

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	10 May 2016
Unique reference number	SC062288
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Educare Adolescent Services Limited
Registered person address	Venture House, 12 Prospect Business Park, Longford Road, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 0LG

Responsible individual	Matthew Fisher
Registered manager	Tina Morten
Inspector	Louise Whittle

Inspection date	10 May 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	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC062288

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people are settled and making positive progress in their development, relative to when they arrived.
- They have warm and trusting relationships with dedicated staff who actively support their emotional and physical well-being.
- Motivated staff successfully support young people to enjoy positive relationships between themselves, enabling them to have free time together in the community.
- Highly skilled staff understand the underlying issues affecting young people's ability to manage their emotions and behaviour, and work with them to address their difficulties.
- Staff effectively keep young people safe and work with them to understand how to keep themselves safe.
- The well-organised registered manager continues to make significant improvements in the service, enabling the stable staff group to focus on the needs of the young people.
- The registered manager ensures that staff supervision is challenging and supportive and that staff receive relevant training.
- The highly child-focused registered manager challenges other professionals when they are not meeting the needs of young people, but could escalate concerns regarding education even further.
- Staff sometimes lack consistency with regard to behaviour management. Ensuring that they each fully understand and have the skills to implement the behaviour management policy is an area for improvement.
- Other areas for improvement are the accuracy and accessibility of written records and making the decor of the home more welcoming.

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
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In order to meet the engaging with the wider system standard the registered person must ensure that staff— (a) seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; (b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans.	3 June 2016
35: Behaviour management policies and records (1) The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— (a) how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and (b) the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home.	3 June 2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must— (2)(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.	3 June 2016

Recommendations

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

- With regard to making the home more welcoming and homely, staff should seek to meet the child's basic needs in a way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where their needs have not been consistently met, doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child and value them as an individual ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7).
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is part of a large organisation operated by a private company. The home is registered to provide care for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or a learning disability.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
2 March 2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
23 September 2015	Full	Requires improvement
4 March 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
7 August 2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people benefit from living in a settled, stable and nurturing environment. They enjoy warm and trusting relationships with the committed, child-focused staff group. The social worker for one young person commented that the home has a very good balance of roles, which emulate a family. This supports young people's emotional well-being and social development. Young people are happy with their rooms, which they personalise. They are positive about the decor of the home, which, although comfortable, does lack pictures and personal items in the shared rooms, which would make it more homely. However, one young person commented in one of the weekly young people's meetings that the sitting room looked nice. One young person is making significant and sustained progress in his education and will shortly to be taking his GCSE exams. Staff fully support his aspirations to become a teacher. Young people who are not in full-time education, engage with staff in a varied range of activities that support their learning and progress towards independence. Staff spend time with them on maths, budgeting, letter writing and online research at the library. One young person has taken measurements for a planned pond and researched the costs. Another young person enjoys attending a mechanics course two days a week. Staff creatively encourage him to visit motorbike shops, read the information leaflets and take photographs of the bikes. Staff effectively encourage young people to engage in artwork, practical skills like making a speaker box and going fishing. Committed and caring staff have an in depth understanding of the reasons behind young people's difficulty in managing their emotions and behaviour and the need to address this on all levels. Young people are listened to by skilled staff, who take their concerns seriously. Staff also help young people to prepare for and contribute to their looked after reviews and education meetings. Staff address difficult issues with young people, including bereavement and they support young people's identify with, for example, family contact and discussions about religion. Staff enthusiastically encourage young people to benefit from sport and physical exercise for their self-esteem, confidence, emotional and physical well-being. Young people enjoy playing football with staff and each other in the large garden. One young person has approached staff about joining a boxing club. Staff proactively support one young person, who is a keen and talented rapper, to find a studio where he can record his work. He also enjoys using his drum kit. Young people have formed positive relationships between themselves and have demonstrated the ability to behave responsibly when out together without	

supervision. They have had fun going bowling and skating together and have made progress in independence skills and self-confidence.

The social worker for one young person commented that he benefits from receiving one-to-one attention from staff, which he has not had before. The social worker says, 'They look after his health, have encouraged him not to smoke and now he is giving up from choice now...They go the extra mile for him.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Experienced staff work effectively with young people to increase their ability to reflect on and make choices about their behaviour. Consequently, they are less likely to engage in harmful behaviours. Young people's smoking has decreased, as have the number of incidents of going missing. Staff who are highly trained in safeguarding and child protection, ensure that they keep young people safe. When young people are missing or leave the home without authorisation, staff follow them and contact a range of agencies and local people to alert them. The locality risk assessment addresses the risks posed by the proximity of the busy main road. Strategies are in place with clear guidelines for staff to follow to ensure the safety of young people and themselves. The social worker for one young person says that if he goes missing, he now returns by himself, which is evidence of the positive relationships that he has formed. Another social worker commented, 'This is the safest place for him and he has been safe. When he goes missing, they find him. They have understood how to manage his behaviour. He is rethinking and will now respond to consequences.' Staff work together daily, to assess the moods and needs of young people. They ensure, for example, that it is safe to agree to a request for additional unsupervised time out in the community. This provides further safeguarding in addition to staff referring to the regularly reviewed and updated risk assessments. Staff discuss strategies to keep young people safe, while acknowledging the benefits to young people of allowing them to feel that they are trusted. Young people are involved in their own risk assessments and behaviour management plans. While staff have not assessed the young people as being at risk of child sexual exploitation, staff are fully trained and aware of the issue. Key work evidences a wide range of safety issues discussed with young people including internet safety, bullying, confidentiality, drugs and alcohol, safe sex, trust, smoking and fire evacuation.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manager is currently undertaking her level 5 leadership and management qualification and has 8 years' experience of working with children in residential care. She has managed this home for the past 11 months, having taken over a very unstable, unsafe and unsettled service. Her staff team now all hold their level 3 qualifications. The registered manager has made real progress since taking over the role. This has resulted in a well-organised, settled home, where young people are making progress in all areas of their development. Her strong child focus and organisational ability have supported staff to effectively meet the complex needs of young people. Since the interim inspection, there has been a significant reduction in challenging behaviour from young people. This is due to the registered manager's skilful impact assessments and matching of the young people in placement. The more settled environment and consequent improved staff morale has enabled the registered manager to achieve the aims and objectives of the service set out in the statement of purpose. The registered manager consistently provides the staff group with clear leadership, supportive supervision and relevant training. Staff say that the registered manager is supportive and they feel well trained to do their job. Supervision is thorough and staff can bring ideas to discuss. One new staff member commented that he has been enabled to do shifts with each team member in order to get to know them. The registered manager leads by example and is not afraid to challenge other professionals when they do not provide young people with the services that they need. Education is an example of this, with the registered manager repeatedly contacting local authorities and virtual schools in order to secure education for two young people in placement. However, while the registered manager is tenacious in addressing these shortfalls, she could escalate matters even higher within the local authorities, in order to be more effective. The registered manager inherited a staff team that was demoralised and she continues to work hard to establish consistency within the team, in particular with regard to behaviour management. Staff do not always all give young people the same message regarding boundaries. This is an area for improvement for the registered manager to address via training and individual supervision. Inconsistent behaviour management by staff and a lack of education for the young people are currently preventing the registered manager from improving standards even further in the service. While record keeping has improved since the registered manager began managing the home, it is not always available to evidence the work that staff undertake with regard to young people and complaints. This has implications for communication between staff members, young people and other professionals. The registered manager has maintained the home in an absence of financial investment in the	

property. The company has now redressed this situation, with budgets approved for the replacement of windows and adjustment to the driveway. This will improve both the safety and the quality of the home for young people and help staff morale.

Feedback from childcare professionals is very positive with regard to the work undertaken by the staff team and the registered manager. The social worker for one young person commented that the service 'works really well' with her, giving her access to online care records so that she can see how the young person is progressing daily. She is satisfied that the staff address complaints and call her immediately with any concerns. She also commented that the registered manager is very good at prompting the local authority to provide services for the young person. Another social worker echoed these encouraging views.

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 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 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'.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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