

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC361789
Inspector	Janice Hawtin
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Cornwall Council
Registered person address	County Hall TRURO Cornwall TR1 3AY

Responsible individual	Katherine Margaret Brown
Registered manager	Julie Anita Walsh
Date of last inspection	21/01/2014

Inspection date	12/08/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Children and young people make exceptional progress in this home where their particular vulnerabilities and complex needs are understood by the staff caring for them. An emphasis on improving communication skills allows children and young people to make choices. Consequently they are enabled to participate to their full ability in everyday life decisions and understand something of the world around them. A parent commented 'My son is doing fine, he is coming on leaps and bounds, I'm really happy with the service. His speech is better and his eye contact is better when you speak to him.'

A Registered manager is in place, she has the support of an enthusiastic and dedicated staff team. The strengths and weaknesses of the service are understood and a development plan is in place. This document is regularly reviewed and in a format which promotes continuous practice development.

Care plans are personalised to meet individual needs, and are compliant with the aims and expectations of the placing authority. Work in partnership with parents and other agencies ensures specialist knowledge and support is available. This promotes progress for children and young people and contributes to them being happy in this home.

The staff team are experienced, and provided with the training and guidance needed and to ensure the safe and effective care of children and young people. Risk is managed rather than avoided, allowing children and young people to take part in a good range of activities. They enjoy themselves and are also exposed to a variety of new experiences, and opportunities for social and physical skills development.

There have been improvements to the environment in recent months. However, there are problems with two of the bathrooms provided which has left them not fit for purpose. One is out of use, and the second doesn't have a shower and has issues with damp. This has left children and young people without an appropriate shower. They can use the staff facilities, however, these are not spacious enough to allow staff to help effectively with personal hygiene needs.

Other shortfalls do not have a discernible impact on the welfare of children and young people. These include some lack of clarity around children and young people's case file planning records and anomalies in the frequency and purpose of night time monitoring.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The service is run by the local authority. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to ten young people of either sex with emotional and behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

The home is purpose-built. It is situated on the site of a local authority special school and has access to some of the school's facilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/01/2014	Interim	good progress
20/06/2013	Full	good
14/02/2013	Interim	inadequate progress
19/09/2012	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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home used by young people are of sound construction internally, well maintained and equipped with what is reasonably necessary. This particularly applies to ensuring the timely repair of showers and refurbishment of bathrooms (Regulation 31 (2)(a-f)).	19/09/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment, and that risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel (NMS 10.3)
- ensure young people's records contribute to understanding their lives, in particular care planning, and detail relating to any faith and religious identity needs (NMS 22.1).
- ensure that night time monitoring of young people promotes their welfare, and protects their rights to privacy and dignity (NMS 10.5).

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Children and young people make exceptional progress in this home often from a very difficult and chaotic starting point. Social, emotional, and physical skills development is evident. Significantly, all developments are enhanced by the progress children and young people make in developing communication skills. The ability to communicate is essential in helping children and young people with complex needs understand the world around them. This has led to a reduction in difficult behaviour, frustration and anxiety. In addition supporting emotional well-being, and social skills.

Records, photographs and other important memorabilia kept by the staff contribute to young people developing a positive self-view and building on their confidence. Contact with families is encouraged and supported, enabling children and young people to understand their background and history.

Children and young people benefit from full -time attendance at school and their achievements are recognised. A close working partnership and the sharing of successful interventions between the home and education providers allows young people to maximise their learning and skills development.

All children and young people are considered to be able to make choices regardless of their verbal communication limitations. This allows them to make decisions around many aspects of their lives. Staff actively encourage children and young people to make choices around activities, food and drink, as well as more complex decisions such as whether they will allow somebody to look round their bedroom. One young person who previously would not tolerate any personalisation of his bedroom has recently chosen and added a duvet cover, curtains and pictures, which are now in place. These add to a sense of ownership and belonging.

Children and young people are engaged in a variety of activities both in the home and out in the community. This enriches their experiences and provides further opportunity for developing skills and socialising. Amongst the many activities on offer, swimming, visiting theme Parks and visiting local places of interest are popular.

Children and young people have complex needs and as such they are supervised both in the home and out in the community by staff. They show no inclination towards, or interest in risk taking behaviours such as smoking or drug use. Young people reaching puberty are helped to understand the need to explore their own bodies in private. This very important but sometimes complex life skill is addressed to avoid socially unacceptable behaviour.

Children and young people who have recently successfully moved, are confident in their new homes. This has been to both adult services and further childcare

providers. A sibling commented 'as a family we are really grateful for all the work and planning the staff did to make sure my brother's move was a success, the staff visited him recently and he was able to let them go again, which just shows how settled he is'.

Physical exercise and a healthy diet contribute to children and young people's understanding of a healthy lifestyle. They are making healthy food choices and as a result some have lost weight, and are now within a healthy weight range. Routine and specialist health checks help them avoid key health risks.

It is likely the children and young people living in this home will continue to need the support and encouragement of others throughout their lives. However, they are encouraged to take as much responsibility as possible in all aspects of daily living; as such they continue to develop independence and self-help skills.

Quality of care

good

Managers and staff have consistently high expectations for children and young people. They expect and enable them to participate in making choices about all aspects of their lives in the home, and in the wider community. Imaginative use is made of resources which improves understanding of their particular vulnerabilities, and informs staff how to sustain successful interventions to meet the needs of these children and young people.

Staff are skilled in their ability to communicate effectively with children and young people. A variety of methods are used including speech, signing, pictures and symbols. The staff also produce social stories and sequencing strips which help to inform children and young people's understanding of plans for the day, boundaries and expectations. They can also be used as aids to help young people develop independence skills such as hand washing or getting dressed.

The majority of young people attended the school which is on the same site as the home. They are supported to attend by the care staff who also work in close partnership with the school staff to maximise progress and celebrate achievements.

The home uses Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) which allows staff, parents and other stakeholders to look at video clips of people interacting with the children and young people in this home. This provides the opportunity for a greater understanding of communication needs and successful interactions. It has proved particularly helpful to foster carers in helping them see first-hand the behaviour and successful management techniques used by staff with children they intend to foster. These video clips have also been used to inform staff supervision, and development.

The care provided is enhanced through effective partnerships with external agencies. This includes work with speech and language therapists to improve communication

skills. In addition, work with psychologists not only provides for individual support for children and young people but also contributes to helping staff understand their behaviour and offers further guidance around interventions.

The care provided includes consideration of issues of inclusion. The many resources in the home and those out in the community add to the opportunities and experiences available to young people and children. This supports their continued progress and development and adds value to their lives. Children and young people appear happy and content, they are comfortable and at ease in this environment, and with the staff looking after them.

Individual placement plans compiled by the home in consultation with other stakeholders are detailed, and cover all aspects of the development needs of children and young people. Faith and religious needs are not always stated or purposefully detailed on care plans and some information around planning is not readily available but lost in the considerable amount of information available. While these shortfalls did not appear to impact on children or young people, the homes planning documents do not demonstrate the quality, creativity and innovative care provided.

Children and young people require lots of attention and support in most aspects of their lives, as such they influence all of the care provided. In addition they are enabled to make considered choices which influence lots of things including activities, food, décor and furniture and fittings in their bedrooms.

It is not clear if all night-time monitoring of young people is necessary, and there are some inconsistencies in this practice. Consequently there is some potential to compromise young people's legitimate rights to privacy and dignity.

The home offers a large spacious environment; each young person has their own bedroom. There are three separate lounges and a number of dining options to allow children and young people the option of sharing or being on their own. This is particularly important for some children and young people who are developing social skills and learning to interact with others. This facility is also useful when the staff are introducing new residents to the home, as they can visit and spend time here without disrupting or impacting on current residents.

The quality of care is compromised by a lack of shower facilities for children and young people. Only one of three bathrooms has a fitted shower and this has now been out of use for more than six weeks following leaks under the bathroom floor. The home is reliant on the local authority who owns the home to manage these major refurbishment issues; this has led to unacceptable and significant delays.

Keeping children and young people safe **good**

Vulnerable children and young people with little or no understanding of risk are supervised during waking hours both the in the home, and out in the community. This is to protect their welfare and keep them safe. Staffing is provided at a minimum one to one level, they are aware of the specific vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of children and young people and respond to any expressions of concern or discontent. Consequently children and young people feel safe in this environment.

Behaviour management plans and individual strategies are grounded in an understanding of children and young people's communication needs, their likes and dislikes. Plans provide clear guidance to staff about effected interventions. This promotes a reduction in destructive and self-harming behaviour, and enables children and young people to reduce anxiety and become more settled. Behaviour management which is focused on communicating with children and young people, involves modelling, encouragement and praise. Sanctions are not used as young people and children would have very little understanding of their meaning. Physical restraint has not been used or needed to manage behaviour for some time. This protects young people's dignity and contributes to them feeling safe.

Children and young people do not go missing from his home. However, arrangements for dealing with any issues are in place should any incidence of care. The home has a good working relationship with the local police who will highlight to staff any particular environmental risks which have the potential to impact on the safety of children and young people, allowing staff to take preventative action.

Regular health and safety checks are completed alongside day to day maintenance of the environment. This protects young people and children from unnecessary risk. Fire detection and retention systems are in place throughout the home to protect both young people and staff. Regular fire drills take place so that staff know what to do in the event of an emergency, and children and young people have some understanding of the evacuation process.

Thorough vetting and recruitment checks for staff help prevent unsuitable people from being employed in this home, and having the opportunity to harm or place children and young people at risk.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager has been in post since 2007, she holds child care and management qualifications and has more than 14 years of experience working with vulnerable children and young people. She has the support of a deputy manager, senior worker and a dedicated staff team. There are clear arrangements in place to deputise in the absence of the Registered Manager; this avoids any disruption in the service provided to children and young people. A psychologist commented 'it is rare to see such consistent professionalism within a team, there is a shared commitment to working together to meet the needs of young people'.

The strengths and weaknesses at the home are understood. Development planning is in a format which promotes continuous practice development to benefit the children and young people. Staff are allocated individual responsibilities; this promotes use of their skills and develops specialisms.

The Statement of Purpose is clear, comprehensive and readily available. Parents, staff and the placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of placements and what services the home offers. A guide for children and young people is available, providing information in a format which suits the age and understanding of children and young people using the home.

The recent appointment of an independent person to complete Regulation 33 reports has seen an improvement in their format and content. Observation of children and young people alongside discussions with staff and parents has informed these reports. Checking of records and other information has been vigorous in identifying action points to further improve the home and avoid any shortfalls.

Staff receive regular supervision of a quality which supports their understanding of their roles and responsibilities to children and young people. Each member of staff has an annual appraisal which identifies development needs and supports personal individual progress. The induction process which includes probationary assessments for new staff ensures they have the necessary skills and knowledge, and are competent to provide for the needs of children and young people. All existing staff have a child care qualification. Following successful completion of their probationary period new staff are expected to undertake a minimum level three diploma in child care.

The training provided to staff is comprehensive and includes mandatory, essential and specialist training.

Consequently, staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to meet the needs of the children and young people they care for. Team meetings are also used to develop staff and provide opportunities for sharing successful interventions, and for problem solving. Alternate meetings are used to discuss and review plans for children and young people so that the home continues to meet their needs and provide for individual progress.

Managers monitor the quality of care provided including the outcomes and progress made by children and young people. Purposeful work with other specialist agencies and in consultation with parents also contributes to the success of placements, the development of children and young people, and their successful transitions into and from the home.

Since the last inspection there have been attempts to provide a more homely environment. Many of the health and safety signs which provided information to staff had been removed. The home has been repainted throughout and new furniture and

fittings in two of the lounges makes them cosy and inviting. Several areas including the spacious corridor areas and the toilets used by children and young people still have a clinical or institutionalised feel. In addition, and despite the efforts of staff to try and get things sorted out, there has been considerable delay in repairing and refurbishing bathrooms used by children and young people.

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.