

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	09/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC1227788
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Solent Child Care Ltd
Registered provider address	9 St Georges Yard, Castle Street, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7LW

Responsible individual	Charlotte Tanner
Registered manager	Andrea Dodds
Inspector	Heather Chaplin

Inspection date	09/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC1227788

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Well-trained, experienced staff provide exceptionally good-quality, nurturing care for the young people, who often arrive in crisis and at a turning point in their lives.
- The home provides a wide range of fun, healthy and constructive activities, which provide the young people with an opportunity to expand their experiences and enhance their lives.
- Keeping the young people busy in this way helps them to engage with the staff, and begin to respond to the positive role models that they provide. This has enabled all the young people who have lived in the home to date to make good progress in a short period of time.
- The home is well led and managed by a skilled, experienced and qualified registered manager. She is very well supported by the responsible individual and a very able deputy. Their positive ethos and clear vision for the service ensure that the staff are supported to provide good-quality care for the young people.
- The home's managers make sound decisions, based on robust risk assessments, about the suitability of potential residents. This ensures effective and safe matching.
- The home is well kept, light, clean and comfortable. A quiet, traditional village environment helps to keep the young people safe and secure, in a rural community in which they are valued and supported.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirements	Due date
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to risk assessing each young person in relation to the unrestricted landing window, the registered person must— 12(1) ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a)(i) that staff assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child.	31/08/2016

Recommendations

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

- The information set out in the statement of purpose is an essential part of the process of agreement between the registered person and placing authority that a placement in that home is the right one for that child, and that the home will be able to respond effectively to the child's assessed needs. In particular, ensure that any photograph of the home used in the statement of purpose is an accurate depiction. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This newly registered, privately operated children's home offers care and accommodation for up to two children and young people of either gender who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home's original remit was to specialise in short-term assessments and bridging placements of up to 28 days. Since registration, it has extended its provision so that the young people may, subject to the local authority's plans, stay for longer periods of up to 12 months.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/02/2016	Registration visit	Not applicable

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
This exceptionally child-centred home has only been open for a little over five months, but it has, so far, had a very positive impact on the lives of all the young people who have lived there. External professionals were unanimous in their praise of the home, and those with young people currently in placement confirmed how much progress they had made. The home provides a warm welcome to any new young person arriving for the first time. One of the first things that a new resident will see when they arrive is a colourful display of art work in the dining room. These are paintings, drawings and quotations that the present and previous residents have chosen to do. They are powerful and very positive statements about how the young people feel about the home, the staff and their peers. The home is also full of photos, award certificates and trophies that celebrate the young people's achievements. The service manages the young people's transitions into the home and on to their next placement very effectively. During the inspection, the staff took one young person to meet his new prospective foster carer, and supported him very well at this potentially stressful time. Each young person has a handmade memory book, filled with memorabilia about their stay. Previous residents remember their time at the home fondly, and often keep in touch in order to maintain the warm and nurturing relationships that they made with the staff. The young people said that the staff are 'amazing', 'really good' and that they help them with their difficulties. Staff have helped the young people to achieve some of the targets that they set when they arrived, to develop self-confidence and to learn some useful problem-solving skills. For example, some young people who are frightened of spiders may have to face these animals when they move into independent accommodation. They have now learned how to confront their fears. They explained that they have successfully handled a tarantula, which they bravely described as a lot better than a small spider, because it did not run so fast. They now respond positively and creatively to spiders by giving personal names to any that appear in the house. Other young people explained how they are gradually learning to overcome their fear of the dark by gradually reducing the amount of light in their room at night.	

Some young people are learning to speak to adults differently. They have made really good progress with their manners in a few short weeks, and now say 'please' and 'thank you'. These achievements have been possible because of the young people's own efforts, supported by exceptionally good relationships with adults, clear boundaries and an easily understood system of rewards.

The young people receive regular key-worker sessions to ensure that they can express their views about their care. They are aware of how to raise any concerns with the manager. Some of the young people have chosen to have an advocate to help and support them.

The staff tailor their care to meet the young people's needs; for example, when education in a formal setting is not possible, they have supported a young person in undertaking useful online training courses, and in applying for apprenticeships. Individual endeavour is always encouraged; for example, one young person writes poetry and has almost completed a book about their life in care, and the staff support her to find the time and the facilities to work.

The managers and staff work seamlessly with other professionals to promote consistency and stability for the young people. One young person has had many placement moves, and his social worker and education officer have worked hard with his school to maintain him there because he is doing well and enjoys going. The home has joined in with these plans and staff have transported the young person some distance to school every day. The young person commented that after not wanting to go to school for some years, this stability in his education has been very beneficial for him.

The young people maintain very healthy lifestyles, and enjoy a good and wholesome diet. They can participate in cooking if they wish, and one young person who is approaching independence regularly cooks for the household. The young people receive all the help that they require with their healthcare needs. For example, the staff support them to attend appointments and medication reviews to ensure that any treatment remains appropriate.

The young people can access child and adolescent mental health services if there is an identified need, and they wish to do so. The registered manager is currently looking at additional training and possible sources of professional clinical supervision for the staff team, to provide indirect psychological input to help support the young people's emotional needs.

The quality of the environment is exceptionally good, with comfortably furnished rooms and a peaceful, calm atmosphere. One external professional commented that their young person had not been at all happy about moving to the home, but now did not want to leave.

All the professionals interviewed said that they are very happy with the quality of

the care provided, including the energetic programme of activities that in some cases introduce children to basic life experiences that they have never had, such as going for a walk into the village to feed the ducks, flying a kite, and eating fish and chips on the beach.

The young people who are approaching independence are making good progress. They now have some unsupervised time with friends, and cook enjoyable, well-balanced meals for everyone. The day's menu is artistically displayed on a café-style menu blackboard in the kitchen.

Some of the young people have carefully planned contact with family and friends, if this is in their best interests and agreed by their placing authorities. The staff support contact arrangements when required.

This positive approach to contact helps to ensure that the young people retain important links with people who are important to them, and maintain their identities with their families. Some young people have had friends to stay overnight in the home, which helps them to maintain normal friendships, in the way that any other teenager would.

The single requirement made at this inspection relates to missing risk assessments in relation to an unrestricted window. The recommendation made relates to the photograph used in the home's statement of purpose. The manager had used a picture of a different house in order to protect the home's security. This was remedied during the inspection.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The young people are safe and secure in this home, and are well protected from risk of harm. They live in a quiet, rural location, where the home is very much part of the local community, and there are few external risks to the young people. Young people in this home have a history of going missing from care and in some cases, used to engage in behaviour that exposed them to harmful situations and individuals. Since arriving in the home, the present young people have not gone missing and are learning to keep themselves safe. Some of the young people explained that they used to run away all the time, but have now learned new coping strategies. They would now talk to someone rather than run away, which is a safer and more mature response. The home has a clear policy and practice guidance for staff so that they know what	

to do should a young person go missing in the future. For example, each young person has a 'missing-from-home passport', which contains all the information that the police would need in an urgent situation. The registered manager arranged for the police's missing person coordinator to visit the home and speak with the staff about keeping the young people safe.

The staff are well aware of the benefits and challenges of internet use. They have helped one young person to respond to unwanted attention by blocking an individual who attempted to contact them online. Staff receive training in e-safety and advise the young people on how to manage this for themselves.

The home has a safe system for staff recruitment, which includes taking up references from several previous employers and carrying out a risk assessment routinely on each prospective appointment. References are always verified to ensure that they are genuine, and the staff undergo a robust, formally recorded interview process.

The home has a clear safeguarding policy, and the registered manager ensures that staff receive training in child protection and in child sexual exploitation. This helps to ensure that if there were to be a safeguarding concern, appropriate action would be taken. The registered manager maintains effective links with the police and the local authority designated officer for child protection to ensure effective communication about any safeguarding concerns.

The home is very good at setting clear boundaries and ensuring that all staff adhere to these when advising and supporting the young people. This level of clarity and consistency helps the young people to feel safe and confident in the staff's responses.

Individual behaviour management plans specify which interventions are appropriate to each young person. There have been seven physical interventions since the home opened, involving three former residents. The home uses a recognised method of intervention and all staff have received suitable training to help them to manage more extreme behaviour safely. Physical interventions are well recorded and have always been carried out for appropriate reasons.

Incident reports are completed after any significant event, and there have been a small number of appropriate notifications to Ofsted.

The home's risk assessments are generally of a very good standard, but one omission was found on this occasion. The young people's risk assessments do not include provision for unrestricted windows. Although most upstairs windows are restricted, there is one small window on the first-floor landing where a smaller young person could exit the home, which would result in a long fall to the ground below. There is no suggestion that the present residents are at specific risk from this eventuality, but the home has accommodated younger and smaller children in

the past, and may do so again. A requirement has been made.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The home is very well managed. The responsible individual, registered manager and deputy manager have both passion for their work and ambition for the young people, as well as a clear vision for the future of the service. They are extremely skilled and experienced, and hold relevant qualifications. Both the responsible individual and registered manager have a background in senior management within privately operated children's services, and the deputy has previously been registered to manage another service. This provides an exceptionally strong and mutually supportive management team. Leaders and managers understand the importance of receiving clear and accurate information about each young person prior to admission, and absolutely insist on this. Consequently, the relevant local authority documents for each of the young people are all in place on file to help inform their daily care. Good-quality information and effective impact risk assessments help the managers to make sound judgements about whether young people will be compatible. This means that the home has not, so far, looked after any young people who did not make progress or whose placement had to be concluded prematurely. The young people's file records are constructed in a very child-centred way, so that they provide a comprehensive record of their time at the home. The young people may access their file records if they wish to do so. When the registered manager and responsible individual realised that a particular resident's needs were not going to be met by their proposed moving-on placement, they changed the home's statement of purpose to enable it to accept young people for up to 12 months. This meant that the young person could return to the home, where they will now stay until they leave care. So far, this has worked well, and the young person is very relieved to still be at this home. The home is well monitored, both internally and externally. The registered manager conducts weekly and monthly checks, and is about to produce the home's first Regulation 45 review. The responsible individual, who has previously held quality assurance roles with other services, conducts monthly visits to scrutinise practice. She has identified a small number of areas for improvement, mainly around paperwork requirements, and these were acted upon promptly. The home's Regulation 44 visitor also visits monthly, and his reports provide an objective and	

constructive review of the home's progress.

The home has sufficient staff to fulfil its statement of purpose. The manager is well aware of the vulnerabilities of newly admitted young people, who may well be in crisis at the point of arrival. She provides increased staffing when needed, and gradually reduces the staff, in line with the local authority's plans, as the young person settles down and begins to manage their own behaviour safely.

The staff are well supervised by the registered manager and her very experienced, well-qualified deputy. Staff induction is extremely thorough, with extensive online and face-to-face training in a wide range of subjects relevant to their role. All but one member of staff holds a qualification at level 3. Further staff training is planned, specifically in attachment disorders, to enhance the team's knowledge and understanding of this important area.

The registered persons seek regular feedback from placing authorities and other stakeholders in order to obtain information about the quality of the service. External professionals confirm that they have very positive relationships with the manager and staff at the home. Their comments included: 'I can't speak highly enough of the home', and 'they have been fantastic.'

There has been one notification to Ofsted. It concerned a physical intervention that took place at a young person's school, so it was unconnected with the home itself. This was reported promptly and appropriately.

The home has a well-designed, clear and informative statement of purpose and children's guide that meet current regulatory requirements. A minor amendment was required in the children's guide to the contact information for the children's commissioner. This did not impact on the young people's ability to seek help from this source.

The statement of purpose is on the company's website, and because of this, the registered manager had, with the best of intentions, used a photograph of another house to avoid compromising security. Discussion took place about the need to ensure that any photograph used on such an important document must be accurate, so a recommendation has been made. This was amended immediately after the inspection, and the revised statement of purpose was sent to Ofsted.

The home provides very good-quality, homely and attractive accommodation in a rural setting, on the outskirts of a village. It is easily accessible by road and rail, which facilitates family contact and professional visits.

The home has a well-designed kitchen, and relaxing, comfortable dining area and lounge. The culture of the home is that outdoor shoes are always removed on arrival, which helps to keep the house spotlessly clean. However, it is very homely and has a 'lived-in' feel.

The young people have good-sized, sunny, relaxing and well-furnished bedrooms.

Both young people said how much they like their rooms. There are good practical facilities for the young people, including a utility area for laundry.

The large garden has a trampoline and swing ball for the young people to enjoy. They are encouraged to grow flowers and vegetables, and to join in the sunflower growing competition. This large outdoor space has considerable potential for further development, to enhance the young people's environment.

Although the lawn is mowed fortnightly, period of rapid grass growth has led to it becoming overgrown. This has no impact on the young people, but the manager, who is justifiably very proud of her home, was advised that the care and maintenance of the garden are not to the same exceptionally high standard as that of the house. No recommendation has been made on this occasion.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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