

1280412

Registered provider: Apex Children's Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people, irrespective of gender. The home specialises in caring for young people who have been or who are experiencing emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

There is no registered manager at the home.

An acting manager is appointed to the home and an application for registration is in process.

Inspection dates: 27 to 28 January 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 4 January 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/01/2019	Full	Good

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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.

Requirement	Due date
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— 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; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i) and (d))	28/02/2020
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it. (Regulation 45(1)(2)(a)(b))	28/02/2020

Recommendations

- Ensure that children can see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon during consultation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- Where children are placed in a home and not participating in education because they have been excluded or are not in school for some other reason, the registered person and staff must work closely with the placing authority so that

the child is supported and enabled to resume full-time education as soon as possible. In the interim, the child should be supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of the information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- Ensure that staff supervision allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

A warm welcome is part of the introduction to the home, alongside a children's guide explaining how the home runs. Two young people's placements have ended unplanned, one due to the placing authority not sharing all the necessary information from the onset. Another young person's placement ended as it was felt that the home could no longer meet the escalating needs. The management team has learned from this and has put in measures to improve its systems.

Overall, the home is very well furnished and young people have their own bedrooms that reflect their tastes and interests. Although the staff clean the bedrooms, it remains that a young person's bedroom is unhygienic. This can negatively impact a young person's health and well-being. A new bed was purchased at the time of inspection to improve this.

Relationships between young people and the staff are respectful. Observations highlighted a relaxed and family atmosphere in the home. Young people are confident and eager to share their views and opinions about the home. One young person said, 'I like it here, the staff are great, they help me. I can talk to any of them.'

One young person's attendance and achievement at school is good. This young person is socialising with peers, enjoying activities and the opportunities the home has to offer. Two young people's progress has dipped. The staff are working very hard with young people and partner agencies to resume full-time education. However, the staff have not put a structured plan in place to ensure that young people, who are not in full-time education, continue to learn and achieve.

Consultation is regularly undertaken with young people to ensure that they can voice their views and opinions. However, the results of their views being acted on by staff are not always fed back to young people to show them that their views count. For example, young people have asked to go indoor skydiving and there is no evidence that the staff have responded to this request.

Young people are registered with appropriate healthcare services and attend necessary appointments. They are encouraged to eat healthily and to exercise. Medication is administered safely.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Young people say that they 'feel safe' and 'protected' by the staff. Positive relationships between the staff and young people encourage a culture of openness and safety. Young people say that they would talk to staff about any worries or concerns.

Risk assessments are in place and help to manage risks to young people. However, these lack detailed evaluation of young people's vulnerabilities. Furthermore, risk-reducing measures are not fully identified to effectively safeguard young people from potential harm, for example when young people are away from the home for long periods of time with their peers.

Challenging behaviour is managed in a consistent and positive manner that focuses on nurturing and reward. As a result, there are no physical restraints and very few sanctions. These are appropriately reviewed by the manager.

Incidents of young people going missing from care are well managed. If young people do go missing, the staff are proactive in their responses and search the area. They follow each young person's missing-from-home protocol and report to all the relevant agencies. Despite the best efforts of the staff, young people have not always had an independent interview from the placing authority, following their return home from being missing from care. This is a missed opportunity to share pertinent information to protect young people.

Effective safer recruitment practices help to protect young people against unsafe adults working in the home. Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service and obtaining references from previous employers are part of this process.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has left his position. Management arrangements were promptly addressed by the responsible individual. An experienced manager has been appointed to the home and an application has been made to Ofsted for registration.

Further staff changes have occurred. However, internal relief staff who know young people very well provide stability and predictability to young people. New permanent staff have been recently recruited and balance the gender role models within the team.

The staff feel supported by the manager and their team members. The staff are suitably qualified or working towards a recognised qualification. They have regular supervision, training and team meetings to keep them abreast of emerging information. Although supervisions take place, records do not provide details of the staff reflecting on their care practice with young people.

The staff work well with partner agencies and escalate concerns if needed. All professionals contacted spoke positively about the staff, the communication with them and the progress that young people make. A professional commented, 'It has been a challenge lately with the young person, but the staff are good.'

Quality audit systems are in place and provide an overview of care practice. However, the manager's review of the quality of care does not include feedback from young people. The manager is aware of the strengths and areas for development in the service, for example improving written documentation and introducing an electronic system.

The requirement and recommendation from the previous inspection have not been fully addressed. Although efforts have been made, it remains that risk assessments are not sufficiently detailed. Moreover, the staff are not responding promptly to young people's ideas and views following consultation meetings.

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 differences 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 whom 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: 1280412

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Apex Children's Services

Registered provider address: Apex Children's Services, 6 Tower Quays, Tower Road, Birkenhead, Cheshire CH41 1BP

Responsible individual: Barry Henry

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Caroline Jones, social care inspector

Nick Veysey, social care inspector

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