

SC013598

Registered provider: Cherry Trees Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This charity-run service provides a variety of short-break services for disabled children and young adults. When operating as a children's home, the service can provide accommodation for up to 14 children who have a learning and/or a physical disability. Children may also have sensory disabilities. Other services that the organisation provides from the same premises are daytime support for disabled children and support for their families, including family events and support groups.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 December 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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 6 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Children have fun and make progress.
- The range of in-house and external activities provide children with a variety of experiences which enhance their lives.
- Staff know the children well and build good relationships with them.
- Staff develop and maintain very positive relationships with children's families.
- Support for children, when they start using the service and when they leave, is well thought out and sensitively provided.
- The quality of meals on offer is exceptionally good.
- Monitoring systems are effective.
- Managers make continuous improvements to the services provided.
- A range of consultation methods are used to support the managers' development plans.

The children's home's areas for development:

- There is a lack of clarity about how to decide whether a child who uses alternative means of communication is making a complaint.
- Some staff members' knowledge, about what they need to tell the police if a child goes missing, is weak.
- The impact of training that staff undertake is not always assessed.
- The quality of supervision records varies.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/10/2016	Full	Good
17/03/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
07/10/2015	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- Staff should encourage children to share any concerns about their care or other matters as soon as they arise. Children must be able to take up issues or make a complaint with support and without any fear that this will result in any adverse consequences. Regulation 39 sets out the requirements on the registered person to have a complaints procedure. Children must be aware of this procedure and be reminded of it as necessary. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13)

In particular, the registered provider should review whether all the staff know how to decide whether a child who uses alternative means of communication is making a complaint.

- Local authorities should have in place Runaway and Missing From Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols agreed with local police and other partners. Where appropriate, they should also have agreed protocols with neighbouring authorities. The protocols should be agreed and reviewed regularly with all agencies and be scrutinised by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.23)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that their missing person's procedures provide guidance on what information the police will want to know if a child goes missing. The registered person should also ensure that staff know what to do if a child goes missing and which information they should refer to.

- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should:

detail the necessary management and staffing structure (including any staff commissioned to provide health and education), the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the staffing structure and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the homes Statement of Purpose;

detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications);

detail the process for managing and improving poor performance;

detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice (see regulation 33 (4) (b)) and keep appropriate records for staff in the home.

The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications

completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff – including the home’s manager. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.8)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that they assess the impact that training has on staff members’ ability to meet the responsibilities that they have.

- It is good practice for a note of the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions to be kept and to ensure that both the person giving the supervision and staff member have a copy of the record. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.4)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that supervisors follow the organisation’s outline of what supervision sessions should include. The registered person should check that the quality of records kept about each supervision session are to the standard that they expect.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are supported well to enjoy life, develop and achieve at this short-break service. Children’s overnight stays are well planned. The staff take account of children’s individual interests, risks and needs. One young person said he got to see his friends when he comes here and that it is a ‘good place’. Children’s enjoyment and progress is continually reassessed and improved. For example, this year sensory bathrooms will be provided.

Slow and sensitive introductions to the service assist children to settle quickly. The staff consider each child’s needs and work effectively with the child, their parents and other professionals to decide how quickly the child attends and what length of time this is for. The staff made it clear that this is at the child’s pace.

The staff build positive, warm relationships with children. The staff know the children well, invest time in them, and protect and promote their welfare effectively. Children seek the staff out to play with them. The staff empower children to decide how they are supported and who cares for them. The staff members’ knowledge and training assists them to communicate effectively using relevant communication systems, such as Picture Exchange Communication, if appropriate.

Children’s views are valued and are used to improve short-break experiences. The independent visitor seeks children’s opinions when they visit, by using emoticons. The manager recently introduced a ‘children’s group’ that considers various issues, such as whether staff photos should be displayed. Staff have developed mechanisms for asking children about changes to the premises, such as how the games room should be redecorated.

Activities are varied, planned well and take account of children's individual needs. The staff assess how any particular activities will meet children's learning and sensory needs, and they complete appropriate risk assessments. Children's involvement in the community is promoted well. The staff have engaged the children in local disability awareness days and provided local events to which children in the community have been invited.

The home-cooked meals and menus are of an exceptional quality. The care staff and catering manager over time successfully introduce children to a range of new flavours. The cook has a good knowledge of dietary needs. Specialised diets take account of physical disabilities as well as cultural needs.

Plans the home makes for children effectively integrate with others in place for them, such as educational plans and parents' ways of supporting their child. One parent said that, with the staff's support, her daughter has progressed. She is now able to make choices and has increased her mobility.

Independence is promoted well. Care is taken to ensure that the environment caters for a wide range of needs and provides age-appropriate facilities, toys and equipment. Changes have been made to safety measures on iPads so that older children can use these independently. Planned changes to the kitchen and dining areas will improve and support children to develop their independence skills. A wheelchair-accessible area where children can learn to cook is to be developed.

Staff make and maintain exceptionally good relationships with parents and families. Parents speak extremely positively about the support that their children receive and about the level of care and support that they, as parents, receive from the staff team.

There is an appropriate complaints procedure for children but there is no clear guidance for staff on how to consider whether a non-verbal child is making a complaint. Nevertheless, the staff do consider how children's behaviour indicates their views, and the staff take action when appropriate. For example, a non-verbal child went twice to a different bedroom from his usual room on his arrival. The staff responded by changing his bedroom, and this behaviour stopped.

Careful attention is paid to how children move on to other services. The staff support children to manage these significant changes positively by preparing children well, supporting their families effectively and providing information and guidance to the new service.

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

Children's safety is catered for well. Parents said that they had total confidence in the staff, and one young person said that he felt safe here. Other children demonstrated, through their behaviour, how they feel at ease and enjoyed being with the staff.

How children are helped to keep themselves safer is an area for improvement. The staff have recognised that learning about e-safety is an important issue for children. For example, the staff have improved children's understanding of e-safety by reading stories about this and helping them to learn safe internet use. Appropriate safeguards and monitoring systems are in place to protect children when they use the internet.

Difficult behaviours are managed consistently in line with children's needs, their families' wishes and professionals' views. One parent described positively how the staff worked to prevent the use of arm guards by using agreed distraction techniques and through their understanding of the child's non-verbal communication. In another instance, staff members' regular recording of behaviours enabled them to identify patterns and trends which led to a change in their behaviour management techniques, resulting in fewer incidents occurring.

Risk assessments and behaviour management plans provide holistic guidance for children's safety in the home and on trips. Staff know and implement the strategies well. The staff know they can influence decisions about the mix of children who attend each day. Appropriate systems for staff to know the plans for the child they will look after each day are in place. However, these systems do not support the person in charge of a shift to have similar levels of information. Action was taken during the inspection to address this. This will assist senior staff to appropriately monitor the care that the staff provide.

Staff understand how to refer safeguarding concerns to appropriate internal managers and external services. The staff act appropriately if a safeguarding concern arises. The safeguarding policy aligns with the local authority's safeguarding protocol. Managers have increased the breadth of safeguarding training to include areas such as child sexual abuse, radicalisation and female genital mutilation. The staff appreciated the impact of this on their understanding of safeguarding and knew how this related to the particular needs of children who have a disability.

Measures to prevent children from going missing from the service are effective. No child has gone missing from the service, or while on trips the service organises, for as long as anyone can remember. The missing person's policy does not contain detail of what information the police will want to know if a child does go missing. Staff did not know where to find telephone numbers or the home's policy on what to do if a child goes missing.

Use of restraint is minimal and usually links to distraction techniques outlined in behaviour management plans. Restraint training occurs for all staff at least once a year but, because it is not used, the staff said that they would not always feel confident to use the techniques. There are no mechanisms in place to address this.

Health and safety is managed well. The staff follow procedures, and the equipment is checked appropriately. This year, the local council has located a defibrillator on the site, which staff can use. The staff have received training in the use of defibrillators but the manager did not hold records to show that this equipment was maintained appropriately.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The management team has a good vision for the service and makes clear development plans. The service is intending to modernise, which will further support its aims of providing services that put the 'child first and disability second'.

The manager knows the home's strengths and areas for improvement well. Staff are positive about how he supportively manages the team. He is clear about when to use other management tools, such as disciplinary measures, if a person's quality of practice needs to improve.

The manager's six-monthly reports provide good detail of how he considers other people's, including children's, views and acts on them. The independent person provides well-written reports which assist in identifying areas of strength and weaknesses. Any recommendations made are met.

A stable staff team shares the managers' ethos and vision for the service. The staff are passionate about meeting children's needs and find ways of increasing a child's enjoyment of their stay and creating memorable moments. For example, one child had asked to go to see Father Christmas, as he had the previous year. The manager immediately made plans for an additional trip when the child was attending the service, which several children enjoyed.

Training programmes have been increased and use both internal and external sources to provide a range of topics. The staff are engaged in completing their level 3 diplomas. Managers' oversight of the impact of training is less secure. Ten staff members recently undertook a further training course in equality and diversity but there is no clear plan about how this learning will be harnessed to make improvements at the service.

Varied staff support systems are in place, which the staff team appreciates. Staff meetings occur regularly, and the staff receive frequent supervision sessions. The quality of the records from supervision meetings is variable. For example, the staff's learning from courses, and how this has had an impact on their ability to care for children, is often not reviewed at supervision.

The staff thoughtfully manage relationships between themselves, parents and professionals. The staff's careful attention to building appropriate relationships results in many compliments. Equally, any concerns that children, parents and professionals raise are quickly dealt with and managed appropriately.

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: SC013598

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Cherry Trees Limited

Responsible individual: Mark Clement

Registered manager: Peter Davey

Inspector

Ruth Coler, social care inspector

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