

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	13/07/2016
Unique reference number	SC047483
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Mulberry House Care Homes Limited
Registered provider address	Tollgate Business Centre, Tollgate Drive, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 3HS

Responsible individual	Karen Ingley
Registered manager	Michelle Lovatt
Inspector	Michelle Spruce

Inspection date	13/07/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved 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	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC047483

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people feel safe in the home.
- Young people transition well into adult care, equipped with the skills for independence.
- Young people sustain their placements.
- Staff are dedicated and passionate in delivering individualised care.
- The home is well presented. Care has been taken to improve the interior of the home. The gardens are excellently maintained.
- Staff know the individual risks that young people present. They understand the triggers to behaviour and manage them well.
- There is excellent joint working with the local police and vulnerability team, particularly in respect of young people at risk of child sexual exploitation
- Young people contribute to the looked after children's board. This helps to shape their future care.
- Young people develop empathy and take responsibility for their actions.
- There are areas identified for improvement. These relate to maintaining the home in line with the statement of purpose, education support, resources, and physical intervention training.

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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
13. The leadership and management standard: In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to the statement of purpose and physical intervention training: (2)(a) The registered person must lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the statement of purpose.	31/08/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that, where children placed in the home are not participating in education because they have been excluded or are not on a school roll for some other reason, the registered person and staff, in the interim, support the child to sustain or regain their confidence in education and engage them in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- Ensure that children have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this would be inappropriate. In such cases, the home should consider whether and how it can support the child to access a computer and the internet safely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.19)
- Ensure that all staff have been adequately trained in the principles of restraint techniques appropriate to the needs of the children the home is set up to care for as defined in the statement of purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.7)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is one of four operated by a private company. It offers long-term care and accommodation for two young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/07/2015	Full	Requires improvement
04/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
18/09/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The quality of care that young people receive is good. Young people like living in the home. For some young people, the home has been the longest placement they have resided at. This helps young people to form positive attachments and sustain a settled residency. An external professional responded to a survey about the home and said, 'The staff create a nurturing and safe environment for young people. Staff support and encourage young people to strive for positive outcomes.' The manager and staff are passionate and dedicated to their role. They work closely with young people, parents and social workers to gain a thorough understanding of the care required. Care plans are clear and kept up to date. Young people are encouraged to take part in the reviews of their care. Staff constantly engage them in conversations to shape their future in key working and house meetings. Young people contribute to the looked after children's board. This helps to shape their future care and gives them the chance to have their say about the care they receive. Relationships are formed over time. Staff try hard to help young people to respect each other and themselves. Staff lead by example and promote a positive culture based on the ethos and values of the home. A staff member said, 'I feel it's important to listen to young people and not to judge them. I am a nan figure in the home. I use humour to ease tensions and offer a hug.' This helps young people to fit in socially because they understand what is expected of them and they know staff care. Young people have contact with family and friends that are important to them. Visitors to the home are made to feel welcome. This helps young people to strengthen family bonds and maintains important relationships. Young people have access to a range of health services should they need them. Staff encourage young people to attend routine appointments. Young people generally feel fit and well. Young people are provided with nutritious and well-balanced meals of their choice. This keeps them healthy. Young people have positive aspirations for their future. Education outcomes differ regards to the individual. For example, one young person has made good progress from her starting point. A tutor said, 'At the start she was difficult to work with. Now her work is excellent and of a high standard when it is completed.' Another young person is awaiting confirmation of his education placement to begin. He has	

a clear vision about his career and is eager to get back into the education system. However, while he is not receiving any education, staff do not have any structured activities to help him regain confidence. The home does not have access to a computer and the internet to support young people's education and learning. This means that learning opportunities are lost.

Young people transition well into adult care equipped with the skills for independence. Those preparing to move on do so in a planned and organised manner. Staff work well in partnership with the young person to assist them in developing crucial life skills before leaving care. Young people engage well and feel ready for independence.

The home is well presented. The front driveway is tidy and welcoming. The garden is well looked after now that regular maintenance is in place. The home has been decorated and new carpets have been replaced in the hall and stairs. New flooring has been put down in the kitchen and upstairs bathroom. Young people have had furniture replaced and bedrooms decorated.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Young people say that they feel safe in the home. Robust risk assessments and compatibility matching helps to protect young people from harm. There is zero tolerance of bullying. The manager deals with and takes seriously any issues related to bullying behaviour. Young people confidently complain when they feel bullied. Complaints are taken seriously and the manager takes effective action to ensure that young people are protected from any perpetrator. The manager investigates all complaints and provides feedback on the outcome to the young people. This keeps them safe. Staff know the individual risks that young people present. They understand the triggers to behaviour and manage them well. Physical intervention is only used as a last resort. Staff always use de-escalating techniques before using any measure of restraint. Young people receive a de-brief following physical intervention. This gives them the opportunity to reflect on the incident. On some occasions the police have been called out when young people have assaulted staff. The staff work well with the police and aim not to criminalise young people unnecessarily. Young people often show remorse and empathy when they have physically harmed staff. For example, following an altercation with a staff member, a young person took it upon himself to apologise. He had reflected on the incident and felt remorse. This helped to regain trust between them and strengthened their relationship.	

Not all staff are suitably trained to use physical intervention. For example, the manager, deputy and senior staff have used measures of physical intervention to protect young people or others from harm; however, they have either not yet received training or their current certificate has expired. This compromises young people's safety if they require physical intervention because there are not enough suitably trained staff to provide support.

Sanctions are imposed for unacceptable behaviour, for example returning home late, damage to furniture and not following the house rules. Young people feel the sanctions are fair and understand why they are given. This helps young people to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Rewards are given for positive behaviour. For example, young people receive money as an incentive for returning home in line with their behaviour plan. Verbal praise is also used to promote positive behaviour. This helps young people to take responsibility for their actions.

Health and safety monitoring arrangements keep all who live, work and visit the home safe. Hazards are reported and action is taken to reduce any presenting risks. Fire safety is managed well. All staff and young people take part in fire evacuations. New staff and young people working or residing at the home take part in fire drills. This keeps them safe in the event of a fire.

The manager and staff work in excellent partnership with the local police and vulnerability team. This helps to keep young people who are at risk of child sexual exploitation and who go missing from home safe. The manager regularly attends forums with the police vulnerability team. The manager said, 'We put a protocol together so staff know what to do if she went missing. We would report her as a young person at risk of child sexual exploitation, rather than missing from care. We would make it clear that she is not missing but at risk of child exploitation'. This has worked well.

All staff are trained in safeguarding and child protection procedures. They know and understand their responsibilities and what action to take if a young person was at risk of harm or abuse. Allegations against staff are managed well. All significant information is shared with the relevant parties. This ensures that a full investigation takes place in a timely manner.

Since the last full inspection, staff have been safely recruited. The manager undertakes a thorough check of required information and ensures that all staff are safe to work with young people before starting work. This keeps young people safe from unsuitable candidates having access to them.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The home is led by a registered manager. She has been in post since January 2016 and has a level 3 diploma in children and young people and level 2 leadership and management. She is currently working towards her level 5 diploma in leadership for health and social care. She has over two years' experience in a leadership role working with children and young people. The manager is supported by a qualified and experienced deputy manager. The deputy has over 30 years' experience working with children and young people. Four staff have left the service since the last full inspection in July 2016. The manager confirms that recruitment is constant. There are currently two full-time staff in post: one senior and one support worker. Agency staff fill the vacancies. The manager said, 'I try to keep the same agency staff to provide continuity of care.' Additionally, the manager also helps to cover shifts along with staff from the company's sister homes and bank staff. Most staff are qualified. Those who are unqualified are within regulatory timescales at present to obtain their qualification within two years of starting work. Some of the training objectives for staff in the statement of purpose are not met. For example, physical intervention training should be provided to staff as soon as practicable. Some staff recruited approximately six months ago still have not received this training. This means staff are not suitably trained to meet the needs of the young people the home is set up to care for. The manager has a home development plan. The plan provides a vision of how the service will continue to operate. The manager identifies from staff, young people and third parties objectives to improve the home. Staff are supervised and appraised well. Their practice is assessed on a daily basis. The manager gets involved with the staff on duty and often oversees shifts at different times of the day. This helps the manager to provide feedback to staff about their performance. The manager often challenges practice where it is not effective. For example, the manager challenged a decision made by an external professional. The manager disagreed with the decision not to report a child missing from care as she remained in contact with the staff. The manager overruled the decision following a discussion with the vulnerability team and the third party. Excellent relationships have been formed with external professionals. The manager says she has forged exceptional relationships with other agencies. Social workers, independent reviewing officers and education professionals all speak highly of the	

manager and her team. A police officer said, 'They provide good feedback and regular updates because information is shared.' A professional responded to a survey from Ofsted about the home and said, 'There is a good staff team with a dedicated and passionate manager motivating them.'

The manager has met the requirement from the last inspection. Information required to be held in records of physical intervention is now held in full. The manager signs off the records and ensures they are correct.

External monitoring of the home is completed monthly, and bi-annual reports about the quality of care are sent to Ofsted by the manager. This ensures that the home is continually evaluating its service.

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'.

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 2016