

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	4 May 2016
Unique reference number	SC069176
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 Greenough
Inspector	Janine Shortman-Thomas

Inspection date	4 May 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved 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	Good

SC069176

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people benefit from a stable, consistent and experienced staff team that demonstrates a commitment to improving young people's life experiences and to keeping them safe. As such, young people's safety is promoted, and they make good progress relative to their individual starting points.
- Most young people report that their lives have improved since their arrival at the home. They confirm that they feel happy, safe and protected as a result of the care and support that they receive from the staff team.
- Young people maintain positive contact with those who are significant to them, as staff encourage, support and facilitate this sensitively.
- Regularly reviewed and updated risk assessments, which are understood and implemented by the staff team, ensure that young people are kept safe. This is because behaviours such as staying out late and going missing from the home have been reduced significantly.
- Positive and proactive working arrangements with partner agencies ensure that young people obtain the support and services that they require to address their changing needs quickly.
- Good external monitoring of the home, which incorporates the views of all relevant parties, ensures that the home continues to develop and improve the experiences and progress of young people.
- Three requirements have been made, relating to ensuring that full case records are maintained, the children's guide and ensuring that suitable education arrangements are in place to support and enable young people's education progress. Furthermore, three recommendations to improve practice have been raised. These relate to staff training and supervision, and the recording and evaluation of any sanctions or consequences imposed.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard. 7: In order to achieve the children's views, wishes and feelings standard— 2. the manager must ensure that— (b) each child— (ii) has access to the home's children's guide when the child's placement in the home is agreed and throughout the child's stay in the home.	31 May 2016
8: The education standard 8: The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (viii) help each child who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of non-attendance and return to school as soon as possible.	31 May 2016
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for	31 May 2016

each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child, with particular regard to ensuring that any plans, such as placement plans, care plans and any minutes or action plans from significant meetings such as strategy meetings, which are prepared by the placing authority are available on file and adhered to (Regulation 36(1)(a)).	
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Recommendations

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

- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control and discipline are fully and consistently recorded and subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36).
- The registered person must ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources, such as training in attachment, to support their training needs, and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of the staff in the home ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11).
- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2).

Full report

Information about this children's home

- This children's home is owned and managed by a private company. It provides care and accommodation for no more than four children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. This company enlists the support of a clinical psychologist in its care planning for children and young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12 February 2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10 November 2015	Full	Good
4 February 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
2 July 2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The stable and consistent staff team provides a happy, relaxed home environment where young people feel safe, supported and at ease. Most young people maintain positive relationships with the adults around them, and attribute their progress to the care and support that the staff team provides. As such, most young people's well-being is promoted, and all young people make good progress in relation to their starting points across many aspects of their welfare and development. One young person said, 'My confidence and self-respect have improved since I have been here. The staff support and encourage you with everything. They want you to think about what you can do. If it was not for them and living here I would not be doing as well as I am doing in school.' Young people are encouraged and supported to maintain good health in a holistic way. Staff are aware and follow young people's individual healthcare plans, and seek out additional support and services as and when required. Staff support and encourage young people to maintain a good standard of personal care, and to make their own choices and decisions about their health, treatment and lifestyle. Staff support young people quickly to access any additional support or services when young people choose to engage in behaviours which are harmful to their health, for example smoking and taking illegal substances. However, despite this and the best efforts of staff, some young people continue to engage in these behaviours, which are harmful to their health and well-being. The vast majority of young people attend school regularly and are making good progress at their individual education placements. Staff transport each young person into school and ensure that they are emotionally ready and enabled to make the most of their learning experiences. Positive communication between the staff team and education colleagues ensures that any barriers to learning can be addressed quickly and efficiently. Furthermore, staff are familiar with the local further education resources and support young people to consider their longer-term educational opportunities. They support young people in seeking out suitable colleges and help them to secure their desired courses for when they complete their formal education. That said, one young person has moved into the home despite any suitable education provision being secured for them. This, and the lack	

of any further education provision being offered and provided to the young person within the home as an interim measure, means that one young person has been without any educational input since joining the home on 4 March 2016.

The manager and staff actively promote young people's contact with those who are significant to them. Staff support and facilitate contact with family members and friends sensitively, and ensure that young people are supported thoughtfully during times of heightened anxiety or distress. Thus, young people are able to remain in contact, and develop and sustain positive relationships with those people who are important to them.

Young people are encouraged and supported to take control of certain aspects of their lives, and are instrumental in planning their weekly menus and activities. Creative consultation undertaken by the staff team ensures that young people's views are actively sought, listened to and acted upon in all areas of their daily lives. When young people raise any areas of concerns, the manager ensures that these are fully investigated and addressed promptly to ensure that a suitable outcome is achieved. Furthermore, young people are actively involved in providing feedback on staff's performance and ideas on what developments can be made within their home to ensure that ongoing improvements can be achieved. As a result, young people feel valued and respected, and fully involved in the development of their home.

Staff provide and promote young people's attendance and involvement in a number of community-based activities. Young people are encouraged to become involved in music groups, drama groups, to play golf and snooker, and to use the community-based services such as the cinema. This promotes young people's general development, enhances their confidence and community participation, and builds positive memories of their time spent at the home.

Young people are growing in confidence and gaining some useful independent living skills, which will equip them well in their preparation and transition into adulthood. Staff support each young person thoughtfully and sensitively to increase their knowledge and skills, in line with their age and level of understanding. Young people confirmed that they feel confident in preparing and cooking foods, and were able to use household appliances well.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The majority of young people confirm that they feel happy and safe. One young person said, 'I feel comfortable here. It feels like a home, not a house. A home is where you feel safe and relaxed, and a house is just somewhere you live.' Staff have a good understanding of their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. All staff have completed safeguarding training and receive regular refresher training as and when this is required. Staff are aware of the home's whistle-blowing policy and speak confidently about this. Consequently, staff understand how to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns promptly. They have a good level of knowledge and understanding of the procedures that they must follow should any safeguarding concerns arise. Staff contribute well to devising young people's individual risk management plans, which are reviewed, updated and evidently understood by the staff. These plans clearly identify the risks. Strategies required to reduce these are consistently implemented by the staff. As such, staff are aware of factors that may trigger unsafe behaviours and are proactive in taking action to minimise them. Staff have a good understanding of young people's needs and, through positive, trusting relationships, are able to encourage them to consider their actions if these are felt to be unsafe. When staff are concerned about young people's safety, they take appropriate action to make sure that young people receive the support that they need. This includes increased supervision, supervision of spending and accessing additional support and counselling. This, alongside positive working relationships with partner agencies, has reduced the number of incidents of young people going missing from the home, for some young people. When young people absent themselves from the home, staff respond satisfactorily. Staff are familiar with the procedures that are in place and implement these consistently. When young people go missing from the home, staff make appropriate attempts to contact and locate them. They use their knowledge of young people's associates and behaviours well, and share the information they receive from these sources promptly with the police and placing local authorities. The manager and staff work well with young people's parents, and ensure that they receive regular updates when young people are away from the home. When young people return, they are welcomed back into the home. Any information taken from them and partner agencies is used well to ensure that young people's	

risk management plans are reviewed and current.

There have been no incidents of physical restraint since the last inspection. Young people acknowledge that staff have been instrumental in helping them to change their behaviour for the better. They say that staff encourage them to understand how their actions impact on others and to make better choices about their own behaviour. Positive behaviour is reinforced and promoted through the effective use of incentives and rewards, which helps young people to self-regulate their own behaviour. When inappropriate behaviours are displayed, sanctions and consequences are used which have been identified by the young people themselves. However, the present recording system for managing consequences and sanctions is inconsistent and confusing. As such, staff do not always fully record the sanctions and consequences implemented at the home consistently and clearly. Therefore, the manager is unable to support young people to consider their behaviours, actions and consequences following each incident. She is unable to evaluate the effectiveness of these to ensure that they are fair and proportionate.

Young people and staff are kept safe, because staff carry out a range of suitable health and safety checks of the home. The manager ensures that all the periodic assessments of the gas, electrical and fire safety appliances are undertaken regularly, and that any repairs and damage are addressed quickly by the on-site maintenance man. Alongside the regular fire drills, which young people confirmed take place frequently, and their clear understanding of the fire evacuation procedure, which they were happy and confident to share with the inspector during the inspection, this promotes staff's and young people's safety and well-being.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
Young people live in a home that is managed effectively by an experienced and suitably qualified manager. She has been registered with Ofsted since November 2008. The manager and her three team leaders are dedicated and committed to the ongoing development of the home. They are driven to continue to improve the lives and experiences of all the young people in their care. The home meets its aims and objectives, as set out in its statement of purpose. The manager is committed and dedicated to improving young people's life chances	

and experiences. She has a good understanding of the progress that young people make and supports her staff in working with other agencies to ensure that these improvements can be sustained and improved upon. Child-friendly information, available within the children's guide, provides young people with suitable details about what the home offers and what services are available to them should they need support in challenging the decisions that affect their lives. This document is not routinely shared with young people on their arrival into the home.

There are a suitable number of appropriately qualified staff to ensure that each young person's needs can be individually met. Staff report that they enjoy their work and are proud to share the achievements that young people have made. They confirm that there is an open culture within the home, and they are encouraged to speak and share any concerns or issues freely. Staff confirm that they feel supported by the manager and are equipped to deliver a high standard of care to all young people. The manager ensures that supervision sessions and training opportunities are provided to the staff to continue to support them to reflect on, and develop, their practice further. That said, the manager's arrangements for supervision are insufficient, as she has only arranged two supervision sessions since October 2015. Staff do not receive supervision sessions in line with the commitments highlighted in the statement of purpose. Furthermore, specific and suitable training around supporting young people with attachment difficulties has not been provided.

The manager ensures that parents, Ofsted and other relevant agencies are informed when serious events occur, such as when young people absent themselves from the home or when they are involved in accidents outside the home which require hospital treatment. The manager is proactive in requesting the meetings necessary to ensure that all the risks can be considered cohesively. She requests the additional support and services required to meet young people's emerging needs quickly and appropriately. That said, minutes and action plans from these meetings are not systematically requested. Therefore, the manager cannot be assured that she and her team are consistently complying with any actions raised.

While there were no requirements or recommendations raised during the last inspection, the manager continues to use effective external monitoring to ensure the ongoing development of the home's systems and processes. To develop this further, the manager has enlisted support and guidance from an external provision to develop her understanding of the strengths and areas for the continued development of the home.

The manager has not made suitable efforts to ensure that all young people's case

files and records are up to date. Some young people who are new to the home have been placed without up-to-date placement plans and care plans, while other young people's files do not contain minutes from important meetings, such as strategy meetings and reviews. As such, the manager cannot translate these aims, objectives and identified risks into the home's placement plans. Furthermore, the manager cannot be assured that she and the staff team are aware of, and are meeting and managing, all the young people's present and emerging needs, and vulnerabilities, consistently and safely.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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