

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC066115
Inspector	Mark Kersh
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Alliance Care & Education Limited
Registered person address	Brow Top Farm Quernmore LANCASTER LA2 0QW
Responsible individual	Andrew Taylor
Registered manager	Scot Thomas Wilson
Date of last inspection	13/03/2014

Inspection date	12/11/2014
------------------------	------------

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	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
-------------------	-------------

This children's home has a school set within the grounds. This was a joint inspection and a separate report has been written in relation to the quality of the school provision.

Young people receive good quality care and support from a dedicated staff team at this home. The enthusiasm and commitment from the staff contribute to this and young people respond positively and achieve good outcomes from their starting points.

The quality of care is personalised and effective in providing a safe, healthy and stimulating environment. Care planning documents support this and young people contribute to their plans. The home has a relaxed atmosphere, and behavioural problems are rare with minimum focus on restraint and few consequences are imposed. Staff are skilled at managing young people in a positive manner.

Young people feel staff support them at all times and are always concerned for their welfare. They say they are confident in talking to members of staff if they have issues or concerns. Consequently, young people feel listened to, valued and secure.

Good relationships exist between young people themselves and all staff. The staff

team understand the needs of the young people extremely well. This enables young people to grow in confidence and develop as individuals. Young people enjoy and have access to a range of stimulating activities.

Young people report that they feel safe. Safeguarding practices are rigorous and implemented by staff and the management team, and all have completed the necessary safeguarding training.

There have been changes in the management structure and the home is currently being managed by an interim manager. These changes have not impacted on the current young people living in this home. The interim manager has the relevant support and understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home.

One requirement and two recommendations have been made at this inspection. The requirement is in relation to supervision for all staff. The two recommendations are in relation to consultation and health and safety.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is one of a number of homes operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/03/2014	Interim	good progress
24/09/2013	Full	adequate
26/03/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
22/08/2012	Full	outstanding

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
27 (2001)	shall ensure that any persons employed by him receive appropriate supervision. (Regulation 27.4 (a))	08/12/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure the wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring staff and in developing the

home (NMS 1.7)

- ensure the home's design promotes children's health, safety and well-being and avoids factors such as areas that present significant risk to children, specifically the bolt lock on the inside of the bathroom door. (NMS 10.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people make good progress from their starting points and their outcomes are positive. Young people have developed their emotional resilience and self-confidence. This is due to the positive and constructive relationships they have with all staff. One young person says, 'staff have encouraged me to be a better person and I'm working hard, all my life I have been this enigma, no one could sort me out, because I would not listen and now I do and I respond well to what they tell me'. Young people's individuality is known, respected and valued. This helps increase young people's sense of belonging and their self-esteem.

Young people benefit from having their health needs identified and met to a good standard. This includes attendance at routine health appointments, such as GP, dentists and opticians, as well as having access to the organisations psychologist, who will provide professional therapy should young people require this.

Young people have personalised education programmes that meet their individual needs. Young people who previously had poor school attendance now regularly attend education. Consequently, improved attendance results in young people attaining and achieving in their chosen studies. One young person says, 'They (staff) have encouraged me in my education, before during year 7, 8, 9 and 10 I did nothing, I would use cannabis, and not listen or engage with the teachers, and now I love school, I go everyday'. The organisations on-site school was inspected separately as part of this inspection by an education inspector. A separate report has been written in relation to this education provision.

Young people are engaged in a variety of positive activities within the local community. They benefit from the range of activities on offer which broaden their experiences through exposure to new opportunities. Young people develop social skills through local youth clubs, they go out to restaurants for meals and have particular enjoyed spending time on holiday and visiting theme parks. Young people regularly participate in group and individual activities, some of which are education based. This broadens their knowledge and contributes to the work they undertake in education.

Young people maintain well, and safely managed contact, which means that young people enjoy and develop relationships with significant family members. This supports their sense of family identity and belonging. A parent of one of the young people says, 'she is really happy in this home, and settled, this has resulted in her change of attitude, she is a different person'.

While none of the young people are preparing to live independently, the home provides them with opportunities to develop independence skills at a level in line with

their ability and confidence. This includes self-care skills, independent travel, budgeting and cooking. Young people are more than capable and adapt well to these tasks, which will benefit them when they engage in a more formal independence programme.

Quality of care

good

Young people receive care and support from a dedicated staff team. Staff are consistently concerned about young people's welfare. Young people report they have positive relationships with all of the staff and with each other, as a result, the home is settled and there are currently no behavioural issues.

Interactions between young people themselves and with the staff are warm, good humoured and supportive. As a result of this atmosphere and culture, young people are able to voice their views and opinions with confidence. This means that they have a voice in how the home is run. They are able to influence matters such as menus, activities and décor. Young people and professionals routinely complete consultation questionnaires, about the care and services the home provides. However, some issues raised within these questionnaires are not always addressed, which could improve the care and services the home provides. As a result, a recommendation has been raised.

There is a complaints process which is easily accessible and understood by the young people. Complaints made are addressed quickly and records show how they have been resolved promptly and young people receive a written response to any concern or complaint they raise. This ensures young people are listened to and provides them with the reasons why it may not be possible to resolve their concerns in all cases.

Staff demonstrate thorough knowledge and understanding of each young person's needs. Care planning documents are individualised and are of a good quality. Young people contribute to their care plans and sign them for agreement. Young people are actively involved in the decisions about their lives and participate in planning meetings and reviews. This ensures their views are listened to and acted upon. A social worker reports that this home is excellent at communicating with them, provides them with weekly written reports and any updates on young people, as they happen.

Staff effectively ensure the emotional and physical health needs of the young people are fully met. Additionally, staff work closely with mental health services, sexual health specialists, looked after children's nurse and drug advisory services. All young people learn from the time of their admission about healthy eating and the benefits of an active lifestyle. Effective medication administration and storage procedures further promote the health of young people. Consequently, through education and support, young people enjoy improved health outcomes.

Staff work in partnership with education providers. Education can be provided at the organisations school which is located within the grounds of the children's home. Other young people attend local schools, which they attended prior to living in this home, this ensures consistency, and prevents disruption of having to change schools.

The home is well maintained, clean and comfortable. The young people are able to personalise and choose the décor in their rooms and this helps them to feel that they have a comfortable private space in where they live. Young people are able to lock their rooms and have their own door keys, which promotes their privacy. All door locks in the home can be opened by staff should they need to gain access in the event of a crisis. However, a bathroom which young people use has a bolt lock fitted on the inside, and as the home has previously accommodated young people who self-harm this is a health and safety concern. As a result, a recommendation has been made.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people report feeling safe and say that staff regularly talk to them about dangers and how to keep themselves safe. One young person says 'yes I am safe here, and the staff do not judge us or me in the way the other home I lived at did, there is trust here and we respond well to this'. All staff have a good working knowledge of how to recognise signs and symptoms of abuse and to whom they must report concerns. This includes knowledge of external agencies they can approach if they feel they need to make a safeguarding referral. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) says, 'the fact that they (staff) make these calls and queries show that they know about the role of LADO and what procedures they need to follow'. The (LADO) and other professionals have no safeguarding concerns with this home.

There is a rolling programme in place for all members of staff, to attend safeguarding training. This ensures that everyone is up to date with their obligations should they have concerns about a young person's well-being or the practice of a colleague. This has been supported by training all members of staff in child sexual exploitation and internet safety.

All young people feel confident they can talk to staff if they are feeling insecure. They report that bullying is not an issue in the home, and say everyone gets on well together.

Previously, young people have gone missing, however these incidents have significantly decreased. Staff are clear about their responsibilities relating to young people going missing and suitable procedures and protocols are in place. The home has strong links with the missing from care police team. There are no concerns of the young people living in this home in relation to being missing from home.

During the summer months there was a high level of disruptive behaviour from some young people. When young people's behaviours change and can no longer be safely met by the home, the management team work in conjunction with the placing authority and other professionals to consider alternatives, including a change of placement to ensure the safety of young people. There are currently no concerns with young people's behaviours. Consequences and restraints for inappropriate behaviour are few with incentives and rewards being used which young people respond well to. One young person says, 'these staff are the only people who have changed my life around for the good, I feel listened to and they reassure me how I can get on the right path'.

Health and safety checks of all appliances, including fire safety checks and regular fire drills, are routinely completed. Robust recruitment practices means that only staff who are checked as being suitable to work with young people are employed. These are essential practices that help to ensure young people are safe.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager resigned his post and left this home in September 2014. This decision was as a result of a career move and relocating his family to another area of Great Britain. As the organisation were fully aware of these intentions they were able to put an interim manager in place while they recruited a full time manager. The interim manager has a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Health and Social Care. She is enrolled on the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership in Health and Social Care. During the previous Registered Managers period of notice there was sufficient time for handing over the responsibilities to the interim manager. A new permanent manager has been appointed and is due to commence work at this home on 24 November 2014. Ofsted has received an application for the position of Registered Manager, from the new manager.

The interim manager has and is being supported by the responsible individual, there is a deputy manager and three senior workers who share the management responsibilities. There were no requirements or recommendations made at the previous inspection in March 2014. The home continues to improve and the changes in management have had no impact on the young people living in this home.

The home is continuing to meet the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose document. Changes have been made to this document to accurately reflect the current management arrangements. This is a clear document which is easy to understand and provides accurate information to parents and other potential stakeholders. The young person's guide is informative and the young people confirm they have received a copy of this document, which informs them of the services they can expect to receive in this home.

The home benefits from systems to monitor the service. The management team regularly monitor the administration processes and speak with young people and professionals relating to the care of the young people. Monthly visits from an independent person are carried out. The interim manager takes prompt action in response to recommendations raised following the monthly independent visits and challenges the report for factual inaccuracies. This helps improve the quality of care young people receive.

The home currently has one staff vacancy and a staff member is due to relocate from another home within this organisation to fill this position. There is no impact on the two young people living in the home, as the home is currently under capacity.

Staff training is good and provided through face-to-face courses and on-line training. Specialist training such as self-harm, attachment and loss and sexual exploitation has been completed by all staff. This ensures staff are competent in dealing with specific issues should these arise. The numbers of staff holding a professional care qualification is sufficient with five of the seven staff having completed this qualification. However, the arrangements for staff supervision are not sufficient with some staff going some months without receiving supervision. As a result, a requirement has been made. This will ensure staff can reflect on past and current practice and identify any future development needs.

Young people's case records are stored securely to avoid any breach of confidentiality. Records contribute to understanding the life and progress of individual young people. Significant events relating to the protection of young people are notified to the relevant authorities, including Ofsted and appropriate procedures are followed with records of outcomes maintained. This contributes to young people's safety.

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.