

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	01/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC020193
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school
Registered provider	The SENAD Group Limited
Registered provider address	Senad Group Limited, 1 St George's House, Vernon Gate, Derby DE1 1UQ

Responsible individual	Mark Flynn
Registered manager	David Hancox
Inspectors	Rachel Griffiths and Ros Chapman

Inspection date	01/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC020193

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children and young people present as happy. They enjoy positive relationships with staff and they make good progress in all aspects of their lives.
- Staff provide good support to children and young people with a history of extremely challenging and risky behaviours, such as self-harm and aggression. For some, incidents of such risky behaviours significantly reduce. As a consequence, children and young people are safer.
- The staff's child-centred approach ensures that vulnerable children and young people who have significant communication difficulties are able to express their views and make choices in respect of all aspects of their care.
- The managers and staff work in partnership with staff from the on-site school, the on-site therapy team and parents. This helps to ensure that children and young people have bespoke packages of help and support that meet their individual needs to a good standard.
- Some excellent direct work with children and young people helps them to prepare for and understand the changes which adolescence brings.
- An aspirational, very reflective and child-focused management team is passionate about improving the life chances and experiences of children and young people.
- Two shortfalls and two areas for improvement are identified as a result of this inspection. These are in relation to safeguarding procedures, supervision practices, the range of activities available and debriefs with children and young people following physical interventions. These are matters which are not currently having an impact on the safety and well-being of children and young people but have the potential to affect the quality of care if not addressed.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets 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
Regulation 12: The protection of children standard (2) In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered person must ensure (a) staff (vii) ensure that all staff are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies	30/09/2016
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience (Regulation 33 (4)(b)).	30/09/2016

Recommendations

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

- The registered person should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside the home ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5).
- Any child who has been restrained should be given the opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as practicable ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.60).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care for up to 25 children and young people with complex communication, learning difficulties and severe challenging behaviours. It is part of a residential special school and is owned by a private organisation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/06/2015	Full	Good
20/01/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/09/2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Children and young people present as happy. They enjoy positive relationships with staff. Parents report that living in this home has had a significant impact on their child's life. One parent said: 'My son is doing fantastically well. He has come out of himself and I am really proud of what has been achieved.' Another parent commented: 'My son has done really well and I can see a massive change. His self-help skills have improved, his attention span is better, he sits for longer and now when he comes home he has no behavioural problems.' As a consequence of the help and support provided, children and young people make very good progress in all aspects of their development. All children and young people attend the on-site school and staff support them throughout the school day to focus and achieve their individual targets. The help and support that children and young people receive to engage in their bespoke programmes of education promote good progress. One parent said: 'My son's learning is coming on a treat.' As a result of children's and young people's educational achievement and skills learned, their life chances improve. A dedicated health promotions manager, who works in partnership with the care staff, education staff and the on-site therapy team, produces individualised health care plans for each child or young person. These provide staff with clear guidelines about how they can support each child or young person to be healthy, how to meet their sensory and communication needs and how to meet any specific complex health needs that they may have. As a consequence, children's and young people's health needs are met to a good standard. A parent commented: 'I have seen massive improvements because of what is provided.' In addition to the above, the home's welfare officer undertakes some excellent direct work, which further enhances children's and young people's health and development. Desensitisation work results in some children and young people who could not previously tolerate attending medical appointments, attending such appointments and successfully having medical interventions. Excellent direct work has also helped children and young people to understand and manage the changes that they experience associated with adolescence. Children and young people are fully respected and valued. Communication difficulties are not a barrier to their views being heard. Staff are creative and use a range of communication methods, which reflect different communication styles, such as photos, symbols, white boards, Makaton, wishes and feelings books and observations. This ensures that children and young people are able to express their individual choices and preferences in relation to all aspects of their care. An	

independent advocate who is a regular visitor to the home said: 'Young people's views are taken seriously in this home.' Children and young people are involved in the staff recruitment process. All children's and young people's care plans are written in consultation with each individual and some children and young people have written their own behaviour support plans. This good level of communication and consultation empowers them and helps to raise their confidence and self-esteem. In addition, feeling understood and listened to helps to reduce children's and young people's anxiety levels.

Detailed multi-professional assessments inform placement decisions. These consider the needs of the new potential placement, the impact on existing residents and the skills of the staff team. Once the decision is made that a placement should proceed, very careful planning and preparation follow to ensure that transitions into the home go as smoothly as possible. Every plan is bespoke, depending on the needs of each child or young person. They can include staff visits to the child or young person, children and young people visiting the home and the use of social stories to help them understand what is happening. A social worker said: 'Staff worked really well with us to progress the placement and did all that was necessary to help him settle.'

Older young people develop life and independence skills while living in the home. A parent said: 'The progress my son has made in respect of his life skills is enormous. The staff are really good at promoting this.' Acquiring such life skills will be valuable to young people and provide them with greater opportunities as they move into their adult lives. Transitions into adult placements are considered at a very early stage and progress at a pace dictated by each young person's needs. One young person who is due to move on imminently has been prepared for this over the last nine months. A structured visiting plan ensures that this young person has every chance of a successful move. A memory book, which he will take with him, will also provide him with treasured memories of his achievements and experiences while living in the home.

Staff encourage and support children and young people to engage in a range of activities both on-site and in the community. The majority of parents speak positively about the experiences and opportunities that living in the home provides for their children. However, staff shortages have prevented the range of activities and experiences available being expanded upon to include new, exciting and challenging experiences.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Children and young people have positive relationships with staff who know them well and who they feel that they can trust. This provides them with stability and a sense of safety and security. A young person said: 'Staff keep me safe. There are a	

lot I get on with. If I feel worried there is always someone I can talk to.'

Careful assessment and planning ensures that the mix of children and young people living in each of the houses is appropriate and that no one poses a risk to one another. In addition, direct work with children and young people helps to promote positive relationships between peers. A young person said: 'We have house meetings and talk about the rules and about how we get on with each other.' This, as well as high staffing levels, helps to ensure that children and young people are living together harmoniously in a happy and settled environment, which provides them with an improved sense of safety.

Children's and young people's needs are met holistically as a result of multi-professional packages of help and support. Regular 'team around the child' meetings to review support plans enable adjustments to be made if and when their specific needs or risk factors change. Not only does this provide children and young people with a good level of protection, for some this has resulted in significant reductions in risky behaviours such as aggression and self-harm. A parent commented: 'Self-harm is now only occasional and aggression has become rare. My son is now settled and happier.'

Although some children and young people have a history of running away from the home, there has not been an incident of this occurring since before the last inspection. High staffing ratios, close monitoring, good site security and staff's understanding of the procedures to follow if an individual did go missing, provide very vulnerable children and young people with a high level of protection.

Proactive approaches to behaviour management are effective. Comprehensive behaviour support plans give staff very clear insight into children's and young people's communication styles and triggers. Staff utilise their understanding and use their skills to good effect to reduce the number of incidents of challenging and aggressive behaviours and the need for recourse to physical interventions. A parent said: 'My son's whole behaviour has changed. Although he still gets anxious, staff calm him easily.'

For some children and young people, physical interventions continue to be necessary in order to safeguard either themselves or others. However, the frequency of physical interventions has reduced significantly in recent months. This is due in part to robust management monitoring of all incidents and regular consultation with in-house therapists about alternative de-escalation strategies. When physical interventions do occur, staff debriefs follow each incident. Individual protocols for debriefs with children and young people, reflective of their communication style, are also in operation in order to explore how children and young people are feeling after being held. However, these are not consistently completed on every occasion that children or young people are held. Therefore, opportunities for staff to reflect on the impact of the hold and drive further improvements in this area of practice are lost.

Staff and managers prioritise children's and young people's immediate safety when allegations or concerns are raised about staff care or practices. However, there has been one occasion when there was a delay in a potential safeguarding allegation

being reported to the appropriate authorities. This contravened the home's safeguarding policy. Any delay prevents an immediate and thorough independent investigation being undertaken, and although on this occasion it did not have an impact on a child or young person, it has the potential to do so. Managers have demonstrated good insight into this shortfall and an action plan has been developed to improve reporting practices and prevent such a mistake occurring again.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager is very experienced and in addition to holding the required management qualification, he is also social work trained. He is committed and enthusiastic and manages the home very well. Two requirements set at the last inspection have been met, resulting in some improvements to the service. The registered manager's knowledge about the children and young people living in the home is excellent. In addition, through networking, he keeps abreast of developments in research and legislation relating to residential care and residential special schools. He filters newly gained knowledge down to the staff teams. The registered manager takes complaints seriously, and he continually reflects on the successes in the home and learns lessons when things do not go quite to plan. By regularly monitoring the progress that children and young people make and by completing comprehensive internal monitoring reports, the manager has devised clear plans for improvement. These are reflected in an aspirational development plan. Leaders and managers have effectively managed staff shortages. Despite sickness, maternity leave and vacancies, as a result of the commitment and dedication of core staff members doing extra shifts, the use of agency staff has been kept to a minimum. This, and recent successful recruitment, has kept the disruption caused by staffing shortages to a minimum. It has helped to ensure that children and young people have continued to receive consistently good standards of care. All staff who are not in their probationary period are either suitably qualified or working towards the required qualification within the timescales stipulated in the Children's Homes (England) Regulations. All staff also participate in a wide range of training. Their training needs are regularly analysed by a training coordinator, ensuring that all staff are up to date with the required training to maintain their skills and competence. Staff development days, often led by in-house experts, are held every three weeks, in response to the specific needs of children and young people living in the home. These days help to enhance staff knowledge and understanding of specific needs and equip them with the skills to meet them well. The majority of staff feel well supported by managers and all present as very committed to the children and young people that they are caring for. Staff attend	

regular team meetings, and although the majority of them receive monthly supervision sessions, there are some exceptions to this. Although there is no evidence to suggest this is currently having an impact on the quality of care, it has the potential to do so if not rectified. All staff require regular, effective supervision and support to be able to reflect on their own practice and the needs of the children and young people that they are caring for.

The home's statement of purpose is fully up to date and provides clear and accurate information for parents and placing authorities about the care, support and services that the home offers. Young people's guides are bespoke. When a child or young person moves into the home, they are involved in producing their own guide in line with their levels of understanding and communication style. As a consequence, they are helped to understand the ethos of the home, they know who is caring for them and all children and young people have a document which is meaningful and helpful to them.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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