

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC005042
Inspector	Michael Williams
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Registered person	Care Today (Children's Services) Ltd
Registered person address	Care Today Children's Services, Lansdowne House 85 Buxton Road STOCKPORT Cheshire SK2 6LR
Responsible individual	Vivien Anne Snape
Registered manager	POST VACANT / Justin Anton Pomelli
Date of last inspection	18/12/2013

Inspection date	28/05/2014
------------------------	------------

Previous inspection	inadequate progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
-------------------	-------------

At its last full inspection in March 2013 the home's overall effectiveness was judged to be good. However, at the interim inspection in December 2013, when an area for improvement was found, the home was judged to be making inadequate progress. The improvement has now been made and the overall effectiveness of the home is good once more.

Taking into account their starting points at the time of their placements, young people make good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. They are helped to achieve this by the good support they receive from staff. Placement planning is individualised to meet the personal needs of each young person and is implemented in practice. Each young person's progress is tracked against the Every Child Matters outcomes.

The manager, deputy manager and staff team have a good understanding of safe working practices which they effectively follow in conjunction with external professionals when necessary. Most young people agreed that they feel safe at the home all the time. Staff follow agreed strategies to protect young people from areas of risk. Any concerning behaviours are well managed by staff. Appropriate boundaries are set and are consistently followed.

The leadership and management arrangements are good. Together the manager and the independent person, who visits monthly on behalf of the registered provider, effectively identify and address any weaknesses in order to secure future improvements.

Young people talked about the following as some of the things that are good about the home: activities including fishing and football, choices about what to do, meals, rewards, the staff. They talked about 'a fun environment to grow up in' and said 'you meet loads of different kids and staff', 'there's somebody there when I need them most', 'we get to do lots of activities', 'I like that we have offsite trust', 'keyworkers are very helpful because it's the one member of staff you're closer to and can talk to easier'. Asked what the home could do better, most young people said 'nothing' although a few talked about wanting more offsite trust, being allowed out and having more of a say in what happens offsite and on.

One area for improvement has been identified as a result of young people telling Ofsted what they think about the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The privately owned service is both a children's home and a school that provides care and education for up to 12 young people who have significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Ten young people can be accommodated at the children's home with a further two young people accommodated in the satellite home. Eight young people were accommodated at the time of this inspection, all in the main home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/12/2013	Interim	inadequate progress
10/10/2013	Full	good
11/03/2013	Interim	good progress
28/11/2012	Full	good

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

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children who do go missing are always responded to positively on their return; in particular, that when they return they always feel welcomed by staff who try to understand why they went missing in the first place (NMS

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Taking into account their starting points at the time of their placements and the length of time they have been in placement, young people have achieved good outcomes overall. One young person's recent Looked After Child (LAC) review reported that, despite a 'blip' at Christmas time, they continue 'to make good progress' at the home. However, occasionally young people adversely affect their achievement of positive outcomes by choosing not to engage with services, such as therapy, that will help promote their well-being.

Young people make good progress in developing a positive sense of identity, self-esteem and knowledge and understanding of their backgrounds. A social worker visiting a young person during this inspection commented that staff have quickly developed the young person's self-esteem and respect for others, helping them to learn what is and is not acceptable. As a result, they have seen a marked reduction in the young person's anti-social behaviour and offending. Young people make, and usually sustain, positive relationships with staff in the home. The above LAC review also reported that the young person engages well with all staff at the home. Where appropriate, young people are also supported by the staff to re-develop positive relationships with their families.

Young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are very well met. They are helped to understand and begin to take responsibility for their health needs. Young people's health needs are assessed and plans put in place to meet them are regularly reviewed. A visiting social worker commented positively on the speed with which the home had registered a young person with general health services. The organisation also has a therapeutic service available to young people and the staff working directly with them.

Young people are able to actively express their views, wishes and feelings which they feel are taken into account both in the day-to-day running of the home and in important decisions about their lives. Young people are supported to participate in regular key worker sessions, in weekly children's meetings and in important meetings about their lives. The home also seeks and takes account of the views of young people's parents and carers and social workers.

Taking into account their starting points at the time of placement, young people's educational attendance and achievement is good overall. All the young people attend the organisation's own on-site school which has pupils from outside the home. A visiting social worker commented that a young person who had had very poor attendance in their previous placement is now in the school classroom all day, every day. Another young person's recent LAC review described them as 'achieving well in school'.

Young people are actively and positively involved in activities both in the home and the community. When asked if they like the activities they are involved in, most young people answered 'all the time' with the rest answering 'most of the time'. This inspection took place during a school half-term holiday when young people were engaged in activities outside the home such as army cadets, fishing and swimming and inside the home such as football and computer games. The young people aged 15 to 17 years old also agreed with the statement that staff help them to prepare to live independently so that when the time comes they are confident about their readiness for leaving the home and moving into adulthood.

Quality of care

good

Staff are consistently concerned with and actively promote young people's welfare. Most young people described the care and support they get from staff as very good. A visiting social worker was very complimentary about the quality of care. A recent LAC review concluded that 'The placement is meeting all of [the young person's] needs.'

Staff use individualised behaviour strategies to help young people enjoy positive relationships with them and with other adults and young people. Young people are helped to make individual progress against identified behaviour goals, such as trying to reduce swearing. Staff also positively promote and support young people's family contact. The combination of the two has impacted positively on young people's family and social relationships.

The running of the home and the delivery of young people's care is significantly influenced by the views of young people. Young people share their views during individual key working sessions, children's meetings and meetings about their care. A visiting social worker talked about a young person having 'ownership' of the decision to move to the home. Since the last inspection the home has only received one complaint. That was from a young person who complained about another resident and was happy with the outcome of their complaint.

Young people are central to the planning and review of their care; staff ensure that as far as possible young people are consistently involved in these processes. This ensures care is tailored to their individual needs and is focused on achieving clear outcomes. Each young person has an up-to-date placement plan which reflects the placing authority's care plan, as well as a placement plan tracker which shows their progress against each Every Child Matters outcome.

Staff actively promote young people's educational attendance and achievement. As all the young people attend the on-site school, staff work very closely together with school staff in order to promote consistency of care across both settings. Monetary incentives are used in the home to encourage each young person to achieve weekly

educational goals.

Staff also work proactively with health and safeguarding professionals to try to secure positive outcomes for young people. The former include general practitioners as well as the organisation's therapists and child and adolescent mental health professionals. Staff work with them to ensure that young people have access to the general and specialist services they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Most young people agreed that they feel safe at the home all the time and those who did not explained that that was because of how they have felt in the past about incidents in the home involving other young people. The home has made improvements in this area in response to the inspection requirement that was previously identified, namely to promote young people's welfare through robust recording of risk management following significant events in the home. To help protect them from risks, such as their own and each other's challenging or offending behaviour, each young person's case records include a risk assessment and management plan. These are implemented in practice and regularly reviewed. As a result, there is a reduction in young people's risky behaviour during their time at the home.

Young people commented that they have not been bullied but that if they were to the staff understand their role in helping to prevent and counter any bullying.

There have been some incidents involving young people going missing since the last inspection. The last instance occurred approximately two months before the inspection and resulted in a police officer visiting the young person on their return to check on their welfare. The frequency with which young people go missing has reduced over time. Managers and staff are aware of, and follow, the organisation's policy for safeguarding children who go missing or are absent, which is based on the latest Department for Education guidance. The organisation's policy makes it clear that, while going missing may have consequences, staff must always welcome the young person back and make them comfortable before investigating the causes. However, some young people who have been missing said that they did not always feel welcomed back by staff who were keen try to understand why they had gone missing in the first place. Staff have not always got the balance right between establishing the consequences for young people of going missing and responding to them positively on their return.

There has been minimal use of physical restraint since the last inspection. The last instance took place almost three months before this inspection. On that occasion the use of physical restraint was appropriate and it had been recorded appropriately. Sanctions have also been used and recorded appropriately, such as time out of the

group for 30 minutes and loss of offsite trust for two days. These have been used effectively alongside the reward system to address unacceptable behaviour. The home's managers have strong and proactive relationships with the police which support and promote young people's safety, for example when they go missing or return from having been missing. Staff awareness of child protection issues has been raised through training. Managers are planning a higher level of child protection training for staff later this year.

While no new member of staff has started working at the home since the last inspection, safe recruitment practices and procedures are in place. They help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm young people

The home provides a good physical environment for the young people. Essential environmental checks are up-to-date. When young people cause damage to the home, for example to their bedrooms, or when refurbishment accidentally impacts on fire safety, for example when a new carpet that had been fitted prevented an automatic fire door from working properly, these issues are identified and addressed.

Leadership and management

good

This is a well-managed home. It has a clear, up-to-date Statement of Purpose that has recently been amended in line with a recent change to the Children's Homes Regulations. The aim and purpose of the home and the facilities and services it provides are clear to staff, placing social workers and young people's parents. There is also a young person's guide to the home in a format suitable for them.

The staffing numbers, the level of experience of staff and the support provided to them are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people. The details of the staff team and the arrangements for their supervision, training and development are included in the home's Statement of Purpose and are implemented in practice.

Since the last full inspection, staff have participated in training designed to help them continue to meet young people's needs, including for example on health and safeguarding. Staff have either attained or are undertaking the professional qualifications relevant to their roles. Regular supervision, team meetings and staff appraisals also support staff to provide a good quality service to the young people.

The home's new manager and deputy manager have been exercising effective leadership of the home's staff and operation. They have ensured the delivery of good quality care that meets the individual needs of each young person at the home. In February 2014 the home's Responsible Individual notified Ofsted that the Registered Manager at the time of the last inspection was being replaced by the Registered Manager of another children's home run by the organisation. At the time of this inspection, the new manager was just waiting for written confirmation from Ofsted of the recent decision that they are suitable to be the Registered Manager for this

home. The home's deputy manager has helped ensure that an effective service has been delivered during the transition period.

To ensure continuous improvement, the home has acted on the one requirement from its last inspection and has produced a development plan which focuses on areas such as the building, staffing, staff training, and specialist support services. Young people's case records and the home's records are clear and up to date and contribute to an understanding of the life of young people in the home.

Since the last inspection, there has been one significant event relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home. This event took place in the school, not the home, and the appropriate authorities, including Ofsted, were notified at the time. The home's manager, who is also the head of care for the school, ensured that appropriate action has been taken in response to that event.

Regular monitoring of the operation of the home effectively helps to maintain good quality care and promote the welfare of the young people. Every month the manager reports on the matters they are required to monitor and sends a copy of the report to Ofsted. The last such report Ofsted received was for March 2014. In addition, an independent person carries out a Regulation 33 visit to the home on behalf of the registered provider once a month and reports to the registered provider and Ofsted on the conduct of the home. The reports of these visits identify any action required. The last such report Ofsted received was for the visit in April 2014 which concluded: 'Overall the young people at the home are happy, feel safe, supported by staff in all areas of their lives. Making progress and engaging in education.' This inspection reached the same conclusion.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.