

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC008484
Inspector	Janine Shortman-Thomas
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	Judith Kathleen Power
Date of last inspection	11/02/2014

Inspection date	27/08/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	None

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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The overall effectiveness is judged to be outstanding.

The children's home is making a significant difference to young people's lives. The motivated and dynamic staff team enrich young peoples' lives by encouraging, promoting and supporting them in addressing their diverse needs. This has helped them make substantial progress in many aspects of their lives.

A significant feature of the home is the warm, affectionate relationships between staff and young people. Staff have high aspirations for young people and are dedicated and proactive in meeting their needs and keeping them safe. Care practice is underpinned by robust responses to managing young peoples' risk and vulnerabilities which ensures that they feel safe and well cared for.

Care planning and care practice is highly individualised and gives due consideration to young peoples' unique and diverse needs. Staff work closely and consult with young people, their families and relevant professionals. Staff are strong advocates for young people and ensure they have access to the services and support that they require. This ensures they have the opportunities to fulfil their full potential which allows them to grow and flourish into adulthood.

The home is effectively and efficiently run by a dedicated and hands on management team who emphasise and advocate high standards of care. Good systems are in place to monitor and scrutinise quality of care which ensures the home continually develops and improves the services that are available to young people. Although systems for reporting and recording are generally good, some shortfalls are noted in relation to the reporting of significant events.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a private children's home; the owner is also the Registered Manager. The home provides care for up to six young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/02/2014	Interim	good progress
06/11/2013	Full	good
27/02/2013	Interim	good progress
19/11/2012	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 if any notifiable event takes place that the appropriate people listed in schedule 5 are notified without delay. (Volume 5, Statutory Guidance, paragraph 2.76)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people make excellent progress across all aspects of their social, emotional and academic development. They are well supported by staff who work closely with a wide range of professionals to help them understand their lives and equip them with the skills necessary to move forward. As a result, young people find stability and are more resilient to the challenges they face in their lives, which in turn helps them to plan positively for their future.

All young people share consistently positive views about their experience of living in the home. They recognise the commitment of staff and how their efforts have contributed to better outcomes in their lives. One young person said, 'this is the best children's home I have lived in. I feel safe and supported by the staff who will help me make the right decisions.' The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the positive choices young people are making about their education, health, behaviour and personal safety, for example.

Young people are fully supported and involved in the development and review of their care plans and the day to day running of the home. Their wishes and views are actively sought through one to one discussion, individual key work sessions and weekly meetings, as well as a number of formal consultation feedback systems. Staff provide excellent support for young people and enable them to attend and participate in their statutory review meetings. For some young people this is the first time they have contributed and had their say. As a result, they feel involved and empowered because they are valued and respected as individuals.

Young people choose to regularly take part in physical activities including scooting, bicycle riding, football and rugby. They contribute to menu planning and are encouraged to eat a healthy well balanced diet. The home has good links with health care professionals such as the looked after children's nurse and the child and adolescent mental health service. As a result, young people's health needs are well met with the large majority of them choosing to lead a healthy and active lifestyle.

The value of education is actively promoted by staff and levels of attendance are high. Good links with local schools and education professionals promote a collaborative approach to supporting young people to engage in the learning environment. Education placements are sourced quickly to ensure disruption to young people's education is minimised. The majority of young people view school positively and realise the importance of a good education. This has resulted in them making very good academic progress in most subjects, relative to their starting point and time in placement. One young person spoke positively about how staff had helped them to overcome their anxieties of group settings. They went to talk proudly about how they have returned to mainstream school and had recently had the confidence to

sing publically in front of two classes.

Staff value the importance of contact for young people in understanding their heritage and identity and facilitate and support this thoughtfully. Individual contact plans are in place to ensure young people's contact with their families and friends is well planned, safe and enjoyable, and as positive an experience for all involved. This supportive approach has helped young people maintain regular, quality contact ensuring that they remain in touch with those significant to them.

Young people are effectively prepared for independence. They are encouraged and rewarded to assist with household chores and given ample opportunities to develop their independent living skills, in line with their age and ability. This support ensures that all young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to make a confident transition to adult life. A number of young people have been supported to move on. Staff work closely with leaving care professionals to ensure this transition is well planned and in the best interest of young people. Staff demonstrate a parent like commitment to young people which continues when they have left the home. For example, young people know they can contact staff for advice and support and are always welcomed back to the home to have tea.

Quality of care

outstanding

Young people and staff share genuinely strong and constructive relationships. These relationships underpin all aspects of good practice and are effectively utilised to encourage sociably acceptable behaviour through positive role modelling and agreed behaviour management strategies. Negative behaviour is calmly challenged and young people are helped understand and manage their feelings and emotions more appropriately. This has resulted in young people showing greater self-control and relying less on the interventions and support of staff. For example, one young person spoke about how he takes himself off to his room and reads when he is feeling angry, which in turn has reduced the number of serious incidents.

Young people benefit from being cared for by staff who are genuinely committed to their care and well-being. They are provided with good information about routes to complaint but feel this is unnecessary because staff 'listen and sort things out.' Staff are strong advocates for the young people in their care and will do their very best to ensure their concerns are quickly and robustly managed. One young person spoke about how the manager had immediately gone into her school when she had raised a concern. This ensured the problem was effectively dealt with and the young person's education was not disrupted.

Staff have a thorough understanding of the young people's individual needs and placement plans are clear, detailed and reviewed frequently. The staff team is proactive in challenging any barriers which may limit a young person's chance to fully participate in the activities expected of their age, ability and understanding. The staff have high aspirations for young people and advocate effectively on their behalf.

Professionals see this as a major strength and it is clear that staff work on the premise that if it is not good enough for their children then it is not good enough for the young people in their care. This level of support and dedication ensures that young people receive the individual care and support that they need and deserve to ensure that they can achieve their optimum outcomes.

Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the young people in their care. Detailed care plans, which are regularly monitored and reviewed, are used as working documents. These plans are based on good information gathering processes, rigorous assessment and effective consultation with young people, their families and other salient people. Care practice is highly individualised and clearly focused on young people's individual needs and areas for development. Strong links and effective communication with a range of external professionals promote a collaborative and inclusive approach to care planning. This ensures young people receive the individual care and support that they need and deserve to ensure that they can achieve their optimum outcomes.

Young people's health is routinely monitored to ensure their known and emerging needs are met. Young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician at the point of admission and they are well supported to attend routine appointments. They are also supported to access additional health services as identified within their individual health care plan. Unwillingness to engage in appointments is positively challenged as staff emphasise to young people the importance of good health. This has proven effective in ensuring young people are up to date with routine checks and appointments. For example, the looked after children's nurse stated how impressed she was that one young person had engaged in their looked after children medical for the first time since coming into care.

Staff make every effort to ensure young people can access the most suitable education placement. Staff are innovative in their practice to overcome barriers especially in relation to education attendance and participation and excel in their commitment to ensure young people achieve. They are proactive, resourceful and persistent in their support and have successfully helped reintegrate a number of young people back into full time education. This is seen as major strength with one social worker saying, "They are proactive in seeking out the most appropriate school and go above and beyond to ensure children get what they need."

Young people live in a homely, comfortable, safe and well-maintained home which is suitably located to access all the local amenities. The home is well equipped and pleasantly furnished and each bedroom has been personalised to the young person's taste. Young people say they like their home and it is noted to have a family feel to the environment. One social worker said, 'It is very homely not like a residential home. All the staff care they and are more like parents. That is why I chose this home and the fact that staff have done great work with another child I work with.'

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

Young people are well protected and say they feel safe. Each young person could identify an adult that they could confide in should they have any worries or concerns. Care practice is underpinned by robust systems and procedures that are designed to give young people's safety the highest priority. Good links with partner agencies promote transparency, collaboration and consistency in ensuring young people are protected at all times. Safeguarding concerns are managed effectively and in the best interest of young people. This includes reporting concerns and keeping relevant agencies informed.

Young people's risks and vulnerabilities are continuously assessed and fully recorded in young people's risk management plans. Information in these plans is routinely shared during daily handovers, supervision and team meetings to ensure staff are equipped help young people keep themselves safe. Staff work with young people to help them understand the consequences of risky behaviour which has resulted in them making better choices about keeping themselves safe.

Proactive and creative safeguarding practice means that the incidents of young people going missing reduce over time. The home has strong links with the missing from care coordinator which ensures that individual risk management plans are implemented effectively to reduce unsafe risk taking behaviours. One officer from the Missing from Care and Child Sexual Exploitation team praised the home on their efforts to reduce one young person's incidents of going missing from home. They said, 'staff are proactive in engaging with young people so that they understand and appreciate the dangers that they are placing themselves in. They throw anything they can at young people to get them to engage.'

Young people say the rules in the home are fair. Sanctions are proportionate and fully recorded including young people's views. Each young person is fully involved in setting behaviour targets which they aspire to achieve. Achievements are rewarded with treats such as activities, additional pocket money or other chosen treats. This incentivised approach has been effective in helping young people modify their behaviour and has led to reduction in challenging behaviour and the need for physical restraint. On the small number of occasions that restraint has been necessary it has been used professionally and for the right reasons by staff who are trained.

The homes procedures for recruiting staff are robust. Potential staff are subjected to a rigorous and challenging process which fully involves young people. Relevant checks are undertaken prior to staff starting work to ensure they are suitable to work with vulnerable young people.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. This is because they are protected by a range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and routine checks. Evacuation plans are detailed, understood and regularly practiced by young

people and staff.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager is also the responsible individual and is in day- to-day charge of the home. She has managed the home for 20 years and has the necessary skills and experience to provide clear leadership and management for a highly motivated and committed staff team. The manager is well supported by two suitably qualified and experienced deputy managers who share her aspirations and motivation to drive forward the improvements outlined in the homes development plans. This includes the imminent plans for the resignation of the homes current manager and the registration of one of the homes deputy managers. This ensures a level of continuity in the management arrangements for the home will be maintained and the currently unqualified manager is replaced by one that is qualified.

The home is consistently managed and effective in meeting the aims and objectives outlined in its Statement of Purpose. A clear vision of child focused practice is embedded within the home's ethos and has resulted in young people achieving positive outcomes in many aspects of their lives. Comments from placing authorities are consistently positive and acknowledge this child centred approach as a major strength of the service.

The management team works closely with staff to promote consistently high standards of care and the safety of young people. Staff performance is routinely monitored and developed through purposeful appraisal, supervision and support. Qualification levels are high. New staff are inducted well and are given the opportunity to commence a relevant childcare qualification upon completion of their probationary period. Staff routinely monitor and discuss young people's needs, development and progress through daily handovers and team meetings for example. As a result, staff fully understands their roles and responsibilities and young people receive individually tailored care and support that is designed to meet their current and specific needs.

Managers utilise a number of internal systems to monitor and review the quality of care provided for young people living at the home. This includes regular monitoring of young people's files and the homes records. This ensures managers are clear about the homes strengths, and shortfalls are identified and addressed through the homes development and training plans.

Young people's records are generally of a high quality and provide a good insight into young people's individual and diverse needs. Information is securely stored and is shared appropriately with young people, staff and stakeholders to ensure individual

confidentially is maintained.

There are systems in place for the management and notification of serious incidents. Detailed records that evidence robust responses to supporting young people and sharing information with relevant people are maintained. However on one occasion there was a minimal delay in notifying the local authority of a safeguarding concern. Also, Ofsted were not notified when a young person was taken to hospital following an accident. These are viewed as an administrative oversight and had no impact on the welfare and care of the young person.

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.