

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC061837
Inspector	Michael Williams
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Archways Care Ltd
Registered person address	Badgers Rest, Stourbridge Road Parkgate KIDDERMINSTER Worcestershire DY10 3PT
Responsible individual	Christopher John Aristidou
Registered manager	Ainsphia Cibrina Butler
Date of last inspection	28/01/2014

Inspection date	17/07/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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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At its last full inspection in November 2013 the home's overall effectiveness, and each individual area inspected, was judged to be good. Then at its interim inspection in January 2014, the home was judged to be making good progress and no areas for improvement were reported that needed to be followed up at this inspection.

Taking into account their starting points at the time of their placements, and the length of time they have been in placement, overall young people make good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. They are helped to achieve this by the good support they receive from staff. Placement planning is individualised to meet the personal needs of each young person and is implemented in practice. Each young person's progress is reviewed against the Every Child Matters outcomes.

The Registered Manager, deputy manager and staff team have a good understanding of safe working practices which they mostly effectively follow in conjunction with external professionals when necessary. Young people who completed an Ofsted survey for this inspection mostly said that they feel safe at the home all the time, followed by most of the time. Staff follow agreed strategies to protect young people from areas of risk. Any concerning behaviours are well managed by staff. Appropriate boundaries are set and are consistently followed.

The leadership and management arrangements are good. Together the Registered Manager and the independent person, who visits monthly on behalf of the registered provider, extensively identify and address any weaknesses in order to secure future improvements.

In their surveys for this inspection, young people commented that what is good about the home is its new carpet, swing-ball in the garden, and that 'I get loads of things and all the rest of the kids are nice to everyone and all the staff are nice.' Asked what the home could do better, young people commented about letting them walk off site without staff, improvements to the home and its staffing, and having more private, unsupervised time with other residents. During this inspection, young people variously commented: that the home is good; all the staff are good; the home is alright because it has positives and negatives; and the home is 'alright and it's a good place for young people.'

Two areas for improvement have been identified. They relate to keeping young people safe but have not had a negative impact on the welfare or safety of young people in the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home offers services for up to four children and young people, with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/01/2014	Interim	good progress
06/11/2013	Full	good
07/11/2012	Interim	good progress
11/07/2012	Full	adequate

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
26 (2001)	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available before a person is employed to work at the home in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2. In particular, in respect of a reference from the person's most recent employer and verification of the reason why their previous work with children ended. (Regulation 26 (3) (d), Schedule 2)	29/08/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take

account of the following recommendation(s):

- Ensure that allegations against people that work with children are reported by the designated person to the LADO. This includes allegations that have also been reported directly to Children and Family Services. (NMS 20.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Taking into account their starting points at the time of their placements and the length of time they have been in placement, young people have achieved good outcomes overall. Most external professionals working with young people at the home strongly agreed or agreed that improving outcomes for children is a clear priority for staff at the home. Since the last inspection, independent Looked After Children (LAC) reviews have mostly reported continued progress and development and some excellent progress. For example, one young person, 'is continuing to make positive progress at [the home] where they are clearly settled', and another young person, 'is making excellent progress at [the home] and would benefit from remaining there for a further period'.

Young people make good progress in developing a positive sense of identity, self-esteem and knowledge and understanding of their backgrounds. Young people make, and usually sustain, positive relationships with staff in the home. For example, one young person's recent LAC review reported that they have, 'developed positive working relationships with the staff group.' Where appropriate, young people are also supported by the staff to re-develop positive relationships with their families. During this inspection, one young person was having a short break with their family and another was having supervised contact with them.

Young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are very well met. They are helped to understand and begin to take responsibility for their health needs. Young people's health needs are assessed and plans put in place to meet them which are regularly reviewed. A parent strongly agreed that their child's health needs are met by staff. The company running the home also has a therapist available to young people and the staff working directly with them.

Young people are able to actively express their views, wishes and feelings which they feel are taken into account both in the day-to-day running of the home and in important decisions about their lives. Young people are supported to participate in regular key worker sessions, residents' meetings and in important meetings about their lives. In June 2014, the home's independent visitor reported that at residents' meetings, 'suggestions made by young people are acted upon if reasonable'. In addition, young people have recently made a number of contributions to the operation of the home through consultation that has taken place with them. The home also seeks and takes account of the views of young people's parents, social workers and independent reviewing officers as part of their regular review of the quality of care provided.

Taking into account their starting points at the time of placement, young people's educational attendance and achievement is good overall. Young people mainly

commented that they are doing well at school or college 'All the time', followed by 'Most of the time'. Young people have variously: completed a further education college course and examination, despite attendance difficulties at the very end; successfully achieved part-time attendance at a local, mainstream secondary school, with a view to attending there full-time; and finished school and attended their school proms having completed most of their secondary education exams, and having completed all of them in which they are predicted high grades. This progress has been reported in recent LAC reviews. For example, 'Everyone is proud of [the young person's] continued educational achievements', and 'They are also making positive strides with their education.'

Although they gave a mixed response when asked if they take part in activities they like, young people are actively and positively involved in activities both in the home and the community. For example, this inspection took place when young people who had finished college and school were engaged in activities outside the home, such as spending time with local friends and time away with family, and inside the home, such as playing computer games and with a remote controlled car. Staff were planning summer holidays to suit each young person. Young people also gave a mixed response when asked if staff help them to prepare for when they will live independently. However, when age-appropriate young people follow an independence plan at the home so that when the time comes they are as confident as possible about their readiness for leaving and moving on into adulthood. As part of promoting one young person's independence, staff were also promoting their social development.

Quality of care

good

Staff are consistently concerned with and actively promote young people's welfare. Young people gave a mixed response to a question about the standard of care and support they get from staff, but a parent strongly agreed that the care and support their child gets from staff is excellent. External professionals working with young people at the home also gave a mixed response, from strongly agree to neither agree nor disagree, to a question about how well staff care and support children and know and understand their needs. One external professional explained: 'I believe that most of the longer standing members of staff do this, but due to the turnover of staff and occasional breakdown in communication, this doesn't always happen.' At the time of this inspection, long-standing managers and staff were supporting new staff to ensure a consistently good quality of care.

Staff use individualised behaviour strategies to help young people enjoy positive relationships with them and with other adults and young people. External professionals mostly strongly agreed or agreed that staff support children to behave well and help them to manage difficult behaviours. Staff also positively promote and support young people's family contact. The combination of the two has impacted positively on young people's family and social relationships.

The running of the home and the delivery of young people's care is significantly influenced by the views of young people. Young people share their views during individual key working sessions, residents' meetings and meetings about their care. They have also recently been asked to contribute their ideas on the day-to-day running of the home, on things such as rules and routines, rewards and holiday activities. Since the last inspection, the home has received four complaints from two young people. One of these young people commented that the complaints system is one of the positive aspects of the home as they have used it to achieve what they wanted to happen.

Young people are central to the planning and review of their care; staff ensure that as far as possible young people are consistently involved in these processes, either in person or via their advocate. This ensures care is tailored to their individual needs and is focused on achieving clear outcomes. Each young person has an up-to-date placement plan which reflects their placing authority's care plan.

Staff actively promote young people's educational attendance and achievement. Young people attend various educational provisions and staff at the home and the company's education co-ordinator work very closely together with staff in these provisions to promote consistency of care across both settings. The education co-ordinator participates in young people's personal education plan and LAC review meetings, and liaises with their placing authority social workers and parents, to promote their educational achievement. They have begun completing an education tracker for each young person to track the educational progress they make during their time at the home. An external professional commented on the, 'Excellent communication between school and the home.'

Staff also work proactively with health and safeguarding professionals to try to secure positive outcomes for young people. The former include general practitioners as well as the company's therapist and child and adolescent mental health services. Staff work with them to ensure that young people have access to the general and specialist services they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people mainly agreed that they feel safe at the home most of the time. Similarly, external professionals mainly strongly agreed or agreed that children are safe at the home. To help protect them from risks, often arising from their emotional and behavioural difficulties, each young person's case record includes a risk assessment which is implemented in practice and regularly reviewed. One young person's recent LAC review reported, 'A risk assessment is regularly reviewed by staff... they have managed their anger much better.'

Young people commented that a question about staff helping them when they were bullied was not applicable, as they did not identify bullying as a problem at the home.

There have been no incidents of young people going missing since the last inspection. Should there be such an instance, managers and staff are aware of and will follow the company's policy and procedure for safeguarding children who go missing or are absent, which is based on the latest Department for Education guidance.

There has been minimal use of physical restraint since the last inspection. It has only been used in exceptional circumstances and has been recorded as required. For example, the last record of restraint includes that its use was, 'necessary to prevent injury to others' and that afterwards a de-brief was carried out with the young person. There has also been minimal use of sanctions since the last inspection. Following consultation with young people about the home's rules and routines, its sanctions log has been replaced by an actions log, recording action agreed following an instance of unacceptable behaviour. Alongside rewards, these measures have been used effectively to address unacceptable behaviour.

The home's managers and staff have strong and proactive relationships with external professionals which support and promote young people's safety. External professionals mostly strongly agreed or agreed that staff work in partnership with them. Staff awareness of child protection issues has been raised through a suitable level and frequency of training. Staff strongly agreed and agreed that they feel confident about dealing with safeguarding and child protection concerns. Since the last inspection, a concern about the welfare of a young person in another service registered with Ofsted, including an allegation against people that work with them, has been reported directly to the relevant children and family service. However, it was not also reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer for safeguarding. A recommendation is therefore made regarding this.

Safe recruitment practices and procedures are in place and are mainly followed to help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm young people. Since the last inspection, three new staff have started work at the home. While information required in respect of one of them did include two written references, it did not include a reference from their most recent employer and verification of the reason why their previous work with children ended. A requirement is therefore made regarding this. During this inspection interviews took place for the home's one residential support worker vacancy; a young person living at the home was involved in this recruitment process.

The home provides a good physical environment for the young people. Essential environmental checks are up-to-date. External professionals strongly agreed and agreed that staff provide a safe and comfortable environment that meets children's needs.

Leadership and management

good

The home is well managed by its Registered Manager, deputy manager, and responsible individual whose office is based at the home. In April 2014, the Registered Manager returned to being in full-time day to day charge of the home after a period of absence, during which the responsible individual effectively acted as the manager. The responsible individual made the following comment on the last report by the home's independent visitor: 'I am really pleased at the smooth transition by [the Registered Manager] back into her role after leave.'

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose that was last revised in June 2014 and collectively covers all the matters required to be included in it following an amendment to the Children's Homes Regulations in April 2014. The aim and purpose of the home and the facilities and services it provides are clear to staff, placing social workers and young people's parents. There is also a young person's guide to the home in a format suitable for them.

The staffing numbers, the level of experience of staff and the support provided to them are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people. The details of the staff team and the arrangements for their supervision, training and development are included in the home's Statement of Purpose and are implemented in practice.

Since the last full inspection, staff have participated in training designed to help them continue to meet young people's needs. The home's training plan includes training in safeguarding, health and safety, fire precautions, contact, equality and diversity, food hygiene, and behaviour management including physical intervention. Staff have either attained or are undertaking the professional qualifications relevant to their roles. Regular supervision, team meetings and staff appraisals also support staff to provide a good quality service to the young people. A staff team meeting took place during this inspection.

The home's Registered Manager, deputy manager and responsible individual have been exercising effective leadership of the home's staff and operation. They have ensured the delivery of good quality care that meets the individual needs of each young person at the home. To ensure continuous improvement, the written development plan for the home dated July 2013 is currently being updated by the Registered Manager.

Young people's case records and the home's records are clear and up to date and contribute to an understanding of the life of young people in the home. The independent person's last visit to the home included viewing one young person's case records following which they reported, 'In summary, this is a well presented case record which provides informative information to all staff working with [the young person].'

Since the last inspection, there have been four significant events relating to the

protection of young people accommodated in the home. The appropriate authorities, including Ofsted, were notified at the time and appropriate action was taken following each incident, including liaison with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the local children's safeguarding team.

Regular monitoring of the operation of the home effectively helps to maintain good quality care and promote the welfare of the young people. The Registered Manager last completed a report reviewing the quality of care over the last six months in May 2014 and sent a copy of this report to Ofsted. Following an amendment to The Children's Homes Regulations that came into force in April 2014, they will now be sending such a report to Ofsted every three months. In addition, an independent person carries out a Regulation 33 visit to the home on behalf of the registered provider once a month and reports to the registered provider and Ofsted on the conduct of the home. The reports of these visits include any specific points of action. The last such report Ofsted received was for the visit in May 2014, the summary of which included: 'This was a very positive visit... I had the opportunity to talk to a number of staff on duty and some of the young people living at [the home] and through these conversations am satisfied that the home continues to provide a high level of care to the young people in residence.' This inspection reached the same conclusion.

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.