

SC067753

Registered provider: West Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care and support for a maximum of 16 children and young people with complex needs. The home can accommodate children and young people who have both physical and learning disabilities, some of whom may display challenging behaviour. The home provides permanent placements and short breaks.

Inspection dates: 25 to 26 September 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 27 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Children have access to a range of specialist facilities and equipment at the home. This helps staff to meet their wide range of needs.
- Children benefit from trusting relationships with dedicated staff, and they are able to spend time away from the home enjoying community-based activities with key staff.
- New staff are bringing fresh ideas to the team and engaging the children in their care planning to give them greater opportunities for independence and choice.
- Management at the home is strong and effective.
- There is a positive culture of education at the home.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Recording and reporting are inconsistent in frequency and quality.
- Medication errors are too frequent, and this is linked to transferring medication between the home and families.
- The home has been hampered by staff absences.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/02/2017	Full	Good
26/09/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
09/02/2016	Full	Good
01/09/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) 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(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that children's privacy is appropriately protected. (Regulation 21(a)) In particular, ensure that personal information is not kept in communal areas and that confidentiality is protected for each young person.	27/10/2017
The registered person must maintain records for each child which are kept up to date. (Regulation 36(b))	27/10/2017
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicine. (Regulation 23(1)) This specifically refers to labelling medication with the date that it is opened and clearly recording the disposal date.	27/10/2017
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(b)) In particular, ensure that supervision records are sufficiently thorough.	29/12/2017

Recommendations

- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on a public holiday. Notification must include details of the action taken by the home's staff in response to the event. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)
- The children's guide should help children to understand:
 - what the day to day routines of the home are ('what happens in the home');
 - the Statement of Purpose of the home (the care they can expect to receive while living there);
 - how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.22)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the last inspection, a requirement was made to ensure that children's information was not kept in the communal area. This is repeated, as personal information is still displayed on the walls of the communal office. The requirement regarding care planning has been met. Admissions to the home have been scrutinised to ensure that these children's needs are within the range of those outlined in the home's statement of purpose. Although some short-term placements have been made, the children have been accommodated in an area of the home that can be separated from other children to lessen the impact of these admissions upon each other.

Children benefit from the warm, nurturing approach demonstrated by staff. Observations during the inspection were of staff who were interested in engaging the children in a range of activities. Some children were supported to play musical instruments, while others were engaged in imaginative play in the sensory room. The children make frequent use of the local area. Some enjoy trips to the coast and countryside, while others enjoy playing outside in the garden. As a result, the children enjoy activities and pastimes that meet their individual needs and enable them to participate in the local community.

The staff employ a range of communication methods to ensure that the children's views are sought and acted upon. The personalised approach to communication has enabled one child to participate in his care review by using a PowerPoint presentation to share his views. Social stories have been used effectively to help some children to understand their developing needs. Other examples include consulting with a child about his bedroom. The changes that were made as a result of this have helped his sleep patterns to improve.

Education is positively promoted. The children have good attendance at school and are making progress in line with their expected trajectories. Individualised plans are in place for children who find the transition between school and home a challenge. Communication between the home and the schools is frequent and effective. Consequently, children benefit from consistent behaviour support from the home and school.

The team of staff are regularly trained in specialist procedures to ensure that they can meet the complex and varied needs of the children. The team includes a paediatric nurse, who frequently assesses the competency of staff in procedures such as gastronomy feeding and ensures that they provide the correct consistency of food for children with specific needs. She has introduced the children to foods that meet their dietary requirements yet remain well presented and varied.

The children who use the home have varying arrangements for family time. Some regularly spend time at their family homes, while others have friends and family who are

frequent visitors to the home. Parents comment that communication by the staff is good. A parent said, 'The staff are great at keeping in touch. I trust them, as they always update me, and I find this reassuring.'

The manager and staff report that children are making progress. One child has improved his health due to the staff encouraging him to be more active and make healthier meal choices. Another has been actively engaged in adapting his bedroom to better suit his needs. However, the progress is difficult to monitor due to gaps in recording and inconsistent record keeping.

Shortfalls have occurred in the recording and administration of medication. For example, a bottle of liquid medicine had neither the date that it was opened recorded on it, nor the recommended disposal date. Medication administration is generally well recorded. However, errors have arisen due to insufficient oversight of the transfer of medication between parents and staff. In some cases, dispensing errors have been identified by staff's vigilant checks and reported to the pharmacist. However, current systems do not adequately reduce the risks of the frequent transfer of medication between families and staff. No children have come to harm as a result of these errors.

The building has undergone some refurbishment to personalise the rooms, giving a more homely feel. For children who use the home for short breaks, bedrooms have some elements of each child's particular interest included in the decor. Plans for the continued development of the home include the refurbishment of one of the bathrooms to bring it up to date and to ensure that it can be used by more of the children who use the service. The manager is committed to ensuring that the development of the home meets the needs of the children who use it.

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

Observations of the children demonstrate that they are happy and find staff approachable. The children enjoy a range of different types of play and stimulating activities in the safe and inviting common areas of the home. The outside play area is popular with the children, as are the sensory and soft play areas. A day bed has been added to the lounge area to enable wheelchair users to have a social space to relax in and take a break from sitting, while still being very much a part of the home's social time. This inclusive approach is indicative of the manager's focus on the inclusion of all of the children who use the service.

Children living at the home and those having short-stay breaks are safe. The staff are trained in safeguarding and make sure that child protection processes are followed. Staff share concerns with social workers and the local authority designated officer. During this inspection, staff did not raise any safeguarding concerns in relation to the quality of care that children receive. However, safeguarding does not currently feature on the agenda at team meetings or supervision. The children have high levels of supervision when accessing the community. Some have additional safeguards, such as 'walking jackets', to reduce the risk of them acting on impulse when in the community.

Incidents of children going missing from this service are rare. One child, in a short-term

placement, did go missing. The staff responded quickly and effectively to this event. The procedures are clear and well understood by staff. Staff work in partnership with the police and social workers to respond to 'missing' episodes, liaising effectively to return a child, once located. However, records of incidents vary in quality and consistency. An example is that notifiable incidents are not recorded in the child's file and, in response to a 'missing' episode, the risk assessments and care plan had not been updated. These gaps in records have not led to widespread failures, yet do have the potential to impact on the children if not rectified.

The use of physical restraint is a last resort. The staff are trained in de-escalation techniques. The team members use their insight to manage behaviour and ensure that the plans are clear and behaviour management is consistent. They have sought additional advice from the 'team teach' instructor and behaviour management advisor for one child when they noticed changes in his behavioural needs. This well thought out approach demonstrates the staff's passion for and commitment to supporting the children.

In response to the previous requirements, safer recruitment has been a focus area. Gaps in employment are now addressed and references are now verified prior to offering an applicant a role. Samples of staff files seen during this inspection demonstrated that this requirement has been met.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager of this home has been in post since July 2016. There has been a delay in registering with Ofsted, due to the demands that she has faced in taking the service forwards. She is suitably qualified and has a proven track record of working for the organisation. The responsible individual is providing additional support and taking matters forwards to further promote the manager's ideas with the staff team.

The staffing has been affected by chronic absence and long-term illness. Leaders and managers have supported the staff during this time. Where agency staff have been used, they have been suitably experienced and the same staff used to lessen the impact on the children. New staff have been recruited and are supporting the changes in practice and culture that the manager has implemented. The new staff are enrolled on the level 3 course in health and social care.

Staff have access to a wide range of training resources that cater for the needs of the children.

Staff meetings do take place. However, the records are inconsistent. A new system is in place whereby the administrator writes up the handwritten notes. However, this is yet to be fully embedded. Supervision of staff is regular. However, the records sampled lacked depth or detail, in particular for new staff. As a result, records are unclear regarding actions and deadlines.

The manager and staff are in frequent contact with the parents and carers of all children

using the home. They have developed effective communication channels which reassure parents and carers. Some families have a daily call to update them. This individualised approach to working with parents and carers ensures that communication is effective.

Managerial monitoring is in place. However, it has not been fully effective in highlighting and addressing the shortfalls in recording and reporting that were identified during this inspection. The children's plans are being developed, and one example seen demonstrated a more effective way to show progress, that involved children working with the key worker. Consequently, the service development plans are beginning to address the areas that were highlighted. However, the improvements are not yet fully embedded.

The statement of purpose provides stakeholders with information about the services that the home provides. The children's guide gives information to children about the home, but it does not give an overview of the home's daily routines and some of the contact numbers are out of date. A recommendation is made to this effect.

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 whom 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: SC067753

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: West Sussex County Council, Director of Social Services, County Hall, Tower Street, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1QT

Responsible individual: Caroline Lees

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector(s)

Sarah Olliver, social care inspector

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