

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035339
Inspector	Mark Kersh
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	PO Box 160 OLDHAM OL1 1UG

Responsible individual	Kim Scragg
Registered manager	Sally Hallwood
Date of last inspection	25/03/2014

Inspection date	30/09/2014
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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	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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At the last full inspection of this home in January 2014 all of the outcome areas inspected were judged to be outstanding. The home continues to provide exceptionally well-personalised care for young people. This has resulted in young people achieving excellent outcomes in all areas of their lives.

Young people's placement plans and risk assessments are detailed and highly personalised to their individual needs and daily activities. As a result, the staff team provides consistent care that helps young people reach their potential and keeps them safe. Strong partnership working with schools, colleges and other professionals within the local authority, ensures young people's full range of needs are met.

Young people's views are actively sought on a daily basis and they feel they make a valuable contribution to their home. Staff are prompt at responding to young people's suggestions and this makes young people feel listened to.

Key strengths of the home are the dedication and skill of a committed management and staff team. Their experience and depth of knowledge are also strengths. As a result, young people are happy and enjoy extremely positive relationships with all of the staff. Their life experiences are very much enhanced by participating in a variety of stimulating activities.

Young people are kept safe through well-understood safeguarding procedures. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and any concerns are robustly investigated. Young people feel safe and are safe within the home and collectively say they can speak to anyone about any worries or complaints.

The management team provides inspirational leadership and support for both staff and young people. The home has highly comprehensive systems in place to regularly audit and track the impact the home is having on young people. As a result young people's outcomes are clearly defined.

There are no requirements or recommendations made as a result of this inspection.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and managed by a local authority. The home can accommodate six young people and has been set up specifically to provide care to young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is anticipated that young people will live at the home on a medium to long term basis.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/03/2014	Interim	good progress
23/01/2014	Full	outstanding
21/03/2013	Interim	good progress
05/07/2012	Full	good

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people make excellent progress in relation to developing a positive self-view. They form and sustain very positive attachments with the staff team, other young people placed in the home and peers in the local area. From their starting points, young people grow in confidence and feel exceptionally well prepared for their eventual move to independence. They fully understand their backgrounds, learn how to meet their own needs in a wide range of areas and are supported to take age appropriate risks by the staff team.

Close attention to young people's health needs and effective liaison with health professionals ensure young people lead healthy lives. This is supported by a positive working relationship with professionals such as the looked after children's nurse and local mental health services. Young people have a thorough understanding of healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle, and are thriving. They meet regularly with staff to discuss meals and menu planning, with healthy and nutritious meals being offered at all times. This includes ensuring that any specific cultural and dietary requirements are met.

Young people do exceptionally well in relation to their educational achievements whilst living in this home. All young people have educational provision in place, including college placements. The management team and staff place a very high value on education and ensure that young people have the support necessary to enable them to achieve in school or college. Close liaison and communication between the home and education provisions ensure young people's development needs are coordinated and thus met.

Young people participate in community activities offering opportunities to make friends, learn new skills, and grow in confidence. Young people gave very positive feedback about a recent charity fund raising event that they helped to plan and deliver in the community. This increases their awareness of health and community issues and their self-confidence. In relation to this, one professional commented: 'this was a wonderful event, where young people and staff were working together for such a good cause.'

The quality of young people's relationships with their families greatly improves as a result of living in the home. Significant in this is that levels of challenging behaviour reduce and young people mature and learn respect for others. Improved family relationships enable young people to retain a sense of their identity and provide opportunities for young people to have solid family support networks in the longer term.

A strength of the home is the focus on promoting young people's independence skills.

The emphasis is on young people doing as much as they can for themselves. Young people benefit from staff team's enthusiasm for and commitment to supporting them to develop independence skills appropriate to their level of ability. Well planned programmes link activities to young people's individual targets. Young people are making considerable improvements, such as learning how to budget and manage their own finances, prepare their own meals and undertake household tasks. This enables young people to make a positive contribution to the home while learning valuable life skills for the future.

Quality of care

outstanding

Young people thrive in the home as a result of nurturing, caring relationships with staff, which provide them with a secure base of stability and trust. Interactions are supportive and responsive, and are based on staff knowing young people extremely well. Staff have high aspirations for young people and they value them as individuals. Social workers say: 'Young people have excellent relationships with all of the staff, who are very supportive to their needs. They trust them and are happy and content there. I can't think of anything to suggest for any improvements they need to make as they do a fantastic job.', and: 'I am very impressed by the commitment of all of the staff.' Young people enjoy each other's company and participate in activities together.

Young people's wishes, feelings and views are central to how this home is run. Young people interact very well with staff on a daily basis to discuss issues, share ideas and agree menu plans and activities. The manager asks young people to complete consultation forms about staff and the care they receive in the home before staff annual appraisals, and all young people's responses are fully considered. Young people engage well in formal meetings with staff, both individually and as a group. All young people's requests are listened to and considered seriously, with decisions fed back to them quickly. As a result, young people feel listened to. One young person commented: 'Yes, staff do listen to us, because they discuss what we have asked for and always get back to us.'

Young people feel exceptionally well supported by staff in this home. They demonstrate a clear awareness and understanding of their rights and know how to make a complaint. Young people have regular contact with the children's rights officer and one young person is involved with the Children's Commissioner for England, which allows them to contribute young people's views about being in care. Some young people have been involved in the training of independent visitors. There have been no reported complaints since the last inspection. One young person commented during the evening meal: 'We can go to any of the staff to tell them if we are not happy about anything and they sort it, so never need to use a complaint form.' Young people present all agreed with this statement.

A focus on identifying young people's specific needs and understanding each young

person's character and personality is evident in comprehensive care plans. These provide clear pictures of young people and tell their stories as individuals. All young people's care plans identify their particular needs, with detailed strategies for staff to care for them and promote their development. Care plans are updated regularly by staff. All staff have time set aside each month to ensure that young people's care plans are accurate and prepared for the monthly audit by the manager. Young people contribute fully to all plans, risk assessments and review processes. Staff spend time going through these with young people, ensuring that their views, comments and contributions are fully recorded and signed by young people as accurate.

Staff are continuously alert to young people's health needs. Routine medical appointments and more specific health requirements are met to a high standard. Staff involve external health professionals whenever necessary, to ensure young people's physical and emotional needs are met. Systems for the administration of medication are robust and this protects the safety and welfare of young people.

Staff are proactive in supporting young people to attend school or college and achieve to their full potential. Key workers liaise closely with education staff and arrange visits and meetings for the young people with school or college. This is to identify support networks or to enable young people to re-sit their exams to achieve higher grades. This ensures that appropriate support is in place to assist young people's educational progress.

The staff fully consider the diverse needs of each young person living in this home. They ensure that any religious or dietary needs are known and met for young people. Staff are sensitive in supporting young people to consider their religious needs and preferences, and family members are consulted in relation to specific cultural issues. Staff also demonstrate a real understanding of ensuring young people with an anxiety disorder are responded to in a sensitive manner.

Young people live in a comfortable and well-maintained home. Young people personalise their bedrooms to reflect their personalities, giving them a sense of identity and belonging at the home. There is plenty of space in communal areas should young people want privacy. The home is set in its own grounds with off-road parking and is situated within a local community close to the town centre.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

Young people report feeling very safe and protected by the staff team. They feel able to discuss any issues or concerns they may have with staff members, confident that action will be taken to ensure their safety. Following the last inspection there have been two incidents of a child protection nature involving young people out in the community. Both of these incidents have been managed very well, with effective multi-agency working ensuring strategies are put in place for the safety of young people.

There have been no issues of bullying from young people for a considerable period of time, and all of the young people respect each other.

Individual risk assessments for young people clearly set out triggers that may cause young people to go missing, the action staff should take and places the young people may go, as well as names and telephone numbers of their friends. Some young people have gone missing from the home, although this has significantly decreased, and well known systems are in place for staff to report this and to support young people on their return. The police missing from home coordinator reports there are no concerns about this home.

Behaviour is well managed in the home. Each young person has an individualised behaviour management plan. Patterns of behaviour are monitored and reviewed on a monthly basis, and plans are amended and updated accordingly. Restraint is not used in this home and this reflects the staff team's ability to help young people to consider their behaviours and emotions and deal with any potential issues in a safe manner. De-escalation techniques, incentives and rewards are used and these positively encourage young people's good behaviours. Young people's individual praise books show more positives than sanctions imposed. This reflects the positive relationships within the home between young people and staff.

The selection and recruitment of staff in this home is robust. Records for all staff reflect the total commitment of the manager to ensuring that no unsuitable people are able to work with young people. The manager has excellent, secure systems in place to ensure that all checks are regularly updated for every member of staff.

There have been no reported allegations against staff since the last inspection and none for a considerable period of time. In the event of an allegation being made, all staff and managers display a clear and thorough understanding of what action would need to be taken. Staff understand the role of the local authority designated officer and know what support they would be provided with during any investigation.

The manager and staff team complete regular health and safety checks of the building to help minimise any risks to the young people. They work to ensure that the home provides a safe and comfortable environment. Staff and young people know what to do in any emergency and they practice this regularly. The manager has considered and consulted with other agencies the need to assess the location of the home and surrounding area, producing an excellent location assessment report for the home.

Leadership and management

outstanding

The Registered Manager has been in post since May 2011 and has the skills and social work and management qualifications necessary for the role. Management of this home is inspirational and reflects the management team's commitment to ensuring the best possible outcomes for young people. The Registered Manager communicates very high expectations to staff and continually strives to improve the services provided and thus the outcomes for all young people. The Registered Manager has very effective systems in place for monitoring and tracking the young people's outcomes in relation to their health, education and social needs.

The home has continued to meet exceptionally high standards since the last inspection. All of the records in the home are detailed, up to date and audited. Regular reports to social workers show the impact the home is having on young people and how their outcomes are continuously improving. One social worker commented: 'I get regular updates from them, they keep me informed of everything and I only have praise for the work they do.'

At the last inspection there were no requirements or recommendations made. There is a Statement of Purpose document in place which accurately describes the service provided. Young people receive their own personal summary guide to the home. These are well presented and informative documents and contain relevant information about living at the home and how to receive additional support.

The Registered Manager is aware of the home's strengths, and areas for development. Her monitoring and evaluation of the home ensures that issues are identified and addressed in a timely manner. Rigorous monitoring systems are in place covering all key areas of the service. The manager completes comprehensive and detailed regulation 34 monthly reports.

Monthly regulation 33 reports from an external visitor contribute to maintaining high quality care. This attention to monitoring, reviewing and evaluating has a positive influence on young people by continuously promoting high standards of care. There are very clear lines of accountability in the local authority from the responsible individual through to the residential child care workers. This ensures any difficulties in receiving plans or correspondence from fieldwork professionals are promptly addressed.

The home is sufficiently staffed and the majority of staff have completed the relevant childcare qualification. All staff have excellent training and development opportunities. The management team keep detailed, comprehensive records for each staff member and ensure that refresher training is continually provided. This means staff have the skills necessary to meet the individual needs of the young people. Staff report feeling exceptionally satisfied at the support they receive from the management team. They receive regular formal supervision and annual appraisals, attend team meetings and feel that they can make a real contribution to how the home is run and develops. The Registered Manager ensures that all staff keep up to date with new legislation and practice developments.

Records for each young person are maintained to an excellent standard. They clearly set out the aims and objectives for each young person and how these will be met. All records are stored securely for confidentiality reasons. Young people read and sign their records on a regular basis and make comments. Records kept for young people tell their individual story from their starting point in the home and show the progress they have made.

All significant events are notified to the appropriate authorities, including Ofsted, in a timely manner. Records reflect actions taken and all appropriate authorities are kept updated if investigations into significant events have not been concluded. As a result, both agencies charged with the protection of young people and the regulator are kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

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.