

Children's home inspection – Full

Inspection date	27/09/2016
Unique reference number	SC035518
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school
Registered provider	Sea Shell Trust Limited
Responsible individual	Mark Geraghty
Registered manager	Catherine Hall
Inspector	Sarah Oldham

Inspection date	27/09/2016
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	Requires improvement

SC035518

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Multi-agency assessment and planning prior to young people being admitted to the home enables effective plans to be implemented to support the complex needs of the young people.
- Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of individual needs and work in partnership with other professionals to provide care to young people.
- Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff, who help them settle into the home and support their care needs.
- Individual care plans are detailed and reflect need. Young people are involved with their plans and receive information in child-friendly formats, taking into account specific communication needs.
- Young people are able to take part in a range of activities. This enables them to develop their social skills with other young people.
- A range of effective communication techniques and strategies are used to support young people to communicate their wishes and views about their day-to-day care and experiences.
- Education attendance is excellent, with the majority of young people attending the organisation's school on the same site. Care and education staff communicate effectively to ensure continuity of practice.
- Individual key workers ensure that the needs and wishes of young people are supported. Where it is not possible to act on some of their wishes, staff provide explanations in a variety of ways to enable them to understand why this is the case.
- Healthcare needs are supported through access to a range of healthcare professionals within the organisation. This includes occupational therapists, school nurse and speech and language therapists.
- The home provides comfortable, purpose-built accessible accommodation which is compliant with health and safety requirements.
- There is a newly registered manager in post who has the necessary skill and experience to manage a large children's home.
- Staff receive regular supervision. This provides them with support and encouragement to fulfil their role well and to reflect on their practice. They have access to a dedicated training department which ensures that mandatory training is provided and that further opportunity is offered to

undertake additional training to enhance skills.

- As a result of this inspection, four requirements and three recommendations have been made. The requirements are in relation to ensuring that all information is gathered from the child's placing authority, including care plans. When this is not provided, the home must challenge this. There must be sufficient staffing to provide continuity of care and support to young people. The statement of purpose should include details in relation to staffing, the experience, qualifications and skills of staff members. The independent visitor to the home should undertake monitoring of all the houses within the registration on a monthly basis. This will enable the manager to have an overview of the service from an external viewpoint. The recommendations are in relation to consistency of staffing and the use of agency staff. The final recommendation is in relation to ensuring that there is clear understanding in connection to delegated authority to make it clear decisions in respect of the young person.

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
If the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c))	30/11/2016
13. The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, in particular reference to consistency of care for each child, the registered person is required to– 2(d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.	15/12/2016
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 16 (1))	30/11/2016
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the home at least once a month. (Regulation 44 (1))	30/11/2016

Recommendations

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

- The registered person should consider the skills, qualifications and any induction necessary for agency staff before they commence work in the home. The use of agency staff should be carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure children receive continuity of care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.16)
- The registered person should monitor and review the patterns and trends of

turnover of staff, whether agency or directly employed, and be able to understand and where possible, address any negative trends. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, 10.19)

- Each child's placement plan should set out the permissions that their placing authority has delegated to the registered person. This should provide clarity on the home's ability to give permission for school trips, sleep-overs or the child's involvement in sporting, leisure and cultural activities. Wherever possible the home should secure the appropriate authority to support children to be involved in the same positive activities as their peers. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 30, paragraph 6.2)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 28 children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, learning disabilities and physical disabilities. The home consists of seven houses, with occupancy of no more than four children in each house. It is owned and run by a charitable organisation who also have a school, college and adult residential accommodation also on the same site. It is also registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
09/03/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
18/11/2014	Full	Good
14/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Placements at the home are made following comprehensive assessments. These include health, education and, where identified, additional specialist assessments, for example occupational therapy and speech and language assessments. The manager also undertakes an impact assessment for new admissions, taking into account their needs and the needs of the other young people. These support transitions and placements effectively. However, some documentation from placing social workers has not been received. An example of this includes confirming the status of a young person who has been placed without the necessary agreement or documentation required for full-time placement within the home or information about delegated authority. This has been raised with the local authority but is not evidenced within the young person's placement information. Individual care plans developed by the home are comprehensive. They remain under review to make sure that they are reflective of individual needs. Designated staff work with young people as key workers who ensure that the young people are involved as far as possible with their plans and help to put these into appropriate formats for them to understand. Daily plans are put into pictorial formats to further assist with this. They also use technology to relay planning, including recordings and handheld computer tablets to further engage young people and obtain their views. All young people attend school or college, with the vast majority of them attending the on-site school and college. The school was inspected alongside this inspection and identified that the young people receive outstanding support to maximise their educational outcomes. The home links with the school well, and regular handovers ensure that there is a continuity of care and support. The manager attends regular multi-disciplinary meetings to further enhance and support the outcomes for young people. Healthcare needs are clearly identified within individual healthcare plans. Staff receive additional specialist training to meet individual specific healthcare needs; for example, managing individual tube feeding and tracheostomy care. One parent said: 'Knowing the staff have training and skills to manage my child's needs enables me to have confidence in the care and support they receive.' The home has access to speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, school nurses and physiotherapists who work for the organisation. This enables them to address specific healthcare needs, whilst ensuring continuity between the residential home and school. Medication storage is secure and within each young person's bedroom in locked cabinets. Staff who are responsible for the	

administration of medication have had the necessary training to enable them to fulfil this role.

Young people have access to a range of activities within the home, on the overall site of the home and school, and in the community. This includes use of the school's swimming pool and playground facilities, and after-school activity clubs. The young people also go to community parks, leisure centres, local shops, and are involved in planning day trips further afield. The vast majority of plans have clear reference to delegated authority agreements to enable staff to fully understand who can make decisions in respect of a child and at what level. Staff confirm that if they are unclear, they seek parental authorisation. However, one young person did not have this authorisation in place at the time of the inspection. Although this was raised with the placing authority, a response has not been recorded.

Parents and carers are fully involved and included with their child's plans. One parent said: 'Staff are always open and honest with me, and this enables effective sharing of knowledge to meet his needs.' Another parent said: 'We receive regular reports about our child and the progress made. Staff have an excellent understanding of her needs.' Parents say that they feel welcomed into the home and that staff provide a safe and nurturing home for their child. When they have concerns, they say that these are responded to well.

Young people are encouraged and supported to develop skills in accordance with their age and abilities. Achievements are celebrated, and plans reflect progress made. They are assisted with moving on to adult care provisions to ensure that the transition is a positive experience for them.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The safety and well-being of children and young people is central to the home's ethos. The individual houses are newly built and provide comfortable, well-maintained and safe environments for the young people to live in. Due to the complex needs of individuals, most are supported by either one or two staff members. The front doors to each house are on a security fob system. However, individual risk assessments have not been completed to ensure that those young people who are able to use the fob system have the opportunity to do so. There have been no incidents of young people going missing from the home, although each child has a comprehensive risk assessment in place in the event of this occurring, and staff fully understand the procedures to follow.	

Specific risk assessments are in place to manage complex health and physical needs. Staff caring for individual young people undertake specialist training to manage individual care, for example managing epilepsy, administering specific epilepsy rescue medication, supporting young people with tracheostomy and tube feeding. This training is provided by specialist healthcare professionals, who assess staff over a period of time prior to them being deemed suitable to complete the task. Training is updated on a regular basis to ensure that the staff remain competent.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of additional risks around behaviours of young people. The risk assessments in place identify the support required to minimise the risk of harm. Training in the proactive management of behaviour is overseen by the organisation's behavioural lead member of staff, who, along with the manager and staff, discusses and formulates intervention strategies and plans. Physical intervention is only used when there is a risk of harm. All interventions are recorded and monitored by the manager to see if there are patterns in behaviours and to look at further strategies or support required. These measures make sure that children and young people's risk of harm to themselves is minimised.

Staff recruitment is subject to robust oversight through application forms, interviews, securing references and enhanced disclosure certificates. Agency staff who undertake work at the home are vetted through the agency, which supplies relevant documentation in relation to their qualifications and current disclosure certificate. This means that the home takes all appropriate measures to ensure that people who pose a risk to children or young people do not undertake voluntary work or employment at the home.

The home has effective links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board, ensuring that they report and respond to allegations and complaints robustly. Comprehensive responses to a recent allegation demonstrate the home's commitment to safeguarding. One parent commented: 'I am confident the home ensures my child's welfare is promoted. If I have any worries or concerns, I am able to discuss them with either the staff or manager and they provide regular updates to me about my child.'

The houses children and young people live in are newly built, with parents and professionals contributing their ideas and views to the accommodation. Bedrooms are spacious and personalised. All young people have their own bathrooms connected to their bedrooms which have the necessary additional adaptations and equipment to meet individual need. Health and safety checks of the houses and fire evacuation systems are undertaken on a regular basis to make sure that the homes provide a safe environment for the children and young people.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The previous registered manager left the organisation at the end of October 2015. Since then, although a manager has been in post, registration with Ofsted was not completed until the time of this inspection. The organisation acknowledges that this was a breach in registration but has taken appropriate action to now comply with regulations by submitting an application with Ofsted, and the subsequent registration of a manager. The registered manager has the necessary experience to fulfil her role, having managed services for children and adults with complex needs. She holds management qualifications in social care and is currently completing additional qualifications in relation to children and young people. She is supported within her role by a manager of the short-break provision and team leaders for each of the houses within the registration, all of whom are appropriately qualified and experienced to fulfil their role. Each house has an identified staff team in place. However, there has been a shortage of permanent staff over recent months, resulting in the use of agency staff being high. This impacts on continuity of support for the children and young people and has led to some concerns being raised by parents. To address this, the manager has worked in partnership with the organisation's human resource department, to review staffing structures and undertake a continuous recruitment and selection programme. This has resulted in additional staff being recruited to permanent positions, and there are further plans for a dedicated bank staff team to provide consistent levels of care and support to young people. The manager undertakes monitoring to review the quality of care and outcomes for young people. However, there are inconsistencies within some filing systems between the individual houses. For example, some individual documentation for children looked after is held on individual young people's files within their home, while some is held within the manager's care office. Therefore information is not consistently accessible to care staff who provide direct care and support to the young people. That said, the staff demonstrate a good understanding of the individual needs of young people, and within each house young people's care plans, developed by the home, are detailed, containing information to support their care effectively. The views of parents, social workers and other professionals are central to the practice and ethos of the service. Surveys are completed on a twice-yearly basis,	

with the most recent one in August. Their views contribute to the development plan, and the manager responds to specific issues that are identified. In addition, the service has introduced coffee mornings on a quarterly basis for parents to meet with staff, the manager and senior management of the organisation. Young people contribute their views, which are gathered in a number of ways, taking into account specific communication methods. Access to independent advocates is also available. This enables young people's views to be incorporated within the service provision.

The manager is involved in multi-disciplinary management meetings within the organisation, which includes working with education and health colleagues. This enables effective sharing of communication to provide holistic support to the children and young people. In addition, she communicates with placing authority social workers to ensure that they are provided with regular updates and progress reports.

Staff receive comprehensive induction training to provide them with knowledge regarding the service, the needs of the young people and procedures to effectively safeguard young people. This training is completed prior to working with the young people and is followed by shadowing experienced staff to further develop their skills. The training for all staff is overseen by the organisation's training and development department. A recent audit of all staff training has enabled clear plans to ensure that training is completed and planned as required. Supervision also supports staff to discuss their practice and development.

There has been a shortfall in the number of permanent staff at the home, particularly over the summer-holiday period. The use of staff who work for the organisation within the school setting helped towards supporting the young people. However, the home also uses agency staff, and this impacts on the continuity of care to young people. Additionally, although agency staff are qualified, their knowledge and understanding of the specific needs of the young people is not as in-depth as that of regular and consistent staff. Recruitment of permanent staff is ongoing to address this.

The statement of purpose reflects the aims and objectives of the service. However, details in relation to the organisational structure, staffing and staff qualifications are not included to provide parents and professionals with this information.

Monthly independent audits of the home and the service that it provides are completed by a suitably experienced person. These contribute to the overall monitoring of the home. However, due to the number of houses within the registration, only one house is visited each month. This does not provide robust monitoring and evaluation of the whole registered service.

The manager and staff notify Ofsted, placing authorities and parents of concerns or events involving a child, as required in accordance with Regulation 40 of the

Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015. There had previously been a delay in this, but systems implemented ensure that all relevant people are now notified without delay.

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 children looked after 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 that 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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