

SC069176

Registered provider: Oakfields Children's Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and managed by a private company. It provides care and accommodation for four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 October 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: 15 February 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:

- Young people benefit from a stable and experienced staff team, with which they have built trusting relationships.

- The staff team works collaboratively to provide stability and consistency to young people. This helps young people to develop acceptable behaviour and self-regulation.
- There is a strong focus on education. Staff are strong advocates for young people and actively encourage them to become engaged in their education placements.
- The quality of care and support is having a positive impact on the progress and experiences of young people.
- Positive and proactive working with partner agencies ensures that young people receive the support and services that they need to meet their needs.
- Staff place the welfare and safety of all young people at the forefront of their practice. They liaise effectively with the police when they have concerns about the welfare and safety of young people.
- Comprehensive monitoring systems result in high standards of care, ensuring that young people have the opportunity to progress, develop and improve their future life chances.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Young people have access to an independent person after being missing from the home. However, the home does not maintain a record of these visits.
- A shortfall in a recruitment file was identified.
- There is no workforce development plan in place to ensure the continual development of the staff team.
- Individual risk assessments highlight the specific risk factors for each young person. However, risk management strategies do not provide staff with clear direction in terms of monitoring a young person's welfare when they return home under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/05/2016	Full	Good
12/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/11/2015	Full	Good

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
12.—(1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child (Regulation 12(1)(2)). This specifically relates to clearer risk management and strategies in relation to monitoring young people believed to be under the influence of alcohol or harmful substances.	30/11/2017
The registered person must ensure full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2 (Regulation 32(3)(d)).	30/11/2017

Recommendations

- Records must be kept detailing all individual incidents when young people go missing from home. This is with specific reference to a detailed record of what actions staff have taken and also when return interviews have been carried out and by whom. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.31)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan. The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Four young people currently live at the home. Two young people have lived at the home for more than a year. One young person has left the home since the last inspection; this was done in a well-planned way. The progress this young person made while living at the home has enabled them to return to live nearer their home. Furthermore, they gained a number of GCSEs this summer, which has enabled them to study A level subjects of their choice.

A young person moved into the home in August 2017, and is making good progress in relation to his initial starting point. The young person has settled in well and is working towards a planned return home. Staff provide young people with continuity of care so that they have stability and consistency in their lives. The atmosphere in the home is supportive and friendly. Observations show that the relationships between young people and staff are caring and supportive. A placing social worker said, 'I have been very impressed and [name] has made remarkable changes in terms of lifestyle, behaviour and self-esteem in a short space of time. The boundaries are excellent, he knows what to expect, there are good routines and staff have a caring but firm approach.'

Staff work hard and persevere to improve young people's experiences and progress. There is a strong focus on education, with staff actively encouraging the young people to engage in their education placements. Three of the young people have an education placement in place, with two young people attending full-time and their attendance is good. A placing social worker commented, '[Staff] have linked well with school and again this is an area of real improvement with attendance going from 30% to nearly 90%.' Another young person recently completed an apprenticeship and has been given a full-time job by the same company. This enhances young people's personal and social development.

Consultation with young people takes place regularly through young people's meetings and key-work sessions with staff. Observations during the inspection confirm that staff are interested in and listen to the young people, particularly when they return home from educational placements. The manager seeks the views of young people in relation to staff practice and regarding developments within the home. Furthermore, the young people contribute to their care plans and targets. This ensures that young people feel valued and that their views and opinions are important.

Young people are healthy and access services appropriate to their needs. Specialist support is available to meet the emotional and psychological needs of young people. The manager employs the services of a clinical psychologist, who supports both the young people and staff. The psychologist has delivered specific training to the staff team, so that its members are confident in responding to a young people's emotional and psychological needs.

Young people are encouraged to pursue their individual hobbies and interests. For example, one young person is a member of the local football club. Others enjoy attending a music club, ice-skating, swimming and trips to the cinema. A young person said, 'It's a good home, I like it here, I've been to Blackpool and I went to watch United play.' Young people make friends and spend time with their peers outside of the home. Staff provide young people with the emotional support to help them gain a better understanding about the foundations of healthy relationships.

Young people learn independence skills, taking into account their age and understanding. The manager has recently renovated the old office into a fully furnished studio apartment, which will enable young people to experience semi-independence with the benefit of ongoing support from the staff. This opportunity will help prepare young people for more independent living.

The home actively promotes contact for young people. This ensures that young people maintain close relationships with the people who are most important to them. Staff work closely with young people's families to promote continuity of care and positive outcomes for them. A placing social worker commented, 'Staff have been supervising the contact with mum, with no concerns.' This means that young people retain a sense of belonging and improves their feelings of self-worth.

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

Young people spoken to during the inspection said that they feel safe and well cared for. The young people do not identify bullying as an issue in the home. Young people's risks are identified from their initial starting points and strategies are put in place to protect them from harm. That said, risk management strategies do not ensure that staff have clear direction in terms of monitoring a young person's welfare when they return home under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

Some young people continue to go missing from the home. Clear procedures are in place for managing incidents of young people going missing. This includes staff trying to maintain contact with young people via their mobile phones when they are away from the home. There are proactive and effective working relationships with the police and other safeguarding agencies to support and protect the young people. Where a young person is identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation, staff share information appropriately and attend strategy meetings. A professional said, '[The manager] is very switched on, they pass on any concerns and share information; they go above and beyond.'

Young people are provided with the opportunity to speak to someone independent of the home when they return from being missing. This further promotes their welfare and safety. However, the home does not maintain a record of these visits, which could potentially have an impact on the staff's ability to pick up on any concerns.

Young people benefit from clear and consistent boundaries. Behaviour is well

managed and staff work with young people to help them find more appropriate ways of managing their behaviour. Young people respond well to positive reinforcements, which means that sanctions are rarely used. There have been no physical interventions since July 2016. A requirement made at the last inspection in relation to the physical intervention records has been met. The manager has identified an independent person to monitor and evaluate any physical interventions that she may have been involved in. This ensures the welfare and safety of young people and staff.

Staff spoken to during the inspection demonstrated a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. They prioritise the welfare and safety of the young people at all times. There have been no allegations since the last inspection.

There has been one new member of staff recruited since the last inspection. The personnel file demonstrates that several recruitment checks have been completed. However, the manager should ensure that references have been verified prior to the employment of any new staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed effectively by a suitably qualified and experienced manager. She has been registered with Ofsted since November 2008. She is ably assisted by her three seniors, and together they provide strong leadership and direction to the staff team. She is totally committed to improving the lives of young people, and is highly respected by the staff team and professionals.

The home is adequately resourced and meeting the aims and objectives within the statement of purpose. The recommendation made at the last inspection, in relation to the statement of purpose, has been addressed. There are sufficient numbers of staff to meet the needs of the young people. The home does not use agency staff. Any shortfalls in the rota are covered by the staff team. This ensures continuity of care for the young people.

Young people benefit from a particularly stable and experienced staff team, with which they have built trusting relationships. The majority of the members of the staff team have a suitable childcare qualification. The manager ensures that regular supervision, team meetings and appraisals provide staff with the opportunity to reflect on their practice and development needs. Staff undertake training to ensure that they are suitably skilled to meet the needs of the young people.

The manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The home's development plan identifies areas for improvement in the coming months. However, there is no workforce development plan in place to ensure the continual development of the staff team.

The manager has a clear understanding of the progress young people are making. Every Monday she reviews the young people's targets and plans to ensure that progress is sustained. This ensures that the young people receive highly individualised

support. The manager is proactive in raising any concerns about young people with other services. Multi-agency meetings ensure that all the relevant agencies contribute to care planning. The manager has recently served notice on a placement because she recognises that the home can no longer meet the needs of the young person safely.

There are good systems in place for reviewing and monitoring the quality of care provided. The independent visitor's reports provide a good overview of the home, and highlight areas where practice can be improved. Any actions raised are promptly addressed by the manager. This serves to ensure that standards of care are maintained and improved.

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 differences 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: SC069176

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oakfields Children's Care Limited

Registered provider address: Library Chambers, 48 Union Street, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 1ND

Responsible individual: Ben Greenough

Registered manager: Lisa Greenough

Inspector

Michelle Bacon, social care inspector

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