

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC069176
Inspector	Ruth Loughridge
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Oakfields Children's Care Limited
Registered person address	Library Chambers 48 Union Street Hyde Cheshire SK14 1ND
Responsible individual	Ben Greenough
Registered manager	Lisa Joanne Greenough
Date of last inspection	26/03/2014

Inspection date	02/07/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory 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
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Young people benefit from care provided by an experienced and committed staff team who understand the young people's needs.

Where young people previously did not engage with services such as health and education, the support from this home has enabled them to do so. As a result, health and education outcomes for the young people are good. With ongoing encouragement and increased self-esteem young people are developing goals and aspirations for their futures.

There are systems in place to keep young people safe, but more significantly, young people are recognising risk and are making different, and positive choices about keeping themselves safe.

Close working relationships with the police support the young people's understanding of socially acceptable and responsible behaviour. The manager's presence on a local community group maintains positive relationships between the home and the locality.

Two requirements have been made as a result of this inspection. They relate to reviewing the Statement of Purpose and consultation with relatives by the regulation

33 visitor. These do not have immediate impact upon young people living at the home.

As the regulation 33 visitor has a dual role within the organisation, a review has been recommended to ensure they are independent in their role and that there are no conflicts of interest.

Two further recommendations have been made in relation to young people having appropriate memorabilia of their time in placement and measures necessary to ensure that young people who wish to take their own medication can do so safely.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home that provides care and accommodation for up to four young people of either gender who may have behavioural and emotional difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
05/12/2013	Full	good
25/10/2012	Interim	good progress
19/07/2012	Full	good

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
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and the children's guide. (Regulation 5 (a))	31/07/2014
33 (2001)	ensure the independent person, shall interview, children accommodated , their parents, relatives and persons working at the children's home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion as to whether children accommodated at the children's home are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the children's home promotes the wellbeing of the children accommodated there. (Regulation 33 (8) (a))	31/07/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure children who are able and wish to keep and take their own medication can do so safely (NMS 6.14)
- ensure young people keep appropriate memorabilia of their time in the placement (NMS 22.6)
- ensure suitable arrangements exist for professional supervision of the registered person of the agency (NMS 19.3).

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

The nurture and encouragement young people experience at the home, helps them to recognise their potential and develop aspirations for their futures. External professionals speak positively about the progress young people make with one social worker commenting, '(Young person) is in a completely different place from where they were. (Young person) has aspirations for the future and is very aware that life opportunities can now be very different.'

Young people who had not previously engaged with education have now moved to full time education, completed exams and coursework and are exploring college options. Because of the significantly improved educational outcomes, future opportunities for the young people are greatly enhanced.

Assessments undertaken at the home contribute to pathway planning for young people. As they prepare for independent living, young people are supported to plan for, shop, budget and cook, their own food. They undertake responsibilities for keeping their rooms clean and tidy and they often choose to contribute to other domestic tasks in the home. Young people are, therefore, gaining the skills that will help them to confidently make the transition to more independent living and they recognise this.

The home places emphasis on the importance of ongoing family contact and there is a flexible approach to facilitating contact in line with young people's needs and their preferences. On social worker commented, 'Staff are very proactive in making contact arrangements that have been agreed. When (young person) has requested something the home have made those arrangements very quickly. This has helped (young person) to settle at the home.' The commitment to ensuring young people have contact with their families helps to ensure they have a sense of belonging, they understand their background and that they will be able to maintain family relationships in the future.

Good health is promoted through attendance at health appointments and access to a range of specialist health services. Young people's emotional wellbeing is supported through ready access to psychology services. One social worker commented, 'Previously (young person) wouldn't engage but they now understand that the staff care about them. Staff have managed to get them into college, to attend health appointments and other services and to take their medication.'

Quality of care **good**

Young people are cared for by a staff team who have a commitment to their safety, their achievement and their happiness. The good relationships between staff and young people mean that young people are open to the positive influence of staff in the choices that they make. One independent reviewing officer said, 'I was really impressed with what they do. Bad behaviour isn't an option – not going to school isn't an option. Because young people realise that someone really cares about them they can take the firm line.'

Staff seek to maximise young people's access to education and they support them to achieve. For example, the staff have worked with a placing authority in order to ensure that pupil premium funding was used to provide additional tuition for a young person and they worked intensely with another to support the completion of important coursework. One social worker said, 'They have done absolutely everything to support (young person's) education.'

Placement plans set out how the home contributes to meeting the individual needs of the young people. The plans convey the young person's characteristics, interests, likes and dislikes and they link to individual risk assessments. Staff are familiar with the plans and they know each young person well. This means that young people receive consistent care from a staff team who understand their needs. The reward system, which also links to placement plans, motivates young people to reach their targets. Individual targets relate to good behaviour, to young people's safety and their health. The sense of achievement for young people when they reach their targets, helps to build their self-esteem.

Arrangements for the storage, administration and recording of medication are generally well managed and, in line with young people's choice, they administer their own medication. However, self-administration is not supported by risk assessment to ensure that young people are managing their own medication safely. Staff work effectively with partner agencies. External professionals all confirmed that they are kept up to date with the young people's progress and that staff are always available. One social worker commented, 'The staff are working with all professionals but also family with open and honest communication. (Young person) recognises that everyone is communicating. (Young person) is very involved and there is transparency. The home contact mum every night so (Young person) knows where they stand with the adults involved in their care.'

The manager ensures that young people are supported and their views are represented through the Looked After Child review process. One young person described how she was supported and the social worker reflected that the whole review was planned around this young person. Careful planning and support to ensure the young people's participation means that they understand and can influence the plans for their care.

The young person centred approach of staff and the homely environment promotes belonging and acceptance and enables young people to settle. One young person said, 'My mind's stable now so I can go to school. I feel settled – normally I don't go 'cause I always have to move.' A social worker for another of the young people commented, 'The home isn't a children's home to (young person) – it's a home. (Young person) feels safe and they are safe. I have no concerns whatsoever.' Although records kept at the home reflect the young people's time there, young people do not have their own record, such as a memory book. It is important for future reference, that young people have their own record that includes memorabilia, so that they can use it to recall and reflect upon this significant period in their lives, spent away from their families, if they choose.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Staff prioritise the safety and welfare of the young people and young people indicate that they feel safe. One young person stated, 'It's good here – it actually is – it's the best. The best thing is that everybody is nice and it keeps me safe. ... I don't want to put myself at risk and don't spend a lot of time on social networking. Staff come and check on me and they always want you to get involved – whatever they are doing you are always invited and always get you to be involved.' Young people's particular risks and vulnerabilities are identified through individual risk assessments. This guides the staff in their approach to working with the young people which includes focused keywork sessions providing opportunities for young people to develop their own sense of risk and safety. The social worker for one young person commented, 'The home has a really good grasp of risk and they have kept them a lot safer. (Young person) remains very vulnerable but they have not previously recognised risk. They now feel safer ... (Young person) now recognises the previous risk and has a better understanding, so overall risks are reduced.'

Social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers comment that since being placed at the home, there is a reduction in young people going missing. The home has developed excellent working relationships with the local police. The police call at the home regularly, they know each of the young people and their associated risks and so when young people do go missing the joint response from the home and the police is timely and proportionate.

Young people feel that the staff help them to manage their behaviour when it might get them into trouble. Good relationships with staff and the focus upon positive reward, helps motivate young people toward good behaviour and lessens the frequency of unacceptable behaviours and the need for sanctions. Although staff are trained in the use of restraint, physical intervention has not been used at the home for some time. The close, and positive, working relationship with the police provides opportunity for their influence, and young people gain an understanding of socially acceptable behaviour in the wider community.

Safe and robust recruitment practices at the home are maintained. The identity of visitors to the home is confirmed. Regular health and safety checks are undertaken and safety equipment is appropriately serviced. Fire drills ensure young people and staff know what to do in the event of a fire. Each of these practices helps to ensure young people live in a safe environment.

Leadership and management

good

The home's Registered Manager is suitably experienced and qualified to undertake the responsibilities of her role. She has many years of experience working in residential childcare, is qualified with the relevant NVQ Level 4 and is currently undertaking the Level 5 Diploma.

The Registered Manager has a strong presence in the home, young people, staff and external professionals all indicate that she is available when needed and staff value the support she provides. Regular supervision takes place and annual appraisals take into account the views of young people. The staff describe a culture whereby, together, they reflect upon day to day practice and whether things could or should have been done differently. Stability and few changes within the staff team contributes toward the continuity of care offered. Attendance at regular training on a range of issues, for example, the impact parental substance misuse, further contributes to good outcomes for young people.

As part of the quality assurance process, monthly monitoring visits to the home are undertaken by the regulation 33 visitor. The Registered Manager ensures action is taken to meet any recommendations set out in the visitor's reports. The regulation 33 visitor does not consult with relatives which means that an important source of feedback is not accounted for within the quality assurance process. Additionally, the regulation 33 visitor provides supervision to the Registered Manager. Given this dual role within the organisation, it is recommended that these arrangements are reviewed as they have the potential to compromise the independence of the regulation 33 visitor.

The home's Statement of Purpose has not been updated in line with recent changes in regulation. Therefore, the enhanced information that should be available to relevant people is not yet accessible to them.

The Registered Manager sits on a local community group which is chaired by the police. Through this she has a good understanding of the local area, any events that are going on and any concerns that might impact upon the home. There have been no complaints from neighbours and although young people know how to complain they have not made any complaints.

Through planning and work with external agencies the recommendation of the

previous inspection has been met. Social workers confirm that they are kept up to date and are notified of any significant events in young people's lives. One social worker commented, 'I get monthly reports. When I do statutory visits it's very warm and welcoming. Nothing is too much trouble. I can spend as much time with (young person) as I want to. I am really pleased that (young person) is at the home.'

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.