

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	29/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC037281
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Suffolk County Council
Registered person address	Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, Russell Road, IPSWICH, IP1 2BX

Responsible individual	Clifford James
Registered manager	Serena Emberley
Inspector	Ashley Hinson

Inspection date	29/09/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and children living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and children are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC037281

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The service is making a positive difference for the children who stay there.
- The staff provide individualised care for children, centred on their needs.
- Children make good progress in relation to their education.
- There are strong relationships between the staff and children.
- There is a strong culture of aspiration, with staff having high expectations of children.
- Children have access to a range of social and leisure activities.
- The service works effectively with external professionals.
- When children move out of the home they do so in a planned way and ongoing support is offered to new placements.
- Children report feeling safe.
- There is no up to date location risk assessment in place.
- Children require additional guidance on e-safety.
- Staff do not currently receive training in child sexual exploitation.
- Records suggest that not all staff have participated in fire drills.
- Staff supervision is not consistently provided at sufficiently regular intervals.

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (Regulation 46 (1))	12/11/2015

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Ensure that staff help children to understand how to protect themselves, feel protected and be protected from significant harm in relation to e-safety. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 43, paragraph 9.9)

Ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert for any signs that might indicate a child is in any way at risk of harm. The registered person should ensure that skills in safeguarding are gained, refreshed and recorded in the homes workforce plan. This is with particular regard to the provision of training in child sexual exploitation. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 43, paragraph 9.12)

Ensure that records of restraint enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. This is with particular regard to clearly and consistently capturing information gained during debriefs with staff and children. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 49, paragraph 9.59)

Ensure that good employment practice is maintained and the performance management of staff includes ensuring staff are experienced responding to fire drills, to safeguard and minimise potential risks to children placed in the home. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.1)

Ensure that staff receive regular supervision of their practice which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.2)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a local authority; it provides medium and long-term placements for up to seven children who have emotional and or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/03/2015	CH - Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/09/2014	CH - Full	Good
12/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
22/01/2014	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and children living in the home are	Good
The children have strong relationships with the staff who care for them. An independent reviewing officer said: 'The staff have been brilliant. He is easily able to approach any member of staff. He knows what response he is going to get; he feels secure. Staff are able to say things to him that are difficult because of these strong relationships.' Children spoke of the staff helping them. Observations of interactions between staff and children were consistently positive, with clear rapport in place. Staff show interest in the children and celebrate their achievements. In turn, children show pride in their achievements and are keen to share these with staff. Staff treat children with dignity and respect. Where children have expressed an interest in exploring a particular religion or to experience a particular evening class, staff have supported it. For example, one child is attending church and another is a well embedded member of a local drama group. This contributes significantly to the culture of high aspirations evident in the home. Children have made considerable progress in relation to their school attendance and achievement. School staff reported: 'He is getting on really well. His attendance is 100% and staff make sure he does his homework. He comes in happy and he goes home happy.' Another professional said: 'He is doing exceptionally well at school. He is up at the crack of dawn and taking himself in. He is proud of this. For someone who missed so much of his education he is thriving and he loves it.' Since the last inspection, two children have moved on to foster placements. Moves are planned and take into account the children's wishes regarding the speed and the shape of the transition. A professional said: 'I have had one other child placed at the home; he was reunified with his family. The home were excellent, not only at supporting contact but giving information about the local community and helping in the transition programme over a period of months.' Prospective foster carers visit the home and spend time with the staff and children. The staff continue to offer support to foster carers after the moves. This increases the likelihood of the placements being successful and decreases the risk of further placement changes for children. Staff are proactive in support contact for children with their family and friends. A child spoke with excitement about his upcoming birthday party and the friends he has invited. A professional said: 'His siblings are placed in another county and the	

service has made sure that they are invited to parties and such like in the home. They have supported him to attend family events. They really promote contact.' Another child spoke of the friendships he has made. An independent reviewing officer said: 'He will always struggle emotionally but it is truly significant that he has made some friendships.' Consequently, children are less at risk of social isolation because of the support they receive.

The children have the opportunity to develop some independence skills in line with their age and stage of development. Some children have been encouraged to develop cooking skills through a 'Come Dine with Me' experience. Some children are now walking to school independently and they spoke of this achievement with great pride. A child said: 'I walk to school and I'm allowed to walk to town as well. I might do this on Saturday. I'm trusted and I behaved. I am proud.' This supports children to cultivate skills as they mature and prepares them for the next steps in their lives.

The service is making a positive difference for the children who stay there. A child said: 'Without them I would not be at school'. Another said: 'They have helped me to learn to cope with answers I don't like.' These are real impacts that have the potential to make a lifelong difference to children.

The home is a large three storey house; staff have made reasonable efforts to make it child friendly. There are numerous displays and the walls are adorned with photographs of children engaged in a variety of activities. Children's rooms are personalised and the large garden is well equipped with a range of resources. The children have access to a large array of books, toys and games. As a result, they live in a physical environment that is conducive to their wellbeing and development.

	Judgement grade
How well children and children are helped and protected	Good
The children report feeling safe and are able to identify someone they can talk to regarding any concerns. They have a variety of routes to raise concerns or make complaints. They have access to forms they can complete and were able to point these out. The children are establishing strong relationships with staff. As a result, they are beginning to feel safe and secure enough to discuss difficult issues. The staff are updating risk assessments to reflect the signs of safety model that the service follows. The risk assessments are thorough and balanced. This means children are protected without being unreasonably restricted. The home has not completed a locality risk assessment over the past 12 months, although one is in	

progress. This does not support staff to understand current risks in the locality.

Children do not go missing in this home. Most children do not spend time away from the home unsupervised. Where this does happen, it is risk assessed. All children have missing from care protocols in place. No children are currently thought to be at risk of child sexual exploitation. However, the manager recognises that this could change at short notice. Despite this, staff have not received any training in this area. This means staff may lack sufficient knowledge in a key area of safeguarding practice.

The staff and manager promote positive behaviour. The children show pride when they manage their own behaviour. Staff use constructive sanctions to assist children to reflect upon consequences. One child said in relation to an incident: 'I feel happy for putting it right.' The manager reviews the sanctions log. Where records have included ambiguous language, the manager has raised this in supervisions. This has provided newer staff with practical guidance and supports continual improvement.

External professionals report that the staff are working consistently with children to help them to manage difficult, aggressive and disruptive behaviours. This support has made a real difference to the progress children are making. As a result, they have managed to maintain educational placements that may otherwise have broken down.

On occasions, children require physical interventions. Staff use interventions in accordance with policy and maintain records of incidents. However, some records lack clarity. It is not always apparent whether debriefs have taken place, making it difficult to establish a clear overview of incidents, review the use of restraint and adapt future approaches.

The children have restricted access to the internet, appropriate to their age and understanding. The staff are aware of the potential risks the internet poses for children. However, there is no structured guidance or education for children on internet safety. As a result, children are not sufficiently supported to understand how to protect themselves.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
An experienced, qualified manager who leads with passion and insight manages the home. She became the registered manager in 2008 and she has a level four management qualification. The home has a strong focus on the needs of the	

children. The manager talks with genuine perception about the children and is committed to meeting their needs. She has high aspirations and expectations for the children. This ethos permeates the service.

Staff members spoke of feeling supported and well guided by the manager. Observations of interactions evidenced the availability of the manager to the staff. Discussions between the staff and the manager were child focused and reflective in their nature. The manager and deputy manager provide supervision but this is not taking place regularly. Some staff have had gaps of three months between supervision sessions. As a result, some staff are not receiving consistent access to protected time to reflect on practice. This is particularly important in a service with younger children who can be aggressive and require physical interventions.

The home is staffed adequately for the number of children in placement at the time of the inspection. There is a consistent staff team with many experienced, long standing carers in place.

Care plans developed by the home are thorough and reflective. They outline clearly the children's individual needs. Keyworkers review the plans monthly and children contribute to this review. Staff encourage children to participate in their formal reviews. A professional said: 'I spoke to him before his review and he was so clear about what his care plan was and was able to articulate exactly what he wants for his future plan. The staff had made sure he was able to understand and articulate his views.' Consequently, children are able to influence the decisions that impact on them and managers and staff have a clear understanding of children's needs and progress.

The home works pro-actively with external professionals to meet children's needs. Professionals are consistently positive about the quality of care provided by the home and the impact the home has had on children. All those spoken to said that the staff work effectively with them and have contributed to the children making progress. A deputy head teacher said: 'I am absolutely certain that without them having pushed, supported and cajoled him into the summer school he would not be here with us now.' A head teacher said: 'We have a really good relationship with the home, which has been built over the years. I know if we have a referral for a child who is living in the home we will be able to work with the home.'

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and children 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 children 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 children 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 children.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and children being harmed or at risk of harm or 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 children living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and children. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, children and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and children. Wherever possible, they talked to children, children 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 children 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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