

1241263

Registered provider: Aspire Care And Education Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 July 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: Not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection

Not applicable

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people are making exceptional progress across all areas of their development.
- Young people develop trusting relationships with staff who know them extremely well. As a result, young people feel safe and secure.
- Staff support young people's behaviour in a positive manner. Young people are able to manage their emotions and are beginning to regulate their own behaviour.
- Young people who have complex needs and difficult attachment styles show significant improvements in all aspects of their lives.
- Young people are able to access educational opportunities that meet their needs and which are supported by meaningful activities and experiences provided by staff.
- Highly motivated staff are supported by a passionate and committed manager who leads by example.
- The manager has a remarkable understanding of the needs of the young people and this, coupled with her robust quality assurance system, ensures that young people receive support and care which holistically meets their needs.
- Placing social workers, teachers and parents speak in glowing terms about the quality of care provided to young people and the significant impact that this has had on their development, progress and self-esteem.

The children's home's areas for development:

- There is a lack of individual risk assessments in relation to radicalisation for young people who may be particularly vulnerable due to their activities and interests.
- The statement of purpose does not accurately reflect the admissions and assessment process, and does not include the provision of respite placements.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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This is the first inspection of this service.

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

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take into account the following recommendations:

Recommendations

- Children's home staff should take reasonable precautions and make informed professional judgements based on the individual child's needs and developmental stage about when to allow a child to take a particular risk, or follow a particular course of action.

If a child makes a choice that would place them or another person at significant risk of harm, staff should assist them to understand the risks and manage their risk-taking behaviour to keep themselves and others safe. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.7)

This relates in particular to the assessment of individual risks of radicalisation.

- 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 that child's needs. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Managers and staff are successful in providing a warm and stable environment where young people flourish and make excellent progress in all areas of their lives. They know the young people extremely well and demonstrate an understanding of their anxieties, hopes and ambitions. As a result, managers and staff have developed a deep understanding of young people's behaviour and know how to support, nurture and empower them.

Young people who previously found it difficult to trust others are able to open up and express themselves in a variety of ways. One young person contributed to her own 'Positive Behaviour Support Plan', incorporating triggers for her more concerning behaviour and contributing positively to the strategies for managing this. This resulted in the young person feeling empowered and in control of her own behaviour and led to significant reductions in aggressive outbursts.

Managers and staff are proactive in adopting a creative approach to ensuring that they incorporate the views, wishes and feelings of young people who may have difficulty in expressing themselves, or have limited communication, into the everyday care and service planning. Staff and managers know young people very well and are aware of their likes and dislikes, and utilise this information fully when devising and reviewing the individualised and bespoke care packages offered to young people.

Communication between staff in relation to young people's daily needs and development is robust, ensuring a consistency of approach. This results in young people feeling more secure in the home environment.

Young people are making very good progress in school. One young person attends school at a distance, as continuity of education was important through the period of induction into her new home, and this met her individual needs. However, there are plans in place for education to be provided locally going forward. The young person is on course to attain good GCSE results.

A teacher reported that one young person in his school is making excellent progress, and that this is due to the high standard of consistent and effective care provided by staff in the home. The teacher said that the young person presents as happy and contented and is achieving to the best of his ability.

One social worker described the communications and relationships between staff and school as being excellent, with daily feedback between the two establishments. This allows for constructive sharing of information, a continuation of young people's learning opportunities, consistency of approach in managing young people's behaviour, and reinforced acknowledgment of their successes. The social worker described the quality of communications with herself in relation to the young person's progress as 'exceptionally good.'

Staff and managers have high aspirations for young people. They support young people's education with creative and enjoyable activities and trips, which serve as a

vehicle for strengthening relationships between staff and young people. These activities also provide young people with memorable new experiences and broaden their outlook in terms of positive activities available to them. These activities include water skiing and visits to conventions of particular interest to young people.

Contact with family members is promoted effectively by staff, who have developed positive relationships with parents. Parents are kept informed of young people's progress and are consulted appropriately. One young person has regular contact with his parents, which is facilitated by staff. His parents have fed back that they feel empowered by staff and managers to positively contribute to decision-making in relation to their son's life, and that they feel valued as parents. They have spoken in glowing terms of the impact of the care and the commitment on the part of staff and managers to improve the quality of their son's life and progress. The young person's parents report that their aspirations for their son have increased and that they feel far more positive about his future.

Staff ensure that young people understand exactly what is going to happen in terms of plans and day-to-day routines. This supports young people to feel secure. Detailed care plans outline how each young person's individual needs are to be met, and these are followed closely and reviewed frequently. Young people's specific health needs are understood and staff provide young people with excellent support with all aspects of healthcare. They do this by example, through key-work sessions and through instilling a desire in young people to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Partnership working is of a high standard and is characterised by clear and regular communications between staff and placing social workers. Staff report excellent relationships with social workers who, in turn, value the work undertaken by staff in relation to young people. One social worker confirmed her appreciation of the positive progress made by her young person, in particular the improvements in her educational achievements. The social worker said that staff have worked hard to ensure that the young person is kept safe, and have supported her in gaining a wider understanding of the more risky aspects of her behaviour, and to reduce these. As a result, the social worker's feedback demonstrates that her own aspirations for the young person's future have significantly increased.

Staff and managers ensure that, when young people leave the home, photographs and memories are captured in a printed book, which the young people take with them. This allows young people to reflect on their time in the home in a positive way.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Staff and managers have a detailed understanding of the risks to each young person based on individualised risk assessments, and are able to respond to each young person's specific needs. Appropriate guidance and clear strategies are in place to protect young people from harm. These are reviewed regularly and, where possible, young people contribute to the analysis of their effectiveness.

One social worker said that she feels that staff undertake thorough risk assessments in relation to her young person and keep her fully informed of all events and actions which take place. The social worker said that she is given regular updates and that the staff

and manager's monitoring of her young person is extremely thorough. The social worker stated, 'Staff really know him and understand him, and support him to take very appropriate risks.'

Trusting relationships between staff and young people have significantly reduced the necessity for physical intervention when young people become distressed or anxious. The nature of these relationships also ensures that young people have trusted adults who are able to listen and support them. Young people were seen to approach staff confidently. One young person said, 'I know that I am safe and I feel safe. I know that staff care about what happens to me. They help me to believe in myself and make me feel happier. They help me to understand things which happen in my life. They allow me to participate in activities which are of interest and significance to me and do not remove these as a punishment. They reinforce behaviour which is good or when I manage situations well.'

Staff are vigilant in supervising and monitoring young people when they are together as a group, or on their own in the home. This minimises opportunities for bullying.

Staff and managers are clear about the processes involved and what actions should be taken if a young person makes an allegation about a member of staff. The registered manager has developed a good relationship with the designated officer and seeks advice and guidance as appropriate.

Young people are aware of how to make a complaint should they have any concerns about the quality of their care and relationships with staff. The registered manager is supporting one young person to express her views about the quality of services offered by her placing authority in relation to a historical safeguarding concern. This has resulted in the development of a trusting relationship between the manager and the young person, which provides an additional significant protective factor.

The home is safe and secure, with the providers having due regard for issues of health and safety, yet maintaining a warm and homely environment. Managers and staff lead by example and take care to support young people in their understanding of the importance of health and safety. Appropriate checks are carried out robustly, and shortfalls are addressed in a timely manner.

There have been no incidents when young people have left the home without permission. However, clear procedures and protocols are in place to protect young people should such an event occur.

Managers and staff have developed relationships with the local police and safeguarding agencies and a comprehensive locality risk assessment is in place. This has been shared with young people, in order to raise their awareness of risks posed to them in the local area and how to avoid these.

Notifications to Ofsted are uncommon. However, where these are made, sufficient and concise information is provided to describe the events and the actions taken in response, with a clear focus on safeguarding young people.

Staff recruitment practices are well managed and effective. These have due regard for issues of safeguarding, and appropriate pre-employment checks are undertaken. Staff

undertake a closely supervised period of induction prior to working with young people. Staff receive comprehensive training in all aspects of safeguarding, including focused training in relation to child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and the use of the internet.

One young person utilises social media frequently. This is carefully monitored by staff, who support the young person to use this medium safely. However, there is no individualised assessment in relation to the risks to this young person of radicalisation, or strategies of how to mitigate against this.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

A very capable and supportive registered manager is in post. She has considerable experience of working with young people who have complex needs and holds a relevant management qualification. Her approach is that of continuous learning and improvement. One member of staff said, 'She is very approachable and supportive and shares her knowledge with everyone. She ensures that we work together as a team and provide consistency for our young people. This makes them feel much more secure and they make better progress.'

Management focus is on young people and an endeavour to create a stable family environment. The manager's meticulous approach to the assessment of potential young people includes a detailed understanding of which young people would best benefit from living in the home. Careful matching ensures that the needs of potential young people and those already living in the home can be fully met, ensuring the best possible outcomes for young people.

The manager has an exceptional understanding of each young person's needs and how the staff can support their development, which results in young people making excellent progress in all areas of their lives.

Managers and staff receive excellent supervision. This is clearly recorded and outlines the specific targets for staff in their work with young people. Supervision is reflective and provides a focus on the relationships between staff and young people and how these form the foundation for young people's trust and security. Supervision is used to constructively challenge practice and to ensure that the needs of young people are central to all aspects of life in the home. Staff report that they feel valued and motivated.

Practice is supported by an effective training programme. Staff have completed a thorough induction, ensuring that they understand the ethos of the home, and are familiar with the organisation's policies and procedures. Staff who do not hold a relevant qualification have been enrolled on the relevant course, and are able to access specialist training to enable them to meet the specific needs of young people. One example of this relates to training accessed by a staff member in relation to a specific aspect of autistic spectrum disorder, a result of which has been a better understanding of the needs of one young person, and a more effective approach to positive behaviour support strategies.

Staff and managers hold regular team meetings that comprise of professional reflection and bespoke workshops, and which are underpinned by current research on topics

related to practice. Staff and managers hold regular 'Triangle Meetings', the focus of which is the young people, where progress is discussed and strategies for managing behaviour and keeping young people safe are reviewed. One member of staff said, 'This home is amazing. I have never worked anywhere like this before. We all work so closely together as a team and the manager understands everything that happens in the home. This makes such a difference to the young people. You can tell that they are really happy here.'

The manager is meticulous in her monitoring of the service and, as a result, provides well-informed and focused leadership. Rigorous monitoring systems ensure that young people benefit from the highest standard of care and any shortfalls identified are promptly addressed. Reports compiled by the manager are comprehensive and provide a systematic evaluation of the impact of the service on the progress of young people.

Young people's care plans meet their needs in a holistic way. Young people are listened to and participate in their care plan reviews. One young person, with the support of the manager and independent reviewing officer, actually chaired her own review meeting, resulting in the formulation of a care plan which fully met her needs and was owned by the young person. Regular monitoring results in care plan reviews in situations where progress is not conducive to that which is expected.

External monitoring visits take place monthly and are suitably challenging of practice. The registered manager values the external scrutiny and acts appropriately on recommendations made. The manager produces six-monthly reports evaluating the quality of service provision, which is utilised by managers and staff as a vehicle for continuous improvement.

There is a clear statement of purpose, which provides a reflection of the purpose of the service and how this is to be provided. This does not contain information about the referral and admissions process, in particular the assessment function in relation to young people during the initial stages of their placement. Additionally, the statement of purpose does not outline the respite services offered by the provider.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1241263

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Aspire Care And Education Services

Registered provider address: The Willows, 144-146 Mickleburgh Hill, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 6JZ

Responsible individual: Jonathan Deslandes

Registered manager: Heidi Caplen-Kingston

Inspector

Jacqueline Georghiou, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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