

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC032838
Inspector	Gillian Walters
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Registered person	Appletree Treatment Centre Limited
Registered person address	Appletree School Natland KENDAL Cumbria LA9 7QS
Responsible individual	Clair Ann Davies
Registered manager	Amanda Jayne Fishwick
Date of last inspection	06/08/2014

Inspection date	11/02/2015
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Previous inspection	good
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **improved effectiveness**.

Children enjoy living in a warm and nurturing environment that places high priority on their safety and well-being. Staff show considerable sensitivity and effort in meeting their needs to ensure they feel comfortable, safe and appropriately secure. For example, for a number of children this involves great care being taken with bedtime routines to reduce their personal anxieties and fears. Most enjoy warm drinks and bedtime stories that help them to relax. However, for some children it is most reassuring to know that a staff member will stay close to their bedroom until they fall asleep. Consequently, children speak very positively and affectionately of their carers and say that they feel safe in this home.

Great care is taken in planning for new admissions to ensure that children already placed are not unduly unsettled or their care compromised. As such, children generally settle quickly into the home's routine. They play and get along well with each other. Although they acknowledge that they do occasionally bicker and argue, they feel able to settle their differences usually with some staff support. Positive behaviour is rewarded with lots of praise and encouragement and treats that are most likely to appeal to the individual child. Staff use incentives creatively to ensure that their approach remains fresh and keeps children interested. On the whole children enjoy very settled placements and take pride in their home and their personal achievements. They develop a positive sense of belonging that enables them to make good progress and move forward in their lives.

Children have an understanding of their placement plans that is consistent with their age and ability. They are successfully encouraged to be involved in their planning and review arrangements ensuring their views and wishes are heard and understood. Children understand that it may not always be possible for them to return to the care of their family and that alternatively they may leave the home to live with a foster family. In these circumstances, children are well prepared for their

move, understanding the steps that will be taken to introduce them to their new home. These arrangements mostly involve meetings, telephone contacts and days out before overnight stays. This way children are gradually introduced to new people in their life and their new environment. This minimises their anxieties and successfully prepares the way for a smooth transition. The home ensures that children leave with their own personal memory box, made up of photographs, pictures, letters and other items that have held special significance to them during their placement. Consequently, children leave the home with positive lasting memories of that period of their lives.

Children are encouraged to take part in clubs and activities that are of personal interest to them. As such the children in this home participate in a wide and diverse range of activities, including street dance, scouts, rugby, swimming, bird-watching and stunt scooting riding. These provide tremendous fun and ensure that children have plenty of opportunities for socialising, developing their skills and exercise. Children are consistently encouraged to express their individuality, developing their own sense of identity that helps build their confidence and self-esteem.

Children's contact with family members is well supported and promoted by the home. For some children where home visits are not possible, staff focus on making alternative arrangements as fun and enjoyable as possible. For instance, staff locate places of interest for children as an alternative to contact centres where it is deemed safe and reasonable. This enables children to meet with their family members in a more comfortable and child-friendly environment that also supports parents to relax and enjoy positive time with their children.

Children have excellent attendance in education, benefiting from the provider's on-site provision. There is good communication and collaboration between care and teaching staff that ensures children are managed in a consistent manner that promotes their learning and development. Children particularly enjoy spending time with staff reading together and listening to stories read to them. This enhances their learning of the world around them and provides a great opportunity for development of their imaginative and creative skills.

Improvements have been identified in the home's internal monitoring arrangements. Since the last inspection, the Registered Manager has been able to successfully evaluate her monitoring activity, identifying trends and patterns of behaviour that have provided alternative strategies that have proved successful in supporting children's needs and behaviours. For example, for one child this has led to a significant reduction in physical interventions by identifying particular times of day that are most problematic. The provider has additionally revisited arrangements for the independent monitoring of the home and appointed a new independent visitor. This further strengthens the home's quality assurance arrangements.

The manager effectively leads her staff team and demonstrates a passion for improving children's life chances. She shows determination in challenging practice,

both within the home and with other professionals, to ensure children receive the highest quality of care and support. Since the last inspection, the Registered Manager has revised the home's arrangements to delegate some management tasks and responsibilities to her deputy managers and team leaders. As such, these staff have a much clearer understanding of their roles and what is expected of them in supporting the Registered Manager to ensure the safe and smooth running of the home.

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned residential special school, which is also registered as a children's home. It provides a service to eight children, between the ages of six and 12 years, who experience emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/08/2014	Full	good
04/02/2014	Interim	good progress
18/09/2013	Full	good
05/02/2013	Interim	good progress

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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.