

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	03/08/2015
Unique reference number	SC038435
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school
Registered person	Sunfield Children's Homes Limited

Responsible individual	Caroline Bell
Registered manager	Mark Brocklebank
Inspectors	Dawn Bennett Christy Wannop Andy Waugh

Inspection date	03/08/2015
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	Requires improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC038435

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- The registered person seriously delays reporting allegations to parents and to placing authorities. The registered person takes advice from the designated officer but does not maintain records of allegations against staff or the subsequent internal investigations well .
- The senior management team do not review practice following internal safeguarding investigations to inform safeguarding policies. Young people's complaints and concerns are not collated to inform practice and the future development of the service. Ofsted is not notified of all serious incidents.
- The school's behaviour management policy is not up to date and not effectively implemented across the houses. Staff do not always apply sanctions appropriate to the understanding of the young person. Strategies that restrict a young person's liberty are not always clearly recorded. Staff are not always supported to reflect upon their practice through de-briefs after managing incidents of challenging behaviour.
- The new structure of school day is not supporting all young people to achieve good outcomes. Young people are not cared for by, or able to form relationships with, consistent staff teams. The staff team are not formally supervised on a regular basis.
- A copy of the independent person's report is not being sent to Ofsted. The statement of purpose does not provide the reader with useful information about accommodation, staff qualifications, and staffing structures. Records of incidents of control, discipline and restraint are not accurately maintained. Risk assessments identify risks but do not identify the actions staff need to take to reduce risks.

The children's home strengths

- Individualised placement planning and target setting actively involves a range of professionals, parents and placing authorities. This leads to good outcomes for the majority of young people.
- From initial assessment, throughout schooling, and on through to transition, staff ensure young people receive good quality support for health and personal care issues. This enhances their quality of life and future opportunities.
- Staff are skilled at supporting young people to experience well planned and therefore positive transitions into and on from the service, and internal moves between the houses. They understand young people's anxieties and capabilities and use these opportunities to learn new coping skills for future moves.
- Staff fully support the young people to achieve their educational potential. Consistency of care and education is promoted at all times. This results in excellent attendance and good educational progress.
- The senior management team recognise the challenges faced by families whose children live away from home. There are excellent facilities on site that enable parents to have regular private or staff supported visits. Staff promote family contact and on site activities encourage parents and sibling involvement. This ensures young people maintain relationships that are important to them.
- Most young people participate in a range of social activities on site and in the local community. Many young people enjoy activities and clubs that prior to moving to the service they would not have otherwise been unable to access. As a result, they make new friendships, experience new situations, learn new skills and develop new interests.

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
12. The protection of children standard: In order to meet the protection of children standard that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure (2) (a) that staff (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child (e) that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly.	30/09/2015
13. The leadership and management standard: In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to: (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (g) demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on – (ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received.	31/10/2015
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(b))	31/10/2015

The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to HMCI. (Regulation 44 (7) (a))	31/08/2015
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. This specifically relates to: A description of the accommodation offered by the home. Details of the experience and qualifications of staff, including any staff commissioned to provide education or health care. Details of the management and staffing structure of the home, including arrangements for the professional supervision of staff, including staff that provide education or health care. (Regulation 16 (1) Schedule 1 (3, 19, 20))	30/09/2015
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes all the points listed in Regulation 35 (3). This specifically relates to ensuring a record of all incidents, updates to records after investigations, and recording timescales for restrictive strategies. (Regulation 35 (3))	30/09/2015
The registered person must follow the procedure in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect and must, in particular - provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located; provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse and neglect, and the action taken in response. (Regulation 34 (2) (b) (d))	30/09/2015
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ('the behaviour management policy') which sets out the measure of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. This specifically relates to: sanctions appropriate to children with learning difficulties; the use of any strategies that restrict liberty, and de-briefing sessions with staff	30/09/2015

after incidents. (Regulation 35 (1) (b))	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4))	31/08/2015

Recommendations

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

Ensure young people receive care which meets each child's needs and promotes their welfare, taking into account of the child's gender, religion, cultural and linguistic background, sexual identity, mental health, any disability, their assessed needs, previous experience and any relevant plans. This specifically relates to the format of the school day and ensuring it delivers positive outcomes for all young people (quality standard 3.2)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This service is a children's home registered with Ofsted. It is also a residential special school registered by the Department of Education. It is run by a charity. It provides a service to boys and girls aged 6 to 19 years with severe and complex learning difficulties and behavioural needs. It offers flexible placements of 38 to 52 weeks a year for up to 61 young people. 7 of these placements are for short breaks for current students who receive day or 38 week placements. There are 12 homes within the grounds of the school. Each house is different in design, the number of young people it can accommodate and the size of the staff team.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/03/2015	CH - Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/11/2014	CH - Full	Good
04/03/2014	CH - Interim	Satisfactory progress
02/05/2013	CH - Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
Care practice across all homes is not consistently good or effective regarding how the service helps and protects children, leadership and management and children's experience. This inconsistency is not widespread, but in some cases, has had a real impact. A year ago the structure of the school day changed. This was well planned, monitored and regularly reviewed. It resulted in some positive outcomes for young people and staff. For example, a reduction in behavioural incidents due to fewer transitions and more time for care staff supervisions. However, some of the changes have not worked. Some young people have experienced weight gain due to the new meal arrangements. The main meal is now at the same time as care staff handover between shifts. This has resulted in fewer young people eating in the social setting of the school dining room. The senior management team are aware of and continue to address the impact of this new structure. For most young people, outcomes and quality of care are good. Some make significant social, emotional, and educational progress. They achieve progress, helped by well-informed staff who received regular training, underpinned by established policies. Their care is tailored to meet their individual assessed needs. Established systems set targets, introduce behaviour management strategies, monitor progress and incidents, and identify trends and concerns. Regular 'team around the child' meetings involve specialists, such as psychologists, therapists, teaching, health and care staff. In the majority of cases, this enables staff to meet specific needs and young people to make progress. The education timetable is consistent with individual needs and circumstances. Young people's attendance is excellent. Routines and practice prioritise and promote learning. Staff have good knowledge and understanding of young people's health and medical conditions with support from the service's medical team. Young people who find routine health examinations threatening have mock appointments and personalised social stories so that they become familiar with the places, people, and processes involved. Staff support parents with medical appointments and will ensure additional staffing is available when necessary. Young people make complaints and raise concerns using a communication aid called 'purple dragon'. They also use external professionals and advocacy services,	

who visit individual houses on a monthly basis. This provides them with additional representatives who act in their interests should the need arise.

Most young people enjoy a range of social activities. A social worker stated: 'The young person has been taking part in a youth club which is run alongside a local school. I feel that this has been a good experience for them and the other students as it has enabled them to have fun with their peers and take part in 'normal' teenage activities.' A parent stated: 'Accessing the community has been a real area of progress. She has attended live concerts, pantomimes, musical productions, attended discos, been shopping, played at the local parks and day trips to the seaside. This is major progress as prior to being at the service we very rarely took her out into the community as it made her behaviours worse and it was harder to manage away from home.'

Young people develop skills important to their future progression on into adulthood. They learn new life skills which develop greater independence and responsibility. Staff ensure they experience positive transitions. For example, young people move into the service with a detailed initial multi-discipline assessment. They move house within the service supported by staff with whom they already have a relationship and who move with them. They move onto adult provisions supported by new staff who visit and stay working alongside staff who know them well. These individually planned transitions enable them to learn new skills at coping with change.

Young people maintain relationships with those people who are important to them. Parents and professionals have access to good facilities on site that enable them to visit and spend quality time with their children. There is dedicated accommodation within the grounds of the home for families to stay in when visiting their child overnight. There is also the facility for young people to contact families via computer who cannot visit as often.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
The systems in place to promote the safety and well-being of young people are not robust in all areas. Safeguarding concerns and allegations are appropriately referred, investigated internally, and ended with the safeguarding designated officer . The designated officer is satisfied with the service's reports of internal investigations and safeguarding arrangements.	

However, there have been significant delays in the service notifying placing authorities, parents and Ofsted of these incidents. Parents have been unaware of incidents for weeks. This does not instil confidence or promote partnership work. It also means that young people are without advocates at key times in their lives.

Records of actions by the staff with safeguarding responsibilities are dispersed and do not show a complete picture. There is not a chronological, or complete, account of these internal safeguarding investigations. Records of elements of investigations are dispersed between computerised records, individual email accounts and paper records. In the absence of the registered manager, senior staff are unable to access key information about the investigation, including what information has been passed to the designated officer, parents or the placing authority in conclusion of the service's investigation. This makes it difficult to assess the quality and robustness of the processes and look for any lessons to be learnt to inform future practice.

While the school has three designated and trained safeguarding officers, they have not taken responsibility for internal safeguarding investigations. Instead they delegate this to senior staff without the benefit of this training. Senior managers do not make sure that the outcomes and lessons learnt after any investigation are made clear to staff who have been subject to allegations. Staff return to work without a professional supervision meeting or a 'return to work interview'.

The safeguarding policy does not reflect other relevant legislation or current practice within the service. It does not provide staff with sufficient guidance to ensure safe outcomes for young people. The senior management team have reviewed the policy, but at the time of the inspection, that process was incomplete.

The behaviour management policy does not reflect current practice and systems. It is also under review. Systems and practice are not consistent across the houses.

Some young people's behaviour is very challenging. Behaviour management strategies and risk assessments do not always clearly describing the staff actions required to reduce risks and manage behaviours. Where restrictive, 'last resort' strategies are planned and used, they are not clearly recorded with timescales. This does not provide the information required to monitor the effectiveness of interventions or if the service is continuing to meet a young person's need.

Sanctions are rarely used. However, in one house staff use some sanctions that are not appropriate to the understanding of the young person. Behaviour management records are not always detailed, up to date, or amended in line with findings from investigations, and are therefore inaccurate. Staff are not always supported to reflect in de-briefing sessions about their interventions to manage young people's challenging behaviours.

Some young people make good progress in regulating their anxieties and resulting

behaviour. A social worker stated: 'The consistent approach offered by the staff in school and on house has had a huge benefit for the young person. Their behaviour is more manageable and the number of incidents and restraints has significantly reduced.'

A parent stated: 'From the very outset, he responded well the school's use of CALM techniques and for example has only been restrained once briefly in the entire year. He has a series of regular activities both on- and off-site with peers and children from a mainstream school which has substantially increased his social opportunities. The school have worked with us to identify potential areas of interest and provided support to allow us to take him out to local attractions. I have just come back from a week with him when I was able to take him to the safari park, soft play, the cinema and to eat out, all supported care staff. None of these activities would have been manageable on my own.'

The service has an effective missing from care procedure and protocol developed with the police and local authority. The home has been proactive in securing the protocol and meeting with the police. Good levels of supervision ensure young people are kept safe and do not go missing.

The physical environment of the houses is safe and secure. Health and safety is well managed. All activities and environmental features are routinely and robustly assessed to ensure safety. Young people have excellent opportunities to try new activities in a safe and structured way. Staff recruitment procedures are robust and all visitors are checked, vetted, and monitored. This further ensures young people are safe.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
The registered manager is appropriately experienced and qualified, holding a BA (Hons) in Education and the registered manager's award. All care managers are also qualified; two are registered health care professionals. The senior management team has oversight of the service's operation and have an understanding of its strengths and areas for development in most areas. Action to meet two regulatory shortfalls from last year's inspections is not yet effective. Shortfalls continue in both these areas: not all staff receive regular supervision and records to show the management of behavioural incidents are not good. The school's safeguarding team does not maximise learning opportunities to make a formal critical evaluation of how the registered person has managed safeguarding matters. Records are not helpful. Similarly, the independent visitor is	

unable to form an effective view of the safety and welfare of young people because they do not get to see crucial safeguarding information. The registered person reviews the policy in isolation from practice. These shortfalls mean that the registered person does not embed learning from child protection incidents into the wider quality review across the school to improve safeguarding practice.

Significant work has been undertaken and there has been a steady improvement in the delivery of supervision. However, there are still areas for improvement. For example, night waking staff do not receive regular supervision. The independent person is sending monthly reports to the registered manager and responsible individual but not to Ofsted. Complaints and concerns raised by young people are not collated across site or used to inform future practice.

The home's statement of purpose does not describe the range of accommodation, staff qualifications, and structures in a way that is informative parents and placing authorities. Staff numbers across site are in line with the assessed needs of young people and the service's statement of purpose. Nevertheless, there is still staff movement between houses and reliance on agency staff to cover shifts. This impacts on staff morale and young people's relationships, especially in the smaller houses where one agency member of staff can represent 50% of the staffing on shift. Trained, permanent staff need consistent support from reliable colleagues to manage challenging behaviour. The senior management team plans to address the shortfall.

The senior management team are focusing on improving consistency of staffing. There has been a sustained employment drive as well as good focus on reducing previously high levels of staff sickness. These initiatives have been successful and have delivered a significant increase in permanent care staff and an overall reduction in the use of agency staff.

The senior management team have already identified some of the shortfalls found at this inspection and these are reflected in development plans or the service's strategic plan. They have missed other shortfalls. There are a wide range of initiatives that are on-going or planned for the future. These continue to develop and inform the service. Due to the size of the service, and the number of personnel employed, the introduction of these initiatives can take time to impact on quality of care and outcomes for young people.

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 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 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 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 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*.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*, which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, workbased learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It inspects services for looked after children and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2015