

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	15/12/2016
Unique reference number	SC063814
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Break
Registered provider address	Schofield House, 1 Spar Road Norwich, England, Norwich NR6 6BX

Responsible individual	Hilary Richards
Registered manager	Janet North
Inspector	Debbie Young

Inspection date	15/12/2016
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	Outstanding

SC063814

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- There are effective safeguards and protocols in place when children are absent from the home.
- Children have positive relationships with the staff. The staff team spend time nurturing these relationships by working directly with the children in a therapeutic way.
- Children make good progress. Their confidence and self-esteem improves.
- There is an inclusive ethos in the home. The children have a positive sense of belonging.
- Support is in place to enable the children to attend their health appointments. The staff work closely with professionals to help the children to stabilise their behaviours and to reduce their medication.
- Children develop positive relationships with their family members.
- The home is well-led with an excellent leadership team in place. This continues to drive the service forward.
- The children are making progress in their education.
- Risk assessments and behaviour management plans are comprehensive and regularly updated, reflecting the changing needs of the children.
- There is a high level of support and training in place for the staff.
- The staff listen to and act on the needs and views of the children. The staff are dedicated and committed to the care of the children.
- Room search records are not adequate and do not include sufficient information.
- Some gaps were identified in the notification of events to Ofsted.
- Records of rewards and consequences do not sufficiently include the detail of the action and why a particular consequence was used.

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

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that all room searches are appropriately recorded. In particular, the reasons for the search, efforts to seek the child's consent and any risk assessment and management oversight of the decision to undertake the search. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.20)
- Ensure that records of sanctions are appropriate. In particular, ensure that there is sufficient detail to enable the children to understand the reasons for any consequence put in place. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- Ensure that Ofsted are notified of all incidents concerning a child that the registered person considers to be serious. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a registered charity. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children and young people aged between 7 and 17 years who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
21/10/2015	Full	Good
19/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
17/12/2014	Full	Good
04/03/2014	Interim	Good progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children have positive relationships with the staff who provide a calm environment and embrace a therapeutic relationship with the children. This enables the children to start to trust them. The children have been able to open up and talk about their difficult life experiences. The staff continue to support them emotionally and help them to make sense of their journey. The children know that they have choices and this enables them to take some control of their own lives. The staff have a good understanding of the individual needs of the children, who have experienced trauma and developmental delay. The staff spend time talking to them on a daily basis and undertake direct work with them through link sessions. These sessions help the children to understand how the home works and how the adults are helping them. The sessions are consistent, child focused and comprehensive. The information that the staff share with them helps the children to keep safe and provide them with the tools to move forward into adulthood. The children benefit from a good level of emotional support that helps them to develop resilience. The staff listen to the children and act upon their views and wishes. The children have regular meetings that combine fun activities with agenda items. Bright and colourful newsletters reflect these meetings. The decoration of the home environment includes the display of collages and photographs. The children are encouraged to contribute, giving them a sense that they are valued and that this is their home. Individual scrap books collate activities and experiences, ensuring that the children have visual memories of their life story. The children are engaging with education. The staff have positive links with school and the communication is good. Staff know the children well and are aware of their attendance and progress. The staff help the children with their homework and they attend parent's evening and celebrations. The staff have contributed to identifying appropriate schools for the children. One child has a bespoke education package to ensure that every opportunity is in place to help him to engage with education, as this area has not been consistent for him. The children have the opportunity to make progress in their individual education targets thus promoting their future life chances. A headteacher said, 'They are incredibly careful at organising the transition in [to the home]. They took a lot of time looking at what it would look like, what was the best thing and what she needed. They would come with her and make sure that she had a consistent person. They were really good and very person-centred.'	

The children engage in a range of activities that help them to progress their social skills and confidence. They participate in trips abroad and in the UK. They are also very much involved in the fundraising, which has included band nights and participating in competitions within the organisation. This inclusive ethos encourages the children to use their own skills to reach targets and goals. They are learning to take some responsibility and to build their self-esteem.

The staff meet the children's health needs. They support them to attend health appointments. As the children become more emotionally stable, there are clear plans to reduce medication. Working closely with the mental health professionals enables this to progress and the children are able to make positive changes. The children's risky behaviours have reduced. One child was able to do voluntary work for three days of the week, which was a significant achievement. A professional said, 'I come here to an oasis of good practice. There is great staff commitment and everything they do is well thought out. It is always a pleasure. They work therapeutically. I like this place a great deal, there is some great practice.'

There is careful planning prior to a new admission. This includes a welcome video and a book with pictures and sounds, as well as tea visits that are arranged in advance. When a child recently left quickly, there was a clear discussion about the feelings around this in the community meeting. Plans are now in place for this child to visit the home again in the near future. There is a commitment to the children that reside at the home and the children that have moved on. The staff actively help the children to move on to their next placement and they arrange keep-in-touch visits, telephone calls and trips in the community. This enables the children to experience nurturing, positive long-standing relationships while they settle in to their new environment.

Staff take the time to build positive relationships with the children's families. The families have a clear understanding that they are very important. The staff participate in professional's meetings to discuss and explore the children's plans. They support contact arrangements and ensure that good schedules are in place for the children. A parent said, 'The contact is positive and they really help this to be lovely.' This helps the children to maintain and nurture relationships with their family members and gives the children a clear sense of identity.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The management team are not risk averse. They are willing to accept placements for children who are displaying high-risk behaviours and have developmental trauma. There are good risk assessments and clear behaviour management plans	

in place. These clearly outline the behaviours that need managing, including the signs that indicate high-distress levels and potential triggers. These plans are comprehensive and regularly reviewed and updated. This ensures that safeguards are in place and that the children's welfare is a priority.

There are concerns regarding a child who is currently spending a lot of time out of the home. The staff team are making huge efforts to engage him, taking the opportunity to discuss and explore the risks as often as possible. There is good communication with his family. A family member said, 'They keep him safe and well looked after. They are trying to keep him as safe as they can.' Staff communicate effectively with the local authority about the child's escalating risky behaviours. The social worker said, 'They are doing absolutely everything they can. They have managed it really well. They have remained so positive.' The children know that they are able to make contact with staff when they need support.

There are good links with the local police. The police community support officer visited the home unannounced during the inspection. The locality risk assessment is well documented, identifying potential risks in the local area. Well-maintained links are in place with the children's friends. The staff make telephone calls and visits to the friend's addresses to collect and drop off when required. Children live in a safe environment and the staff take appropriate actions to support them. They actively look for children when they go missing and follow the protocols to make sure that children are located without delay.

Staff use de-escalation and distraction techniques to manage challenging behaviours effectively. If these strategies are not successful and if there is significant risk, physical interventions are used. Appropriately trained staff ensure that the use of restraint is minimal and that there are clear records of these interventions. The need for physical intervention is low and challenging behaviours are reducing.

The staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding and are able to recognise the signs of child sexual exploitation. There is careful reporting of child protection concerns to the local authority and continued liaison to ensure that concerns are addressed. The manager and staff take appropriate action in relation to allegations and make contact with the designated officer. This contributes to the children's safety.

The staff record rewards and consequences. However, the records do not provide sufficient details of the action or why a particular consequence was used. This means that the children may not understand the consequence or reward and therefore the outcome for them is not meaningful.

Due to the high risk behaviours, room searches take place on a daily basis for one child. The staff make records but they do not include the reasons for the search, efforts to seek the child's consent, any associated risk assessment or management

oversight of the decision to undertake the search. This does not provide a transparent and open process.

There are a number of high risk behaviours evident. While some notifications to Ofsted are completed, this is not consistent. The inspection identified gaps in this reporting. This does not affect the good management of the risks, however, it does not provide a regular flow of information.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The registered manager has been in post since 2007. She has relevant qualifications and experience for the role. She is passionate about and committed to providing a high-quality service for the children in her care. All previous inspection recommendations have been actioned quickly and effectively. The internal and external monitoring is excellent. The manager regularly audits the service and seeks the views of professionals, parents and children. The independent visitor spends time at the home ensuring that good safeguarding practice is in place for the children. The manager drives forward improvement and ensures that the children are receiving a service that meets their needs and is continually improving. The leadership team is well established and long-standing. The deputy manager and the manager work together efficiently and effectively. A staff member said, 'There is strong leadership. They know what they are talking about and are open to discussing ways to move forward.' A cohesive team ensures that the children receive consistently high-quality care. The management team values the staff and recognises their individual strengths and contribution. The staff sleeping-in areas reflect this as the quality of the decoration is superb. This also helps the children with design ideas for their own bedrooms. Communication in the team is excellent. Support for the new staff is in place from an established core staff team. Supervisions take place regularly. The comprehensive records include a clear agenda, detailing the length of the supervision and with a focus on the individual's training needs. There is an acknowledgement that staff members utilise supervision differently and therefore additional sessions are in place for those that request them. New staff have a suitable induction programme and there is a comprehensive training programme. All eligible staff members are qualified to level 3 or are working towards it. The managers promote professional development for all of the staff. The staff are supported well so that they can provide and maintain high standards in their care of the children.	

Safer recruitment practices are evident, with all suitable candidates robustly interviewed and the appropriate checks completed. The children are actively involved in the recruitment process. This ensures that only suitable people work with the children.

The manager has a clear vision for the service and she has a workforce development plan in place. There is constant focus on delivering the best service to the children. This is evident in the ongoing improvements in the home environment and the garden. Children's work is displayed in every area of the space, including the glass panels on the door, which the children and staff decorate. This has been an effective and creative way of stopping the children damaging the glass. There is a painted tree on the garden wall with the handprints of every child and staff member. This is inclusive and powerful and gives the message that they are working together to make this a nurturing home.

The staff use a therapeutic approach. They receive training to enable them to deliver mindfulness, yoga, food therapy and theraplay with the children. All of the interactions with the children are supportive and child focused.

There is effective challenge to the local authority when it is felt that clear plans for the children are not in place and actions are not in line with their best interests. Senior managers escalate these concerns and seek advice from professionals to inform this challenge.

The individual care plans reflect the needs of the children. The staff support the children to participate in their reviews and to ensure that their views are sought. The children's case files are extremely well presented and contain up-to-date documents outlining the individual profiles of the children. This ensures that all relevant information is readily accessible to staff and is accurate.

There are positive relationships with parents, other agencies and social workers. The professionals give positive feedback about the care provided and the excellent level of communication. The staff complete monthly reports, three-monthly reports and annual reports. These outline the children's progress and achievements. The children are actively encouraged to contribute to these as games, word searches and quizzes are incorporated. There is clear management oversight of the children's progress. Children are making progress and successfully transition to adult placements as well as being supported with their long-term plans to return to the care of their family where this is agreed.

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 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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