

SC066565

Registered provider: New Options Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 26 children and young people. The home provides a specialist service for children and young people with an autistic spectrum condition and associated learning disabilities. There is a school on-site that the majority of children and young people use, and it also caters for day pupils. A few children and young people go to other schools. A small number of children and young people use the home for short breaks. Some children and young people have a placement for 52 weeks a year, while others go home at the weekends and during the school holidays.

Inspection dates: 3 to 4 July 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 19 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Children and young people receive high-quality bespoke care.
- Leaders ensure that there is a strong multi-disciplinary approach and effective partnership work that gives children and young people good all-round support.
- Children and young people have a strong voice regardless of the way they communicate.
- Staff help children and young people feel safe and secure.
- Children and young people achieve well, enjoy a range of interests, and are happy.
- Risk management is good and helps children and young people to develop their independence in a safe way.
- Leaders are ambitious for children and young people to fulfil their potential and benefit from high standards of care.
- There are good arrangements for staff training and supervision that focus on meeting the complex needs of children and young people.
- Leaders are reflective, regularly review practice, and strive to continually improve the service.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
05/07/2016	Full	Good
17/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
21/09/2015	Full	Requires improvement

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that records include details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure (Regulation 35(3)(a)(v)). In particular, records must make it clear to the reader the reason why a measure of control, discipline, or restraint was used.	29/09/2017
The registered person must maintain records for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child (Regulation 36(1)(a)). This includes a copy of any plan for the care of the child prepared by the child's placing authority, and of the placement plan.	29/09/2017

Recommendations

- The registered person is responsible for leading a team which provides high quality care for all children living in the home. They must lead and manage the home in a way that delivers the ethos, outcomes and approach set out in the home's Statement of Purpose. They should also play a key role in shaping the ethos of the home through developing a culture of high aspiration for children which is demonstrated through the care, resources and opportunities offered to the children ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.4). In particular, there should be clear and detailed records of: the decision-making about accepting referrals; contact and consultation that staff have with parents of children; and, the transition arrangements and events for children moving into the home. The evaluation in the impact risk assessments should evidence that any negative impact of a placement has been fully considered for all children and detail any measures that will be put in place to reduce this impact.
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs, and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11). In particular, the registered person should assess the effectiveness of staff training and learning.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people receive highly individualised, flexible, and bespoke care. Staff recognise the uniqueness of each child and young person, regardless of their needs, age, and gender. This is underpinned with support from the clinical team who provide speech and language therapy, psychological input, and occupational therapy. Clinical assessment informs the person-centred planning process. This provides individual, child-focused care plans and realistic goals for children and young people founded on a strong research and evidence base.

The resultant, well-informed staff understand children and young people's diverse needs. Staff promote good communication with them through effective use of social stories, signs, symbols, visual timetables, and talking mats. This is especially important for children and young people who have limited verbal communication. Staff respond positively to children and young people's views, wishes, and feelings, helping them make sense of their living environment. This enables children and young people to establish strong, positive relationships with staff and gives them a firm basis on which to feel secure, happy and make good progress in their lives.

Staff support children and young people with clear expectations, structure, and boundaries. Such predictable responses, in a safe and secure environment, help children and young people to self-regulate their emotions and empower them to achieve in other areas of their lives.

Children and young people's achievements are highlighted in the pictures and photographs of them completing their goals, undertaking new tasks and enjoying themselves. This includes learning to use money, cook, shop, and develop self-care skills. They access a good range of leisure activities, such as swimming, visiting places of interest, playing in the home's adventure playground, pamper sessions and listening to music. Children and young people are able to follow their chosen interests, such as visiting churches, information and communication technology, and helping out in the school's bistro.

All children and young people benefit from high attendance levels at school. There is good integration between care, teaching, and clinical staff that helps children and young people achieve well in school. Good communication addresses any concerns and helps children and young people to have positive experiences of school life.

There is good support for young people transitioning to adult services. Their views, wishes, and feelings play a key part in the decision-making about their future. The manager strives to ensure that there is a proactive multi-agency approach that will support young people into adulthood. Whenever possible, children and young people are supported to successfully return home to their families.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children and young people feel safe and relaxed. The physical environment, daily routines and staffing are tailored to their individual needs. The resulting consistency reduces levels of anxiety associated with their autistic spectrum disorders. Staff know the children and young people well, are confident in supporting them and are sensitive to their needs.

Staff undertake a wide range of safeguarding training. This includes issues such as child exploitation and extremism, as well as covering individual needs to do with autistic spectrum disorder, communication, and specific health conditions. Consequently, staff are able to keep children and young people safe and promote their health and welfare.

Children and young people know how to complain, and staff support them through the use of a variety of methods to be able to communicate. Children and young people have a strong voice in this service. Their ability to be heard helps to protect them from harm.

Risk management arrangements enable children and young people to take risks, develop their independence, and participate in life in line with their abilities. For example, children and young people develop their self-care skills, respond better to a wider range of stimulation, and participate in the local and wider community. A stakeholder commented, 'Staffing is appropriate, it relates to risk and supports the levels of challenging behaviour and complex needs.' These experiences promote the emotional well-being of children and young people.

Recruitment practice is thorough, and the manager considers the previous experience of new staff when matching them to appropriate shifts, and which children and young people to look after. For example, less experienced staff may start out on night shifts, which are less hectic. All staff, regardless of whether they have worked here through an agency, still complete a full induction. Screening and background checks ensure that only suitable staff are employed.

Staff understand safeguarding procedures and feel confident to use the whistle-blowing policy if needed. The manager appropriately reports any concerns about children and young people to the local authority. She seeks the advice of the local safeguarding children's board to help keep children and young people safe.

There have been no occasions when children and young people were missing from the home. The high levels of staff support mean that staff know the whereabouts of children and young people and are able to effectively manage any risks they pose to each other. Staff manage the physical environment well, both with regard to health and safety, and in meeting the individual needs of children and young people. The decor, furniture, and furnishings are adapted to provide calm living environments.

The safe environment lowers the levels of challenging behaviour from children and young people. As a result, staff use physical intervention minimally and only when necessary. There is good management oversight of practice and record-keeping. Leaders

have reviewed staff training about behaviour management, following an incident that occurred shortly before the last inspection. Changes to training are aimed at keeping children and young people safe and ensuring that staff follow best practice. The manager has not yet assessed the impact of this training and the difference it has made. Occasionally, records of incidents requiring the use of physical intervention do not clearly indicate staff's rationale for intervening in terms of preventing serious damage and/or promoting safety. Leaders agreed to address this.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has plenty of leadership experience and has been in post since December 2014. She is suitably qualified, and has a Master's degree in health and social care.

Leaders are fulfilling their vision to deliver a bespoke service to all children and young people and constantly strive to improve standards of care. This includes developing staff skills and knowledge about autistic spectrum disorders and working towards accreditation with the National Autistic Society. There is a new guide to the service, in video format. This is accessible to more children and young people via their iPads and tablets and there are plans to develop this further. The clinical team is a strong part of the service, improving the experiences of children and young people, and supporting staff training and development.

The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the service and her development plan is child focused and ambitious, yet realistically achievable. For example, she intends to expand staff training in the use of talking mats. This will promote the voice of children and young people and enhance their role in decision-making about care planning.

Leaders are reflective and committed to learning from complaints, incidents, and feedback. They ensure that there is regular evaluation of the service and use the results to make positive change, such as the revised induction programme for new staff. This now includes more hands-on work, making it more realistic and improving staff learning.

Staff feel supported and enjoy their work, which consequently benefits children and young people, who are cared for by motivated and dedicated staff. There are good levels of staff retention and a high proportion of permanent staff previously worked as agency staff. This provides consistency for the children and young people, who require routine and structure to feel safe and secure. Supervision and training arrangements focus effectively on children and young people's needs, contributing to the highly individualised care that they receive.

Leaders have a good understanding of the progress and experience of all children and young people. This is obtained through the coherent and integrated efforts of care staff, the clinical team, and teaching staff. The strong multi-disciplinary approach puts children and young people first and provides them with high standards of care. When children and young people are educated at other schools, there are good partnership

relationships that contribute towards giving them the best all-round support.

During the inspection, there were deficiencies in records relating to: decision-making about admissions, details of contact with children and young people's parents, transition arrangements moving into the home, and the level of evaluation in impact risk assessments. For one young person, the manager had not yet obtained a copy of the placing authority's care plan. There was no tangible negative impact on children and young people, but there is potential to compromise their positive experiences if these issues are not addressed.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC066565

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: New Options Limited

Registered provider address: Turnpike Gate House, Alcester Heath, Alcester,
Warwickshire B49 5JG

Responsible individual: Graham Norris

Registered manager: Joanne Carter

Inspector(s)

Simon Morley, social care inspector
Abby Maspero, social care inspector

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