerned about bullying or unsafe behaviours.
- (m) Any searches of young people, their rooms and possessions are carried out sensitively by appropriately trained staff with due consideration given to their need to feel safe and to have their dignity and needs respected. All searches are appropriately recorded, including the reasons for the search, efforts to seek the young person's consent, any risk assessment and management oversight of the decision to undertake a search.
- (n) Staff and volunteers working with children and young people are carefully selected and vetted and monitored on a regular and on-going basis. Monitoring prevents unsuitable people from being recruited and having the opportunity to harm children and young people or to place them at risk. The relevant authorities are informed of any concerns about inappropriate adults.
- (o) Staff working within the setting are clear about procedures for concerns about the safety of a child or young person. Any child protection concerns are immediately shared with the placing and/or host local authority as required and a record of that referral is retained. There is evidence that staff follow up the outcome of the referral quickly and that appropriate action has been taken to protect the child or young person from further harm. Where staff are not satisfied with the response from either the local authority where the home is situated or the placing authority, they escalate their concerns by writing to the Director of Children's Services in the local authority placing the child. A record of that correspondence is retained for inspection.
- (p) Investigations into allegations or suspicion of harm are shared with the appropriate agencies and are handled fairly, quickly and in accordance with statutory guidance.³² Children and young people are supported and protected. Support is given both to the person making the allegation and the person who is the subject of the allegation.
- (q) The home has effective links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board, the local authority where the home is located and particularly with the LADO and/or equivalent. There is regular communication about safeguarding issues, for example any injuries sustained during restraint or allegations against staff. The home has good relationships with relevant

³² 'Working together to safeguard children', Department for Education, 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2.

local voluntary sector organisations that may be able to offer specialist support to children and young people in keeping themselves safe.

- (r) The physical environment for children and young people is safe, secure and protects them from harm or the risk of harm.

Requires improvement

- 60. The help and protection offered to children and young people is likely to require improvement if children and young people are not yet receiving good help and protection, but there are no serious failures leave them either being harmed or at risk of harm.

Inadequate

- 61. The help and protection offered to children and young people is likely to be inadequate if there are serious and/or widespread failures that leave children and young people being harmed, at risk of harm or with their welfare not being safeguarded.

Outstanding

- 62. The help and protection offered to children and young people is likely to be judged outstanding if the following apply:
 - (a) The home consistently exceeds the requirements of a good judgement in the care of all children and young people. Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the lives of children and young people. Highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the home. Where children and young people are new to the home, any risks are well understood and are significantly reducing. Proactive and creative safeguarding practice means that all children and young people, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being and they are unlikely to be missing from the home on a regular basis. Children and young people are involved in creating ways to de-escalate situations and finding creative alternative strategies that are effective.
 - (b) Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children and young people.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

- 63. This judgement takes account of:
 - how well leaders and managers prioritise the needs of children and young people

- the extent to which children and young people continually make progress from their starting points across all aspects of their development,³³ as leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the progress children and young people are making in respect of the plan for them
- whether they provide the right supportive environment for staff through effective supervision and appraisal and high quality induction and training programmes, tailored to the specific needs of the children and young people living in the home
- how well they know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home, prevent shortfalls and identify weaknesses and take decisive and effective action
- whether the home is achieving its aims and objectives as set out in its statement of purpose
- the quality of professional relationships between the home, families, placing and host authorities, independent reviewing officers, police, schools and health services to ensure the best possible all-round support to children and young people in all areas of their development
- whether leaders and managers actively challenge when the responses from other services are not effective.

64. The inspector will report on each of the areas in paragraph 63 unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so.

Good

65. The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged to be good if the following apply:
- (a) The home is effectively and efficiently managed by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager.
 - (b) The home is properly staffed and resourced to meet the needs of the children and young people living there. The staff team is stable, suitably vetted, qualified and competent to deliver high quality services to children and young people and their families.
 - (c) Leaders and managers actively and regularly monitor the quality of care provided.³⁴ Leaders and managers use learning from practice and feedback to improve the experiences and care of children and young people; for example direct testimony from children, young people, parents, carers, other professionals and stakeholders in contact with the home. They learn from complaints, staff feedback, placement successes and breakdowns, and any serious events. They identify strengths and

³³ Recognising the impact of trauma, abuse and disability on actual or potential progress.

³⁴ Including through regular monitoring as required by regulation.

areas for improvement, have clear development plans that are implemented and they take action to continually improve the experiences and care of children and young people. Robust action is taken to address all issues of concern arising in the home, including any concerns or complaints from young people and local residents. Proper investigations are undertaken. Placing and host authorities are engaged as necessary. The requirements from the previous inspection are met in full.

- (d) Leaders and managers take steps to ensure that care plans for individual children and young people comprehensively address their needs and experiences, including their hopes for the future. The manager, staff and the children and young people themselves participate in reviews, influencing decisions appropriately. Leader and staff champion children's needs.
- (e) Leaders and staff work proactively and positively with other agencies and professionals. They seek to build effective working relationships with parents and social workers from placing authorities and with the local authority where they are located to secure positive outcomes for children and young people.³⁵ They work effectively with independent reviewing officers, education settings, the head of the virtual school, health agencies, the police, youth offending teams and voluntary sector agencies (where relevant) to secure positive outcomes for children and young people. In short break services, they work well with parents or carers and other professionals to ensure continuity of care.
- (f) In short break services, there are effective relationships with parents or carers so that they feel confident leaving their child for their stay and they understand what the service can offer. Parents feel involved in the running of the service and they are able to raise concerns and complaints. Staff are accessible and keep parents informed about their child's stay at the home.
- (g) Leaders and staff work proactively with the local community, including neighbours, faith groups, leisure organisations and local businesses to support children and young people to use the facilities and to develop a sense of belonging, security and purpose.
- (h) Where children and young people are not making progress or settling into the home, leaders and managers take steps to ensure that the plan is reviewed with the placing authority and the family (where this is appropriate) to consider the best steps to take next. They effectively challenge and take action when they are concerned that placing authorities are not making decisions that are in children's best interests,

³⁵ The nature and extent of the relationships will vary depending on the legal status of the children and young people, the future plans for the children and the relationships they have with their parents including the contact arrangements that are in place.

when the statutory requirements for looked after children are not met, or when they cannot keep children and young people safe. They effectively challenge and escalate any concerns about partners or services to ensure that children and young people receive the support they need.

- (i) Leaders and managers understand the plans for the children and young people and actively drive the achievement of important milestones, goals and permanence for their futures. Leaders and managers monitor the progress that individual children and young people make and can demonstrate the positive impact that living at the home has had on individual children and young people, including on their life chances.
- (j) Managers and staff receive regular and effective supervision that is focused on children and young people's experiences, needs, plans and feedback. Supervision is recorded. There is effective support and challenge, including through team and management meetings, to ensure that the professional development of staff and leaders results in the right environment for good practice to thrive. The emotional impact on staff of the work is recognised and managed well by leaders and managers.
- (k) Training and development activities are effective. They are focused on ensuring that staff can meet the specific needs of the children and young people that live in the home and are evaluated to ensure that they lead to effective practice. Leaders, managers and staff are up to date with current practice in their specialist area. Induction programmes are robust and help new staff to acquire the specific skills and knowledge they need to work with the children and young people.
- (l) The registered person has in place effective succession plans so that the staff group is stable, consistent and qualified to care for and meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people. Recruitment and appraisals are robust and involve children appropriately.
- (m) Staff are able to meet the individual needs of children and young people through trusted relationships. They work together as an effective staff team to provide consistency and stability. Conflict is safely managed so that all children and young people are protected. The staff team work collaboratively to provide consistency and stability. There are clear responsibilities and accountabilities and the staff team have a sense of shared ownership about their practice. Staff work together to address difficult and challenging issues and develop a consistent and shared approach. Staff report that they are well led and managed and there is other evidence to support that this is the case.
- (n) Leaders and managers make child-centred decisions about children coming to live at the home. They give priority to the safety and stability of the group environment and new admissions take account of all the needs of children and young people living there, including the likely impact of

new children and young people joining the group. There are effective plans in place to ensure good transitions for children and young people moving in or out of the home.

- (o) The statement of purpose, which is kept under review, clearly sets out the ethos and objectives of the home. The manager and responsible individual ensure that the physical environment is maintained to a high standard, meets the needs of the children and young people and is sufficiently resourced. The home feels and looks like a family home for children and young people and any damage or wear and tear is quickly and regularly repaired.³⁶ There is evidence that the registered provider is financially viable and so can deliver high quality stable care for children and young people.
- (p) Case records reflect children's everyday lives and the work that is undertaken with children and young people. They reflect their achievements and clearly relate to the plans for their futures. The style and clarity of records enhances the understanding that children and young people have about their histories, background and experiences. The records are available to children and young people with the support of their keyworkers when they wish to see or contribute to them.
- (q) Volunteers who work with children and young people living in the home are trained, supervised and supported to undertake their roles appropriately and to provide a high quality service that enhances the experiences of children and young people.
- (r) All significant events relating to the welfare and protection of children and young people living in the home are notified by the registered person to the appropriate authorities. Necessary action is taken following the incident to ensure that the child or young person's needs are met and that they are safe and protected.
- (s) Leaders and managers regularly review and act on any known risks to children and young people, taking advice and guidance from local partners and agencies.

Requires improvement

- 66. The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers are likely to require improvement if the characteristics of good leadership and management are not in place. Where there are weaknesses in practice, leaders and managers have identified the issues and have plans in place to address them or they are less serious and there is capacity to take the necessary action.

³⁶ We recognise that some children need specialist environments and/or medical equipment. It is expected that any specialist adaptations are sensitively installed and the design of the home is not institutionalised while meeting the specific needs of the children and young people who live there.

Inadequate

67. The judgement on the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers will be inadequate if:
- there has been no registered manager for more than 26 weeks and/or
 - the progress, experiences, care or protection of children and young people are inadequate and leaders and managers have not been able to demonstrate sufficient understanding of those failures or the action they have taken. They do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the home and have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements. The home fails to work effectively in partnership with others in the best interests of children and young people.

Outstanding

68. The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers are likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence that leaders and managers are inspirational, confident, ambitious for children and young people and influential in changing the lives of those in their care. They create a culture of high aspiration and positivity and they have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children and young people they are responsible for. They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children and young people. They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period. Professional relationships between the home, partner agencies and schools ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children and young people.

Our approach to homes judged to be inadequate

69. Any judgement of inadequate for the overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home at an inspection of a children's home will lead to an urgent case review. There will also be an urgent case review where the issues identified at an interim inspection give sufficient cause for concern.
70. The case review will consider whether statutory enforcement action is required in relation to the establishment or agency and, where there is a registered manager, the registered manager. The case review will consider all the enforcement options available. The social care compliance handbook contains

detailed information about the enforcement options available and the arrangements for following up enforcement activity.³⁷

71. The timing and nature of subsequent inspection and monitoring visits following a judgement of inadequate will be determined through the oversight of improvement on a case-by-case basis. We will always return to undertake some inspection activity within six to eight weeks to ensure that children are safe. This will be either a monitoring visit or a full inspection. Where concerns are serious, we are likely to return to undertake a monitoring visit to check that the manager and responsible person have taken sufficient steps to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people living in the home. Any monitoring visit will result in a published report.
72. An inspection visit will take place sooner if any further significant concerns arise during this period, or if an earlier inspection is necessary to make statutory requirements to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people.
73. All inadequacy is serious and requires immediate action to be taken. However, in some cases, the inadequacy will derive from fire risks, health and safety hazards or other environmental factors. While serious and high risk for children and young people, these can be quickly rectified in many instances. Inspectors will always seek to understand how and why such serious inadequacy has occurred.
74. Where the concerns are serious but likely to be rectified relatively quickly, we may in specific circumstances be satisfied at the monitoring visit that the situation has been made safe for children and young people. We will seek assurance that leaders and managers can and are acting appropriately in respect of their responsibilities. All requirements that have been made will have had to be met in full. In these instances, the inspector may determine that an improved inspection judgement can be awarded. If this is the case, the monitoring visit will result in a new inspection judgement.
75. Where the situation has not sufficiently improved, the inadequate judgement will remain, a report of the monitoring visit will be published with the original judgement and we will decide what steps to take next.
76. We will consider new inspection judgements in circumstances where:
 - the regulatory inspection manager agrees that the concerns are sufficiently discrete (see examples in paragraph 70)
 - without these very specific concerns, the home would have achieved a higher inspection judgement

³⁷ 'Compliance, investigation and enforcement handbook', Ofsted, 2014;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/compliance-investigation-and-enforcement-handbook-childcare.

- the home has a previous good track record of addressing concerns and issues and there are no concerns about the leadership and management of the home or the protection of children and young people
 - the nature of the concerns means they can be rectified quickly.
77. Therefore, where we have followed up an inadequate judgement with a monitoring visit, the outcome may be to:
- carry out further monitoring and take steps towards cancellation
 - schedule a full inspection (usually within 16 weeks from the original inspection), which may either support our steps to cancel or give the home the opportunity to demonstrate improvement and secure an improved inspection judgement
 - consider whether the monitoring visit provides sufficient evidence to secure an improved inspection judgement.
78. We think that these changes enable inspectors to act proportionately and with rigour in the best interests of children and young people.

Reporting findings at full inspections

79. Each full inspection is followed by a single report that sets out the inspection findings using text and grades, organised under the headings below.
80. All published inspection reports will include the name and address of the registered provider and the name of the responsible individual where the registered provider is an organisation and this does not identify the location of the home.

Report contents

Service information	Brief contextual information about the service
Previous inspection	The last inspection judgement
Enforcement activity since the last inspection	A brief summary of any enforcement activity we have taken since the last inspection
Inspection judgements	Grades for all judgements
Summary of findings	A summary of the report
Areas for improvement	No grade
Information about the children's home	Summary of information about the service provided
Recent inspection history	Inspection judgements from recent years
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Grade

How well children and young people are helped and protected	Grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Grade
What the inspection judgements mean	Information about the judgements
Information about this inspection	Information about the legal basis for the inspection

81. The full inspection report is sent to the registered provider for a factual accuracy check, usually within 10 working days of the end of the inspection.
82. The registered provider or representatives must return the full inspection report with any comments on factual accuracy within five working days. The final report will be published on the Ofsted website, usually within 25 working days of the end of the inspection (irrespective of appeals or complaints).

Interim inspections

Grading interim inspection findings

83. For interim inspections, inspectors make their judgements using a three-point scale. This inspection will focus on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.
84. Interim inspections will focus on the following key areas:
 - an evaluation of the progress and experiences of children and young people since the last inspection and the difference the home is making:
 - where young people have left the home since the last inspection, inspectors must focus on the reasons the young person has left (well-planned and facilitated move or placement breakdown) and the contribution the manager, keyworkers and staff have made to the plans for their future
 - where young people are newly resident in the home or the service is a short break service, the inspector must assess the quality of the planning and transition work, the knowledge and understanding of the needs of the young person, the arrangements to work directly with children and young people to help them, and the ability of the staff to meet those needs effectively. Inspectors will take into account the views of children and young people
 - the effectiveness of leaders and managers in monitoring the quality of care and professional practice that children and young people receive, their ability to identify where improvement can and should happen and,

where they prioritise areas for development, the effectiveness and impact of their improvements

- an overview of the experiences of children and young people since the last inspection, including significant incidents, notifications, complaints and incidents of restraint. Inspectors must assess whether children and young people are protected, how well staff and managers have responded and how well they have used opportunities for learning to improve the experiences for children and young people
 - how well the manager and staff have worked in partnership with others to support the progress of and improve the experiences of children and young people
 - the home's response to the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection.
85. The inspector will report on each of the areas in paragraph 84 unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so.
86. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine whether the home's effectiveness has improved, been sustained or declined since the last inspection.
87. In arriving at their judgements, inspectors will use their professional judgement to evaluate the evidence across the three key areas, taking into account the nature of the service, the length of time since the last inspection, the outcome of the last inspection and any serious incidents.
88. Where inspectors judge that the practice of the provider has declined in effectiveness, while there may be evidence of some improvement, the judgement in such a case would be based on the overall experiences and progress of children and young people and the extent to which the staff and managers continue to be effective. Where the post of registered manager has been vacant for more than 26 weeks, this is likely to lead to a judgement that the children's home has declined in its effectiveness.
89. Where the home has declined in effectiveness, the inspector and a regulatory inspection manager will consider whether to hold a case review to determine next steps based on the seriousness and impact of the concerns identified.

Reporting findings at interim inspections

90. Each interim inspection is followed by a single report that sets out the inspection findings using text and a grade, organised under the headings below.

Report contents

Service information	Brief contextual information about the service
Previous inspection	The last inspection judgement
Enforcement activity since the last inspection	A brief summary of any enforcement activity we have taken since the last inspection
The judgement at the most recent full inspection and the evaluation of effectiveness at this inspection	Improved, sustained or declined
Recent inspection history	Inspection judgements from recent years
Areas for improvement	No grade
Information about this inspection	Information about the legal basis for the inspection

91. The interim report is sent to the registered provider for a factual accuracy check within 10 working days of the end of the inspection.
92. The registered provider or representatives must return the interim report with any comments on factual accuracy within five working days. The final report will be published on the Ofsted website, usually within 25 days of the end of the inspection (irrespective of appeals or complaints).

Confidentiality

93. We take all appropriate steps to ensure that information given to inspectors remains confidential, as required by law. Although evidence gathered during inspections of children's homes is not subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, any personal data it contains may still be disclosed to relevant individuals under the Data Protection Act 1998. We may also be required to disclose the evidence to other bodies (for example, the Disclosure and Barring Service) under other legislation, and may disclose evidence on a discretionary basis (for example, to the registered person or to provide assistance to another public authority).
94. Where we consider that any information provided indicates the likelihood of harm, we pass the necessary information to the local authority children's services for action.

Quality assurance

95. Quality assurance is the action that we take to ensure that an inspection is of the quality needed and expected by users, providers and Ofsted. We will ensure that inspectors are suitably experienced in the areas they are inspecting and

that quality assurance managers are suitably experienced and skilled to undertake this type of work.

96. The inspector is responsible for ensuring that all the evidence gathered is robust, reliable and secure.
97. We ask the manager of the children's home to complete a short evaluation form following each inspection, which is used to improve the quality of inspections.
98. For national consistency, some inspections include a manager whose role is to quality assure the inspection process. During these visits, the manager speaks to the inspector, managers and other staff, and, where possible, service users. S/he always seeks the views of staff at the children's home on the conduct of the inspection and samples the way that evidence is being gathered and used.
99. All inspection reports are subject to quality assurance procedures. These may result in changes to provisional judgements. Where the quality assurance process results in a change to the provisional judgement, the inspector will contact the registered manager, explaining the reasons for the change, before the report is sent to them.

Conduct during the inspection

100. Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work, and ensure that everyone they encounter during inspections is treated fairly and with respect. The code of conduct requires inspectors to:
 - evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
 - evaluate provision in line with frameworks, regulations and standards
 - base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
 - have no connection with the provider that could undermine their objectivity
 - report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
 - carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
 - endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
 - act in the best interests and well-being of service users
 - maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
 - respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
 - respond appropriately to reasonable requests
 - take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.

Expectations of providers

101. For inspection and regulation to be productive and beneficial, inspectors and providers must establish and maintain a professional working environment based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct, but we also expect providers to:
- be courteous and professional
 - apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
 - allow inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way
 - allow inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively against the quality standards, regulations and inspection evaluation schedule
 - provide evidence that will enable the inspector to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
 - work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
 - ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises
 - maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspector or the inspection team
 - draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in an appropriate manner
 - respect that inspectors need to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager or registered person.

Complaints

102. The great majority of our work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise during an inspection, they should be raised with the lead inspector as soon as possible during the inspection visit. This provides an opportunity to resolve the matter before the inspection is completed. Providers can contact the inspector's line manager (regulation inspection manager) after an inspection if they have not been able to resolve matters with the individual inspector. Any concerns about the factual accuracy of the findings in the report can be raised after the inspection.
103. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns through these means, a formal complaint can be raised under our complaints procedure:
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure.
104. Complaints can be submitted to us at any stage during an inspection and should be submitted no more than 10 working days after publication of any report or letter. We do not normally withhold publication of an inspection report or withdraw a published inspection report while we investigate complaints.
105. Complainants should send their concerns using the online complaints form:
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure. If

there are special circumstances that prevent the submission of a complaint online, complaints can be sent in writing to:

Ofsted
National Complaints Team
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

More information

106. We hope that you find this document useful in helping you to prepare for your inspection. If you have any queries about your inspection, please discuss them with your lead inspector when they contact you.
107. If you have any other general queries about the inspections of children's homes, please contact socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A. Request for information at a full inspection of a children's home

This document is available to download from Ofsted's website and providers are encouraged to keep this document up-to-date.³⁸

Item no.	Item	Answer
1	Name of children's home	
2	URN of children's home	
3	Name of person completing this form	
4	Date completed	

NB – Unless specified otherwise, all information provided should cover the period since the last full inspection.

1. Information about children

Item no.	Item	Answer
5	Number of children and young people admitted to the home	
6	Number of children and young people that have left the home	
7	Number of incidents of restraint and number of children involved in these incidents	No. of incidents: No. of children:
8	Number of times children went missing ³⁹ and number of children involved (also see question 21)	No. of episodes: No. of children:
9	Number of times children were away ⁴⁰ from placement without authorisation and number of children involved	No. of episodes: No. of children:

³⁸ *Annex A. Request for information at a full inspection of a children's home: form for providers*, Ofsted, 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-childrens-homes-framework

³⁹ Missing from care: a looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (for example school) and their whereabouts is not known.

⁴⁰ Away from placement without authorisation: a looked after child whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.

Item no.	Item	Answer
10	Number of children currently at the home that you consider to be at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE)	No. of children:
11	Number of children currently at the home that you consider to be subject to CSE	No. of children:
12	Number of complaints from children and number of children involved	No. of complaints: No. of children:
13	Number of complaints from others and number of children involved	No. of complaints: No. of children:
14	Number of allegations made against staff and number of children involved	No. of allegations: No. of children: No. of staff:
15	Number of sanctions given and number of children involved	No. of sanctions: No. of children:
16	Number of child protection referrals made to local authority children's services and number of children involved	No. of referrals: No. of children:
17	Number of children that were subject to a deprivation of liberty (DOL) order	

Secure children's homes only		
18	Number of single separations by type:	
18.1	Elected	No. of elected separations: No. of children:
18.2	Directed	No. of directed separations: No. of children:
18.3	Enforced	No. of enforced separations: No. of children:

Short breaks only		
19	Number of children receiving a service at the time of inspection	
20	Number of children who received more than 75 days' care per year since the last full inspection	

21	Return home interviews since the last full inspection. Please include all children who have gone missing at any point since the last full inspection, one child per row.		
Child's initials	Name of placing LA	Number of episodes of going missing	Number of these episodes where a return home interview arranged by the placing LA took place

Please use additional copies of this page if required.

2. Staffing and other information

Item no.	Item	Answer
22.1	Does the registered manager hold a level 5 diploma?	Yes/no:
22.2	Does the registered manager hold a level 4 diploma?	Yes/no:
Note: 'Level 5' = Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare (England). 'Level 4' = Level 4 diploma in leadership and management for care service and health and social care.		
22.3	If no to both 22.1 and 22.2, please state qualification held:	
23	Number of new staff since the last full inspection	
24	Number of staff who have left since the last full inspection	
25	Current staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of permanent staff ■ Number of agency/other staff ■ Number qualified to NVQ 3/Diploma level 3 ■ Number undertaking these qualifications and date they expect to be qualified ■ Number with a first aid qualification ■ Number of auxiliary staff ■ Number of volunteers 	People: FTE: People: FTE: People: FTE: People: FTE: Date(s): People: FTE: People: FTE: People: FTE:
26	For organisations and partnerships, names of the current directors, secretary and other officers of the organisation or names of current partners of the company (please attach details to this form as applicable)	
Name		Role
		Responsible individual Y/N?

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

3. Dates of checks and updates

Item no.	Item	Answer
27	Date statement of purpose was last updated	
28	Date children's guide was last updated	
29	Date of last annual assessment of the location of the home	
30	Name any policies that have been updated since the last full inspection:	
31	Date of last gas installations check	
32	Date of last portable appliance testing (PAT) check	
33	Date of last health and safety risk assessment	
34	Date of last health and safety check of the premises	
35	Date of last fire risk assessment	
36	Date of last fire service visit	
37	Date of last fire drill – day and night	Day: Night:
38	Employers liability insurance – valid until:	

4. Information about children **currently living in the home – placing local authority, educational provision and placement review**

Please list the placing authority, education placement and date of last placement review of all children currently in placement.

Child's initials	Name of placing local authority	Name of educational provision (the main provision if there is more than one).	Planned hours of education per week if less than 25	Actual hours of education per week if less than 25	Date of last placement review	Up-to-date care plan from LA? Yes/no

'Hours of education per week' refers to the most recent full school week – for example, during term time this will generally be the week before inspection.

Please use additional copies of this page if required.

5. Information about children **currently** living in the home – notable achievements since the last full inspection. Anything you would want to tell inspectors about a child’s progress.

Child’s initials	Notable achievements

Please use additional copies of this page if required.

6. Information about children currently living in the home – key people

Please provide contact details of just the **key** people for each child currently on roll. This includes, but only where applicable, social worker, independent reviewing officer, looked after children nurse, missing coordinator for the police, Youth Offending Service/Youth Offending Team workers, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service worker, independent advocate, parents or carers, headteacher and form tutor. NB: this does not need to be an exhaustive list of everyone in the child's life.

Child's initials	Name	Role	Organisation	Office phone number	Mobile number	Email address

Please use additional copies of this page if required.

7. Other key people

Please provide contact details of any other **key** people you would like to bring to our attention.

Name	Role	Organisation	Office phone number	Mobile number	Email address

Please use additional copies of this page if required.

Annex B. Making judgements across the diverse range of homes and provision

Introduction

108. The inspection framework is not intended as a 'one size fits all' model of residential care or inspection. Each home is unique and while all providers have to meet the requirements of regulations and take into account the DfE guide, there will be different ways that these are shown in different homes and for different groups of children and young people. In all homes, inspectors should use their pre-inspection planning time and the set-up meeting at the beginning of the inspection to understand the ethos and approach of each particular home and the therapeutic or research-based approaches used to care for children and young people.
109. This is particularly the case for secure children's homes, short break services, residential special schools registered as children's homes, therapeutic communities, homes providing accommodation to children and young people with specific mental health needs and homes that offer shorter stays to assess children and young people.
110. In all homes, inspectors need to take the purpose of the home into account as this will influence:
- the specific needs of the children and young people who come to live in the home and how these decisions are made
 - the physical environment
 - the nature and extent of progress
 - the type of experiences children and young people can expect to have
 - the training and development needs for staff
 - how as inspectors they are able to understand the views and/or experiences of children and young people
 - the key stakeholders that the inspector may try to contact.
111. Some schools and children's homes adopt a particular way of working or subscribe to a particular model of practice. While it is not expected that inspectors will have a detailed knowledge of all the models/frameworks/approaches to residential care, it is important that they take the home's approach into account when inspecting a service and take opportunities to familiarise themselves with the key principles of a practice model wherever possible. Where a home applies specific social work models, it is reasonable for inspectors to ask staff if they have received training in the particular approach and to explain how the application of the model benefits children and young people. Inspectors should not make judgements about the approach itself but should evaluate its impact on children and young people's

progress and experiences. If an inspector has any concerns about the efficacy or authenticity of a particular approach, they should take advice from their manager.

Secure children's homes

112. During inspections of secure children's homes, inspectors should give careful consideration to:

- the quality and outcomes of education and related learning activities – separate and specific guidance is provided for these aspects of the inspection of secure children's homes⁴¹
- for those young people placed in secure children's homes on justice grounds, the extent to which assessment and sentence planning is consistent with relevant legislation and guidance⁴² and incorporated into the approved assessment and planning tools
- information provided to inspectors by the Youth Justice Board performance monitor
- the effective use and management of CCTV, security doors, locks and fences; escort arrangements to and from the secure children's home; management of movement around the building and outside the secure perimeter, including local emergency services' access to the secure children's home
- how effectively the use of restraint, single separation and searches of children and young people is managed and minimised; practice should take full account of relevant guidance and legislation, including the Youth Justice Board's code of practice for behaviour management⁴³
- how well children and young people's outcomes are promoted through prompt and on-going preparation for reintegration back into their community or a move to another secure setting, including resettlement or discharge planning arrangements
- the timeliness, quality and impact of health services provided for young people, including specialist mental health and substance misuse services.

113. When inspecting secure children's homes, due consideration will be given to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).⁴⁴ All inspections carried out by Ofsted contribute to the UK's response to its international

⁴¹ 'Guidance on inspecting education and related learning activities in secure children's homes' (130201), Ofsted, 2013; www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-childrens-homes-guidance-for-inspectors.

⁴² 'National Standards for Youth Justice Services', Youth Justice Board, 2013; www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-standards-for-youth-justice-services.

⁴³ 'Behaviour management across the secure estate for children and young people', Youth Justice Board, 2006; [http://yjbpublishings.justice.gov.uk/en-gb/Scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=496&eP=.](http://yjbpublishings.justice.gov.uk/en-gb/Scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=496&eP=)

⁴⁴ Convention on the Rights of the Child www.unicef.org/crc/.

obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).⁴⁵ OPCAT requires that all places of detention are visited regularly by independent bodies – known as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) – which monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees.

Short break services for disabled children

114. Inspectors should take the following into close account:

- There is likely to be a greater emphasis on experiences for children and young people than progress, although the service should still be focusing on working with others to support progress where it can. The impact of the home on children and young people's progress is likely to be influenced by the frequency and length of the short break stays. Children and young people should be supported to enjoy experiences that may not be available to them otherwise.
- The quality of introductions to the service and the level of engagement with the family and with other professionals to provide consistent and safe care and minimise disruption in children and young people's lives is critical.
- Parents/carers are likely to hold the central role in relation to many aspects of the care of the young person and so inspectors should place particular emphasis on evaluating the quality of these relationships and how they support the best possible experience for children and young people.
- Particular importance should be placed on the planning of stays; how decisions are made about the groups of children and young people that visit together; how friendships are supported and the experiences that they are offered and how these add to their lives.

Residential special schools also registered as children's homes

115. Inspectors should take pay close attention to the following:

- Larger group care settings may look and feel different to a family home and inspectors will need to evaluate how the organisation of this service meets the needs of the children and young people who live there. Children living in these settings may live within larger groups, spread across a number of sites or houses. For some young people being able to socialise in large groups is an important element of their experience and learning; however, this may not be the desired experience for all young people.

⁴⁵ 'Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment', Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2006
www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPCAT.aspx

Inspectors will need to evaluate how the organisation can meet the needs of all young people placed.

- The building and private and communal areas may need to be adapted to meet the needs of individual children and young people. Inspectors need to take time to understand this and ask for explanations where they are unsure. Equally, inspectors should also feel able to challenge 'custom and practice' to determine that services continually adapt and evolve to meet the needs of children and young people.
- Parents/carers may hold the central role in relation to many aspects of the care of the young person and children and young people will be living in the residential special school (RSS) for differing lengths of stay. This is likely to influence the role that the RSS has in the young person's life. Inspectors should take this into account.
- While attendance at school is much less likely to be an issue, how the home manages transitions from home to school and consistency of care between home and school is very significant and must be considered.
- Educational curriculums may be developed to support young people over a 24-hour period. Inspectors need to understand how opportunities for learning are used to help children and young people progress and feel safe. Structure may be more important for some children and young people and inspectors need to question and challenge the structure that they see so they can evaluate how practice is in the best interests of children and young people.
- As residential special schools offer a 24-hour environment, and can be situated away from communities, external scrutiny and links with the local community are important in supporting children and young people's experience and safeguarding their welfare.
- Particular attention must be given to the arrangements for children to complain, to tell someone they are being bullied and for them to contact their families or a trusted adult away from the school.

Assessment homes/refuges

116. Inspectors should take the following into close account:

- Where a home is a refuge or a home that provides short-term placements there needs to be a greater focus on how well children and young people are welcomed into the home, how they are helped to feel safe and how they are helped to move on to the next stage of their lives.

Where health professionals provide services on-site

117. Inspectors should take the following into account:

- Nursing and health professionals should be registered with the relevant professional body such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council and should be able to demonstrate to Ofsted that this is the case. Nurses are required to undertake specific safeguarding training to comply with their own code of practice. While inspectors are not expected to know the detail of individual codes of practice for health professionals, it is reasonable to ask for evidence of how these requirements are met. If there is any cause for concern, the inspector will require the provider to demonstrate that they meet these requirements.
- Nurses should receive regular clinician supervision from someone professionally qualified to do this. Inspectors will want to know the details of this and how their practice is subject to monitoring and supervision and subject to external professional scrutiny to promote and safeguard the welfare of children and young people. This includes the systems in place for external scrutiny following an injury, particularly if sustained as a result of a physical restraint or possible non-accidental injury or from another child.
- The working hours of nursing and medical staff and the procedures for administration of drugs should meet the individual needs and routines of children.
- The quality of the arrangements for the secondary dispensing of drugs by medical staff, the management of changes of prescribed drugs, the systems in place to audit the drugs held on-site and the procedures in place in the event of mal-administration of medication.