

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	05/08/2015
Unique reference number	SC065679
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Staffordshire County Council
Registered person address	Staffordshire County Council, Wedgwood Buildings, Tipping Street, STAFFORD, ST16 2DH

Responsible individual	Richard Hancock
Registered manager	Mark Guest
Inspector	Louise Whittle

Inspection date	05/08/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained 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

SC065679

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff skilfully support young people at a transitional period of their lives, to adjust to the uncertainty of a short-term placement, when their future is unknown.
- Young people engage in educational activities and staff offer a wide range of life skills to compliment formal education. Young people's diversity is recognised and highly valued. Staff support them effectively to maintain aspects of their culture such as food and worship.
- Young people feel safe and are safe due to the highly skilled and experienced staff team.
- Staff understand and embrace the registered manager's clear vision for the service. Social pedagogy is a constant and positive feature of work within the home and reflective practice is encouraged by the registered manager to drive up standards of the service for young people.
- There are some shortfalls. Staff struggle to communicate effectively on a daily basis with young people who do not speak or understand English. The children's guide is not translated into the languages necessary for all of the young people who are admitted into the home.
- Staff are not effectively challenging racist and bullying behaviour and have recently failed to recognise and address the emotional impact of racist bullying on young people who do not speak or understand English.

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 with particular reference to the arrangements for young people who do not speak or understand English 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.	15/09/2015
7 The children's views, wishes and feelings standard: In order to meet the views, wishes and feeling standard with particular reference to young people who do not speak or understand English the registered person is required to: (1) (c) take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. (2) (ii) help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; (b) ensure that each child- (i) is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a	15/11/2015

relevant person about the support and services that the child receives; (ii) has access to the children's guide, and the home's complaints procedure, when the child's placement in the home is agreed and throughout the child's stay in the home.	
13 The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to young people who do not speak or understand English and are subject to bullying and racist behaviour, the registered person is required to: (2) (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach, ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose. (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.	15/11/2015

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority owned children's home. It is registered to care for up to five children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, aged between 12 and 17 years on a short- term basis. Young people normally stay no longer than 12 weeks, during which time staff support assessments and enable them to return home or move on to appropriate long term placements

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/03/2015	CH - Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/11/2014	CH - Full	Good
20/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good progress
29/04/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Young people experience a warm and welcoming environment. The home is comfortably furnished, well maintained and the food is excellent, with menus chosen by, and reflecting their individual preferences. Photographs of staff and young people having fun together are evidence of the trusting and supportive relationships between them. Young people have specifically asked to display these pictures on the walls. Caring and motivated staff are skilful at providing young people with the sense of safety and security that they need when they arrive, many at very short notice and following traumatic placement breakdowns. This helps them to settle and adjust to their new surroundings. Short- term placements and a regularly changing group of young people provide both young people and staff with significant challenges. Staff prioritise the development of young people's confidence, resilience and the skills to move on including, importantly, the ability to manage their emotions and behaviour. Experienced and highly trained staff understand the basis of young people's complex needs, vulnerabilities, and behaviours and are skilled in identifying and addressing them. One young person is now able to manage his behaviour better and responds to sanctions without becoming violent. He has made progress in that he now listens to people a lot more and takes time to think about things. Enthusiastic staff encourage them to engage in the community. This year young people helped organise significant events with staff for neighbours and child care professionals, including a charity event and a barbeque. Young people's health, emotional wellbeing, and social skills benefit from engaging in football, basket-ball, swimming, and outside activities like climbing and archery. They are also able to learn basic woodworking and pottery skills from skilled staff. Staff value young people's diversity and they benefit from close links with the local mosque and the provision of specific foods that reflects their cultures. There is a diverse staff team, some of which reflects young people's individual choices and ethnicity.	

Staff consult young people about their views, wishes, and feelings and give them serious consideration, enabling their positive contributions. Staff ensure that young people receive feedback within reasonable timescales. One young person who has been here for four weeks said he is happy here and staff enable him to go to the mosque four times a day. Two other young people said that they have everything they need and that they get to play football, which they enjoy. One young person, who completed a questionnaire on leaving, thanked the staff for all they had done for her.

Where young people are not emotionally ready to engage in formal or full-time education, staff provide stimulating input to develop and maintain their daily routines and social skills in preparation for future education. Self-expression is encouraged through artwork and writing, which also provides young people with a sense of identity and achievement. Staff liaise closely with the Virtual School to regularly monitor and assess young people's ability to engage in education and to plan and provide appropriate educational input for them.

Whilst staff request the use of interpreters from the local authority for young people who do not speak or understand English, this does not occur on a daily basis. This essential tool is reserved mainly for admission, 'looked after' reviews, and meetings with social workers. This reduces the staff's ability to effectively explore the young people's views, wishes and feelings. This has resulted in, for example, a significant health issue going unrecognised. Two young people have experienced bullying due to their ethnicity and staff were unable to discuss their feelings about this with them without an interpreter. Staff work hard to communicate, but their language limitations mean that some young people do not always have access to support for their emotional wellbeing.

The lack of a translated children's guide also means that some young people are unable to access the information necessary to understand how the home is run and, if necessary, to make a complaint. Staff are working to design a children's guide using images, but an accessible guide is not available to all of the young people who are currently living here.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Staff are highly trained in safeguarding and evidence clear knowledge of risk assessment, procedures and the importance of the young people's behaviour	

management plans.

Staff keep young people safe whilst allowing them to experience positive activities in the community and to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Staff are vigilant about the impact of young people moving in and moving out, on the relationships and behaviour within the home.

Positive relationships and the reinforcement of positive behaviours are emphasised and the use of sanctions is limited. Staff ensure that they take into account the complex needs of each young person when responding to crises and dangerous behaviour.

A thorough and detailed locality assessment is in place and staff work closely with local police to ensure that risks are identified on an ongoing basis. Staff approached local councillors to highlight the risks of child sexual exploitation and to seek to work together to reduce them.

Staff support young people to understand how to keep themselves safe by way of young people's meetings and one-to-one key work sessions. One young person with a history of involvement with drugs and gangs no longer puts himself at that risk and there are now far fewer physical interventions. Staff have undergone training, which embraces the relationship with the young person and emphasises the need to ensure that physical intervention is only used as a last resort and for safety.

The creative staff group is negotiating the use of an adjacent open space, which they want to use as a garden for the young people. Staff recognise the value of this in terms of behaviour management, where young people need to engage in outside activity in a safe environment in order to reduce conflict and tension.

Most young people say that they feel safe. Two young people say that the verbal aggression they have experienced from another young person makes them angry and frightened. This bullying is a very recent occurrence, involving racist elements, which staff have not been fully prepared for. However, the young people have not sustained any physical harm and staff and the registered manager are working with social workers to address the issue.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
There are many positives about the registered manager's leadership and management for this complex setting and the wide range of young people and issues managed. He has a clear vision based around social pedagogy, which staff understand and embrace. He is child focused and believes that all young people have skills and abilities that can	

be identified and developed with the right approach, regardless of background and difficulties.

Under his leadership, staff strive to drive up standards of care. This includes escalating concerns about the services provided for young people by other professionals. The registered manager advocates on their behalf and works closely with family members, staff, and other professionals to support young people's placements and plans. Social workers speak highly of the registered manager and staff, of the good level of care that young people receive, and of regular communication with professionals.

The dedicated and highly experienced staff team feels well trained and supported by the registered manager and by each other. One staff member said that he loved working at the home, as the team was a supportive and close team. The registered manager encourages staff to be reflective, which, he considers, underpins positive relationships with young people, which in turn supports better behaviour and then ultimately engagement with education and social development. Staff are aware of his plans and are enthusiastic about aims to work more closely with family members in order to support young people to return home. Staff already work closely with the intensive prevention service, to achieve these positive outcomes.

The registered manager responded positively to the requirement in the previous Ofsted. He has provided staff to attend school with young people to offer them support during the day. This means that young people are helped to either sustain or re-engage with education. He has worked with the Virtual School to look at the possibility of online tutoring for young people who are not emotionally ready to be in school full time. He has also become a school governor in order to challenge and influence the provision of resources and services available to the young people.

The head of the Virtual School says that staff and the registered manager: 'do everything they can to get a young person into school and to support their education'. Also that: 'They are proactive and meet young people's needs.' She commented that the registered manager has made a significant contribution by attending governors meetings.

It is clear that the registered manager and staff are working hard to identify and meet the needs of a wide range of young people and that in most cases they are succeeding in this. However, the leadership and management had not been prepared for the recent development, which is the bullying of young people who do not speak English. Improvements therefore need to be targeted at their work with the young people who require access to greater communication skills and understanding of racism and bullying in order to have their needs met.

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 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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