

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC025695
Inspector	Seka Graovac
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	St Christophers Fellowship
Registered person address	1 Putney High Street London SW15 1SZ

Responsible individual	Jonathan Joseph Michael Farrow
Registered manager	Steven Munn
Date of last inspection	02/12/2013

Inspection date	16/06/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory 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	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Leaders and managers have created ethos in which young people's welfare is at a centre of the service. Care planning and risk management practice are highly personalised. Managers and staff work in close partnerships with other professionals. Multi-agency working is fully embedded in the practice and is a real strength of this service. Collaborative protective strategies and early interventions contribute to the enhanced safety of young people.

The home recently went through a challenging period with a high number of significant incidents and safeguarding concerns about the young people. This was well managed and used as a learning and improvement opportunity. The home's admission process has been made more robust.

Staff are skilled at establishing positive relationships with young people and motivating them to turn their lives around. Staff use creatively young people's interests, such as in football or dance to help them to develop their confidence, and social skills. The home has a lively atmosphere that is bursting with young people's high energy, engagement and positivity. Young people have high aspirations and make good progress in relation to their starting points across all aspects of their welfare. Under watchful and caring staff, young people support and challenge each other to do better.

Through rigorous monitoring processes, leaders have identified weaknesses in the consistency of some records that are kept by the home. They have put plans and actions in place to remedy this. Some improvement has already been achieved. However, this is not enough to demonstrate that the home has consistently met all the national minimum standards over period of time. Due to the inconsistency in the quality of some records, leadership and management is judged as adequate. The areas for development identified in this report relate to the records of complaints and of staff training and supervision.

The weaknesses in the record-keeping have not impacted negatively on the young people. The care practice in the home is consistently of a very high quality. Young people thrive in their placements. The overall effectiveness of the service is good.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The provider is a registered childcare charity and housing association that has a number of different services registered with Ofsted. This home provides care and accommodation for up to eight children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/12/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
14/05/2013	Full	good
10/01/2013	Interim	good progress
02/07/2012	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):

- improve the systems for maintaining staff training records, so that the home is able to more efficiently demonstrate that the staff receive high quality comprehensive training (NMS 18)
- provide each staff member with recorded supervision on a more frequent basis (NMS 19.4)
- improve the clarity and organisation of the records relating to complaints, so that they more systematically demonstrate that the procedure has been consistently followed in respect of each complaint. (NMS 21.10)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people have a very positive experience of living in this home. They understand why they are in care. They are able to talk about their lives with openness, emotional maturity and resilience. They engage very well with staff and other professionals who have a supportive role in their lives. They have developed a positive self-view and have high aspirations. They lead very active lives and many of them play sports almost every day. Many of their activities involve cooperation with other people and team-work. This has had a tremendous positive impact on their social skills and confidence. They recently enjoyed an activity packed weekend away from the home. They were challenged and empowered to do something they had not done before such as wall-climbing and sailing in a raft that they have themselves built.

Young people are well integrated in their local community. They are polite and friendly. They present themselves very well. A director of a media company that recently did some voluntary work in the home wrote to the manager to say how impressed they were with the young people. As a result, they have offered a work-experience to one young person. Another example of effective community integration is that of the young people helping to organise a big community summer event.

Young people are able to express themselves clearly. In the knowledge that their views truly matter, they engage fully in the house meetings. A house-president has recently been elected by the young people in the home. This process has facilitated their understanding of a democratic election process. Applying for and executing this role has provided them with the opportunities to develop their communication and negotiation and leadership skills. They understand their rights and are committed to building relationships that are based on fairness and equal opportunities. They are highly committed to the values of the British Society. Some young people have recently attended the All Parties Parliamentary Group debate on education for looked after children and care leavers. Having experienced good care themselves, they are willing to participate in the development of better services for all looked after children and care leavers.

Some young people describe the home as being 'football mad'. As they aspire to become professional footballers, boxing champions or pilots, they are highly committed to having healthy lifestyles. They have adopted a disciplined way of life to work towards the realisation of their dreams. They combine regular physical exercise with healthy eating and restful sleep. They are aware of the health risks associated with smoking cigarettes, consuming alcohol or misusing substances. They themselves are prepared to challenge any (rare) incidents associated with this at the home. They have a positive impact on each other. For example, young people influenced the young person who came to the home with a smoking habit to smoke less.

Young people are highly committed to looking after themselves well. As many of them came initially with a very low self-esteem, lack of self-belief and significant risk of self-harm, this is a great improvement. Their different outlook on life has impacted positively on many aspects of their lives. Staff have enabled young people to use their interests and natural talents as a spring-board for adopting different self-beliefs and changing their lives for better.

Taking into account their starting points, young people have made good educational progress, overall. Having had very fractured educational history, for some of them this is the first time that they are engaging with education. They have developed positive attitudes towards learning and their school attendance has improved. Staff help young people with on-line learning. Some young people receive additional individual tuition to help them to catch up with the educational attainment of their peers.

Quality of care

good

Staff know the young people in their care very well. They understand the underlying factors that influence the behaviours of young people. Staff are skilled at communicating with young people and establishing positive relationships with them. Young people talk highly about the staff members and describe them as really caring people. Young people trust the staff and have confidence in their positive intentions. This trust makes it easier for young people to accept the rules and boundaries. They understand that it is not possible for the home to act upon their wishes in all cases.

An independent reviewing officer shared her observations with the inspector: the main reason why young people thrive in this home is the high quality of the relationships and healthy attachments that they have formed with the staff members. Young people report that they feel listened to. They are well supported and respected for who they are. Their views and wishes play a central part in the planning, delivery and review of their care.

The home works in effective partnership with social workers and other professionals to agree and review the care plans for the young people. They deliver highly individualised care and support that meet the needs of young people and support their development. Staff have high aspirations for each young person in their care. Working in close liaison with other services, they work patiently and tirelessly to ensure that the young people achieve positive outcomes. Any barriers to the progress of young people are challenged effectively and consistently.

The home provides a healthy, safe and orderly environment. There are strong links with the local mental health services. Staff have good understanding of young people's emotional and psychological needs. Young people receive good support to have all their health needs met. This includes receiving timely specialist support and medication.

In discussions with the inspector, the virtual head of education talked highly about the home's commitment to supporting young people's educational achievements. The head and the home's management meet on a monthly basis to review the educational progress of each young person and agree any further support needed.

The physical environment is maintained to a high standard and provides a comfortable living environment. Without giving it an institutional feel, the posters on the walls provide information on multi-faith celebrations, anti-bullying help-lines and the football world cup. The sayings of great thinkers that encourage creativity and learning are also displayed to foster young people's positive self-beliefs.

Young people comment favourably about their bedrooms and the communal areas. They keep their rooms tidy and clean. They receive good support to develop their life-skills. They say that the staff motivates them to do things for themselves.

Keeping children and young people safe good

The staff recruitment procedures are very thorough. For example a recruitment file that the inspector examined contained four references, three of which were verified over the phone. Robust recruitment ensures that only suitable people have access to young people in the home and the confidential information about them. Young people have their say in who gets to work in the home. They have been involved in recruiting a new deputy manager.

Leaders, managers and staff have in-depth understanding of good safeguarding practice and are able to consistently implement it in their work. The home has strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Multi Agency Support Hub. Staff support young people's behaviour in line with the comprehensive risk management process and within effective partnership working framework. The risk assessments are robust and comprehensive. They are monitored and formally reviewed on at least monthly basis, but often much more frequently.

The home went through a turbulent period, recently. In the last six months, Ofsted has received a high number of notifications. These notifications relate to the police being called to the home regarding the young people's challenging behaviour and the concerns about their safety. In their discussions with the inspector, the police officers commented positively about the co-operation with the home and how the incidents were managed. This included working effectively together when young people were missing from the home. The incidences of young people missing have been minimised. For example, a recently admitted young person went missing on their first day in the home. That was the last time that they went missing. Another young person who used to go missing, now always returns home on time. The young person who used to be at the centre of a number of incidents that involved the police talked positively about the police and the support they give to the home.

Since the last inspection staff have used physical interventions on seven occasions to calm highly volatile situations. The interventions ranged from physically guiding the young person out of the environment to using protective embraces to contain their movements. The comprehensive records demonstrate that the well-trained staff members intervened appropriately on each occasion. Their interventions were effective at protecting the young people involved. The manager always briefs the young people and the staff following the incidents. There have been no injuries or a negative impact of the interventions on the relationships between the young people and the staff members.

The home enforces clear boundaries through a number of ways, including the effective use of sanctions. Regular key-working sessions, a range of well-organised high energy physical activities that young people and staff enjoy together and consistent encouragement and praise that young people receive also contribute to the good progress that young people have made in respect of their behaviour.

Some of the notifications received by Ofsted relate to the suspicions that young people might be sexually exploited. Staff have worked hard with the young people themselves, the police, children's social services, schools and health professionals and the young people's families where relevant, to minimise the risks. Some young people did not respond satisfactorily to the comprehensive multi-agency protective strategies that were put in place and continued to place themselves at risk. Although the home is highly committed to providing stable placements, those young people had to be moved to a different area for their safety and to receive a different level of care service.

Young people who live in the home now understand the key risks and want to keep themselves safe. This includes the risks inherent with sexual activity. They felt comfortable to ask the staff for better sexual education. In response to this, the home has made arrangements with a specialist service provider to talk with young people and staff about safe relationships. This includes discussions about safe heterosexual and homosexual relationships and how to recognise and protect themselves from the risks of controlling relationships and sexual exploitation.

Young people report feeling safe at the home and outside. They report not experiencing any bullying or intimidation. They describe the other young people who live in this home as good friends. They feel confident and safe. They feel able to talk with the staff members about any concerns, should they arise. When a young person disclosed to have experienced bullying at school, they received a well-targeted support that was effective at resolving the concern.

Leaders, manager and staff at the home model positive, respectful and supportive relationships. The young people told the inspector that they were able to change their behaviour for better, because the staff motivated them and helped them. They also talk positively about the impact that they have had on each other. One young

person explained to the inspector that he was involved in the number of incidents previously, due to the negative influence of a group of young people that he was friendly with at the time. The current group of young people is competitive in a positive way. They drive each other's progress and challenge each other to excel in their achievements.

Leadership and management

adequate

The home's new Registered Manager registered with Ofsted in May 2014. The interim management arrangements were good. However, they lasted much longer than intended due to circumstances beyond the organisation's control. All professionals who spoke to the inspector commented that whenever they visited the home they found it to be well managed.

The management has taken the recommendations from the last inspection seriously. Significant improvement has been achieved in both areas that were identified as weak.

One of the recommendations related to the atmosphere in the home and the relationships between the young people. This has completely changed, since the last visit. The home now radiates with an atmosphere full of energy and happy banter. Young people value each other's company and have formed a bond amongst themselves. Equally, they are open to accepting new residents into their positive group-living arrangement.

The main impact of the home's learning from the difficult period relates to tightening of the admission procedure. This includes increased consultation with young people overall and specifically in relation to new admissions. For example, there is now a clear expectation from the placing authority to include a full risk assessment in the information provided at the point of referral. The management bases their decisions on a better informed and more refined analysis of the predicted group dynamic. This includes talking with the young people who already live in the home about a referral and taking into account their views.

The other recommendation related to the medication records. The home has carried out a full review of the procedure for dealing with medication. The review focused on developing a more efficient record-keeping system that is likely to be more error-proof. A new, streamlined but still robust procedure has been introduced recently with a positive effect.

Many other aspects of the service provision have also been improved. In order to be able to demonstrate better the improved outcomes for the young people, the home has continued to develop the individual folders of the evidence that support this. Photo images of the young people joyfully sharing their new experiences with others provide additional qualitative evidence of their positive engagement, learning and

progress.

The home's Statement of Purpose and all policies and procedures have been recently reviewed in the light of the legislative changes and up-to-date good practice guidance.

Managers and leaders have clear plans how to continue to develop and improve the service further. Monitoring is robust and comprehensive and clearly focused on identifying and eradicating any weaknesses in the provision. The management has recently taken steps to improve records to enable them to more clearly demonstrate that all staff have been consistently well trained and supervised. However this is still a work in progress and needs to be firmly imbedded in practice.

The records of some complaints that were received in the recent months from the neighbours do not clearly demonstrate all the stages of the process that was followed. This is inconsistent with a high quality of record- keeping in relation to the complaints received from the young people. On some occasions, the young people wrote letters of apologies for their unacceptable behaviours to the neighbours. There are no unresolved complaints but the records have not been tidied up.

The home has made a request to enhance the team with a full time administrator. This is to increase the resources available to deal with the administrative tasks and a plethora of records that the home keeps. It would also enable the management to spend more time with young people without compromising the time required to be spent on the home's records. The home has been very busy, operating at a full or nearly full capacity. It is exclusively funded by the local authority in which it is situated.

The records on the young people's files are comprehensive and of a high quality. They provide an accurate picture of the young person's life in care. They clearly demonstrate the positive outcomes that they have achieved since coming to live in this home.

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.