

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	11 May 2016
Unique reference number	SC038435
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school
Registered person	Sunfield Children's Homes Limited
Registered person address	Clent Grove, Clent, Stourbridge, Worcestershire DY9 9PB

Responsible individual	Caroline Bell
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspectors	Sue Young Dawn Bennett Christy Wannop Louise Battersby

Inspection date	11 May 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	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 requires improvement because:

- Systems to safeguard children and young people have not been robust.
- Staff do not consistently promote young people's safety and well-being. Safeguarding incidents have occurred when staff have not followed procedures.
- The home continues to have a significant number of staff vacancies. This impacts on the care that children and young people receive.
- Staff do not feel supported in their roles and do not feel that managers listen to them. In some houses, staff morale is low.
- Not all care staff have attained the appropriate qualifications to work with children and young people.
- Some children's bedrooms are not pleasant, nurturing or supportive environments.
- Children and young people's records are not kept up to date, and important information is missing.
- The monitoring and surveillance of children and young people are taking place without the written consent of placing authorities.

The children's home strengths

- The overarching therapeutic provision is good. Constructive input from the therapeutic team and partnership working with parents have led to an improved quality of life for many children and young people.
- Education is consistent with individual needs, and promotes learning.
- Facilities on site enable children and young people to have positive contact and maintain relationships with those people who are important to them.
- Clear transition planning supports young people to develop skills that will be important to them in adulthood.
- The senior management team has strengthened internal quality assurance processes, and tightened systems and procedures to improve robustness and rigour.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The protection of children standard 12.—(1) In order to meet the protection of children standard, children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe;	3 June 2016
The leadership and management standard 13.—(1) the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; (b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; (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; (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the	3 June 2016

development of the quality of care provided in the home; (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance (Regulation 24(1)(b)).	3 June 2016
The registered person must ensure that an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma (Regulation 32(4)(5)).	30 September 2016
The registered person must maintain records for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 and are kept up to date (Regulation 36(1)).	3 June 2016

Recommendations

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

Ensure that local authorities should have in place 'Runaway and Missing From Home and Care' (RMFHC) protocols agreed with local police and other partners ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.23).

Ensure that children's homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9).

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 six to 19 years with severe and complex learning difficulties and behavioural needs. It offers flexible placements for 38 to 52 weeks a year for up to 61 young people. Seven 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
4 February 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
3 August 2015	Full	Requires improvement
18 March 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26 November 2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
Safeguarding and leadership challenges mean that overall, children and young people are not having good experiences and outcomes. The lack of rigour in safeguarding processes, and the shortage of skilled and qualified staff have impacted on children and young people's care and outcomes. However, the quality of individualised care provided, and the impact of the school on the progress and experiences of children and young people are improving. There have been no new admissions since the last inspection. New admission processes are now clearer about the needs that the home can meet and whether children's challenging behaviour is beyond their care. The majority of children and young people are making good and, for some, significant progress across all aspects of their development. For example, one young person has made excellent progress in his communication, learning the use of new aids and verbal skills. Children and young people have good attendance in education. Education is consistent with individual needs and promotes learning. One placing social worker stated, 'The young person has been at this home for some years and has made considerable progress.' Another social worker commented, 'He has made great progress since moving to the home, in particular in the area of communication. He was non-verbal on arrival and now communicates verbally and with symbols, [and] is able to make himself understood well. He is pushed to explore and learn, and is making clear progress with his education.' Children and young people use a communication aid called Purple Dragon to raise any concerns that they may have. They also have access to an independent advocacy service that visits and meets with staff and young people on a regular basis. This ensures that children and young people are able to contact someone independent of the home to represent their wishes and feelings, should they feel that this is needed. Children and young people benefit from consistent, joined-up care. Staff are appropriately trained to administer medication and are well supported by the school's medical team. This ensures that staff have a clear understanding of children's and young people's health and medical requirements. There are regular 'team around the child' meetings involving specialists such as psychologists, therapists, nurses, teaching and care staff. This ensures that children's and young people's care is tailored to meet their individual assessed needs.	

The involvement of children and young people in activities on and off site is an improving picture. There is an increased participation in activities with the local community. A youth club is run on site in partnership with a local mainstream school. A film club has also resumed. At the weekend, a games room, soft play room and sensory room are available on site for children and young people to enjoy.

The quality of relationships between staff, and the children and young people is, on the whole, good. Feedback from placing social workers and families is positive. One parent commented, 'There is brilliant care, it is really nice.' Another stated, 'This is the happiest he has been. Staff genuinely care and do their best to create a positive, supportive and active environment.' A placing social worker stated, 'Staff are skilled, patient and caring.'

Children and young people are well supported to have contact with those people who are important to them. The home has two self-contained flats where family and friends can come and stay overnight, and a cottage where day contact can take place. This supports the contact arrangements for children and young people who live a long way from home. The home runs 'sibling weekends', when young people's brothers and sisters can come to stay. There are also 'sibling workshops', when they can discuss what it is like to be the sister or brother of a child or young person living at the home.

Clear transition planning and support mean that young people are helped to develop skills that will be important to them in adulthood. The home has a transition team that works with families and local authorities to develop a profile of each young person moving into an adult placement. It works to ensure that adult care assessments are accurate, and is a strong advocate for young people and their families. When young people move into adult placements, the team supports both the young person and the new provider through individually planned transitions.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Systems to safeguard children and young people have not been robust. Staff have not followed procedures when safeguarding incidents have occurred. Management has taken action when this has been found, and allegations have been appropriately referred to the local safeguarding designated officer. Senior managers have been proactive in meeting with the local safeguarding designated officer and, as a result, the robustness of internal investigations has increased. They have conducted a thorough internal review, resulting in systems and procedures being tightened to improve robustness and rigour. For instance, they	

now conduct a critical review of procedure and practice after any safeguarding incident. This means that staff, children and young people are better protected.

Managers have reviewed training for staff to increase their knowledge and awareness of safeguarding. They have engaged a safeguarding consultant to deliver training and to increase security for children and young people. This includes Internet safety. Managers have also worked well with placing authorities and parents to address any shortfalls. As a result, staff feel more enabled to whistle blow and reconsider areas of poor practice.

Children and young people do not regularly go missing or engage in risk-taking activities. There has been one incident of a young person going missing, which was very serious and potentially life threatening. Managers have been swift to put measures in place to rectify the shortfalls to prevent a further recurrence. Children are never alone, either inside or out of the home, so will not be subject to child sexual exploitation. Any use of the Internet is closely monitored by staff. The home does not have a copy of the West Midland protocol for children who go missing to ensure that their procedures concur with local police protocols. However, managers have made links with local police to develop awareness and practice.

Staffing levels and support have not always enabled staff to manage challenging behaviour effectively. This has improved. Increasingly, challenging behaviours are being managed by staff using clear and consistent boundaries. This contributes to a feeling of well-being and security in children and young people. Management has developed student focus meetings so that any member of staff can discuss concerns regarding children's and young people's behaviour with a member of the psychology and therapy team.

There are some children and young people whose behaviour continues to be difficult to manage. Seclusion is still used as a behaviour management strategy, but its use has been dramatically reduced since the last inspection. There is now only one young person for whom this is used. The home also uses baby monitors to monitor some children and young people with epilepsy. Managers and staff have not obtained written consent for their use from either placing authorities or parents. As a result, children's and young people's privacy may be compromised.

The environment in some children's bedrooms is not pleasant. The management of extreme destructive behaviour, incontinence and regurgitation mean that some children sleep and eat in rooms that are not nurturing and supportive environments.

The physical environment of the houses is safe and secure. It is regularly assessed, and health and safety checks are routinely conducted. Fire evacuations take place on a regular basis so that all staff and young people know how to keep themselves safe if there were to be a fire. There is a careful, robust selection process for all new staff working in the home to ensure that they are suitable to work with young

people. Visitors are supervised and monitored appropriately to ensure that young people are safeguarded.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The home does not currently have a registered manager in place. Since the last inspection, the home has employed a new head of care, who is in the process of registration. There are four care managers who are all appropriately qualified and experienced. The home has a statement of purpose which accurately sets out its aims and objectives. The home continues to have a significant number of staff vacancies. Although it manages this by the use of regular agency staff, some children and young people experience a lack of continuity of staff who are familiar to them and have a full understanding of their needs. The senior management team has reviewed staffing levels, and is implementing a strategy and recruitment drive to increase staffing within the home. Care staff have not all attained the appropriate qualification to work with children and young people. There are several members of staff who have worked in the home for over two years but not achieved the stated qualification, or its equivalent, within the required timescales. However, all are in the process of completing these qualifications. Managers expect all staff to have obtained the appropriate qualification to work with children and young people within six months. The senior management team has oversight of the home's operation and the areas for development. Senior managers are fully aware of the shortfalls. They continue to have a firm commitment to a programme of improvement and have a clear understanding of the progress that children and young people are making. However, action to meet the regulatory shortfall from the last inspection is not yet effective. Shortfalls continue in this area. The senior management team has strengthened the internal quality assurance processes to improve areas where it has identified weaknesses. They have conducted a thorough review of safeguarding concerns within the home. A development plan outlines the direction of travel to improve quality of care and safeguarding. Managers are committed to working in partnership with designated safeguarding officers, placing authorities and local authority commissioning teams. One local authority commissioner stated, 'There is a genuine commitment to improvement, and the principal and new head of care seem ready to acknowledge past failings and the urgent need to remedy them.' Having insufficient skilled and qualified staff in some houses still has the potential to impact on children's care and staff resilience. At times, staff feel unsupported	

and not listened to by management. They can be under extreme stress because of children's individual challenges. Managers recognise that support and supervision for care staff need to improve. They have developed reflective practice sessions which are available to support the staff teams. There are also plans to increase skills for a particular staff team that works with young people with mental health issues. Staff widely report that the new head of care is a 'breath of fresh air'. They consider training and induction to be of good quality.

The quality of record keeping, although improved, is still not good. There are gaps in records. Records are not kept up to date and staff do not have easy access to important statutory documentation that they need to implement children's and young people's care plans effectively.

The overarching therapeutic provision is good. Constructive input from the therapeutic team and partnership working with parents have led to an improved quality of life for many children and young people. This enables managers and staff to have a good understanding about the progress that children and young people are making. Staff can clearly describe the progress that is made and the strategies that they use to achieve this.

Managers and staff provide good advocacy for children and young people. For example, one young person has been supported to achieve protection through the looked-after system to secure additional funds for activities and his future adult care.

The vast majority of placing social workers and independent reviewing officers report good and excellent partnership working with managers and staff. One social worker stated, 'Excellent. Staff are very helpful and professional. Good working partnerships maintained.' An independent reviewing officer commented, 'I find the professional partnership working to be without fault.'

The home works well in partnership with parents. A family support worker meets all families on admission and stays in contact with them. There is a family forum which is run every six months. Parents have access to training and reading materials. Families are able to feed into other aspects of the running of the service, such as policies, development plans and training.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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