

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC045096
Inspector	Guy Mammatt
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Blackford Education (Schools) Ltd T/A Libra
Registered person address	Edgemoor Court SOUTH MOLTON Devon EX36 3LN
Responsible individual	Alan Wilkes
Registered manager	Lisa Jackson
Date of last inspection	25/02/2014

Inspection date	16/10/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home provides highly personalised and well planned care. Young people are involved in their care planning with a wide variety of consultation opportunities. This promotes good outcomes for the young people. They have all made good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development in relation to their respective starting points.

Young people benefit from many unique opportunities that promote their social inclusion and understanding of the wider world. Young people are also helped to keep themselves safe through engagement in education on the safe use of the internet. The educational achievement of the young people is exceptional, taking into account both their attainment and their progress since they moved into the home.

Staff provide high quality support and have excellent relationships with the young people. Staff show good knowledge and understanding of the young people's needs. The staff provide effective support to manage young people's behaviour and help them to address unresolved issues from the past.

Leadership and management arrangements are strong. The manager is effective at

tackling weakness and securing improvement. There are no breaches of regulation or failure to meet national minimum standards that are impacting negatively on the safety and welfare of the young people.

Generally staff at the home demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practices. However, restraint records do not fully describe the measures used and staff do not routinely offer young people medical attention following the use of restraint. Additionally, the manager has not referred to the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) a concern that was reported to the police by a neighbour.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private limited company. It is registered to care for four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Care packages usually include the provision of education at the company school.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/02/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
24/07/2013	Full	outstanding
18/02/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
20/11/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include a description of the measure used (Regulation 17B (3)(c))	12/11/2014
22 (2001)	ensure that electronic or mechanical monitoring devices for the surveillance of children are not used in a children's home except for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, and where it is provided for in the child's placement plan. (Regulation 22 (1)(b))	12/11/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where there has been physical restraint, children's homes must be able to call on medical assistance as required and children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- ensure that allegations against people that work with children are reported by the designated person to the LADO. This includes allegations that on the face of it may appear relatively insignificant or that have also been reported directly to the police or Children and Family Services. (NMS 20.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people enjoy living at the home. They engage with the staff and make good progress in many areas of their lives. Young people form positive attachments which give them the confidence and security to do well in all areas of their life.

Their attendance at school is excellent. Young people have a positive relationship with their teachers. They are taking GCSE's and also achieving appropriate developmental targets in line with their cognitive ability. Young people attend taster days at local colleges to help stimulate their ideas about further training opportunities.

Young people thrive in this nurturing environment. Their physical health and personal development have improved greatly since they came to live at the home. Young people who have previously experienced severe neglect benefit from the consistent responses of, and clear boundaries set, by the staff. This helps young people to reach developmental milestones and begin to physically mature.

All young people engage with specialist support services; for example, creative art therapy, occupational therapy and a clinical psychologist. This helps them make sense of their past, and develops their emotional resilience when dealing with current anxieties.

Young people show significant improvements in their eating skills and enthusiasm to try new foods. This helps their personal development as well as increasing the nutritional value of their diet.

Young people benefit from experiencing a wide range of activities and opportunities, including a group holiday to Florida, holidays in the UK, horse riding lessons and involvement in community youth clubs. This broadens their experience of the world, opens up new social opportunities and teaches them to deal with new and challenging situations, such as long distance travel.

Young people collect photographs and memorabilia while they are living at the home and are able to take them with them when they leave. Young people value these; young people are very proud of their photos of swimming with dolphins and riding horses. The photographs and memorabilia promote young people's sense of belonging and will be something that young people can reflect on positively in future, bringing back positive memories of their time at the home.

Generally young people do not participate in risk-taking behaviour. They have been less physically aggressive since coming to live at the home and they have not been involved in any criminal activity. Young people learn to control their emotions and are develop the ability to verbalise their feelings; something they do more now than they

used to.

Bearing in mind their ages, young people are reasonably confident, about being ready for independence and adult life. They have their own bank accounts and shop independently. Young people take part in work experience at wildlife parks and are encouraged to explore other career options and part-time work opportunities. One young person has been asked to be a mentor at an outdoor adventure centre that they recently attended.

Young people learn about road safety, internet safety, cyber bullying and on-line privacy. This helps keep them safe now and in the future.

Each young person's experience of family contact has improved since the start of their placements. Supported by the home, young people and family members benefit from regular opportunities, to spend good quality time together. The stability that young people have found since coming to live at the home has contributed to improved relationships with people who are important to them.

Quality of care

good

Placement planning is highly individualised. It takes full account of each young person's views, wishes and feelings and is focussed on clear measurable outcomes.

Consultation opportunities for young people are excellent. The feedback provides the staff with valuable information about the young people which is incorporated into their care plans. Staff get young people to participate in placement plan reviews which then feed into their child in care review meetings. Key worker sessions are used to discuss events and help young people make the link between their experiences and their behaviour and feelings.

Staff benefit from specialist advice on how to individualise behaviour management strategies in ways that support young people to develop their own skills in managing their behaviour. Staff engage young people in anger management work. They also external advice and expertise, for example for young people who have been victims of domestic abuse.

Working with the relevant health professionals, the manager ensures that the young people have access to the services and support that they need to meet all of their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Young people benefit from having access to a clinical psychologist and creative art therapy

Staff work proactively with other agencies and professionals to ensure positive outcomes for the young people. They work together to positively address challenges to educational achievement and provide a good level of support for young people at school.

Staff support the cultural needs of the young people. They also help them understand equality and diversity issues. Young people take part in Operation Shoebox which gives them the opportunity to participate in charitable work and appreciate other children's circumstances in developing countries.

The home is maintained to a good standard and well-resourced throughout. Young people live in a homely environment. They have access to facilities that help them relax and play.

The young people's placement plans do make reference to the door sensors that are used by the staff to safeguard and protect young people at night. Consequently it is not clear to all parties why the sensors are being used. Although an omission, this has not had a negative impact on the young people's health and well-being or their safety.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

The recording of, and follow up to, the use of physical restraint is incomplete. Staff do not fully describe the measures used during an incident. This does not allow for effective monitoring to ensure that the use of force was safe and proportionate. Additionally, staff do not always offer medical assistance to the young people following the use of restraint. On no occasion has a young person been injured and their injuries been overlooked. However, the home is required to ensure that staff routinely offer medical assistance to young people following the use of restraint, irrespective of whether it appears to be needed or not.

A neighbour of the home raised a concern to the police about young people's welfare. This was investigated by the police who took no further action. The manager did not refer this to the LADO. This did not impact negatively on the welfare of the young people. However, a recommendation is made to ensure that significant information about the protection of children is shared with all of the appropriate parties.

Behaviour management plans are clear and help staff challenge unacceptable behaviour in a safe manner for all concerned.

The manager monitors incidents, sanctions and restraints. Appropriate action is taken to reduce their frequency. The manager has put in place effective strategies that help and support young people when they are most likely to be feeling stressed or anxious. This has led to a reduction in such incidents.

The frequency with which young people go missing has greatly reduced. All incidents are followed up sensitively to provide effective support for the young person concerned and reduce the likelihood of a re-occurrence.

The manager works proactively with the local police to support and promote the safety of young people. The Somerset police representative for missing persons has approved the Missing Without Authority policy and completed training with the staff on child sexual exploitation. Individualised risk assessments are in place which describe the vulnerability of each young person and the response required in the event that they were to go missing.

All staff working with young people are carefully selected and vetted. All environmental and safety checks of the premises are conducted at appropriate intervals.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager has been in post for five years. She has the necessary experience and qualifications for the role.

Leaders and managers are aware of the strengths and weakness of the home. They use good quality monitoring processes to identify areas for development and achieve high standards for young people.

The manager can clearly demonstrate the difference that the home has made to the young people's lives. This is supported by the views of professionals who know them well. A family support worker commented that they had seen a young person develop significantly in terms of their emotional and physical health and well-being; 'it was wonderful to see him laugh and be able to communicate effectively with his sister.' A social worker for another young person observed that that young person 'has made vast progress since coming to the home.'

The manager has met the recommendations from the last inspection: there is now a designated deputy manager to provide leadership and direction when the Registered Manager is absent; large parts of the home have been redecorated; and all young people have practiced a fire drill.

Staff receive good levels of supervision which includes a discussion about the staff's familiarity with the young people's care plan. As a result, the staff have good knowledge of the young people's needs and background.

The training provided for staff is good and includes a thorough induction process. This broadens their experience of supporting different young people and ensures they all complete essential training. Staff also complete specialist training related to the support needs of individual young people. For example, preventing bullying, supporting young people who are the victims of domestic violence, child sexual exploitation and on-line safety.

The manager has a comprehensive Statement of Purpose in place that clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the home. This is supported by an excellent development plan. The development plan promotes opportunities for the young people around the positive use of social networking sites, learning about different cultural issues and inclusion in the local community.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.