

SC366002

Registered provider: Alliance Care and Education Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. There is a registered school on site.

Inspection dates: 22 to 23 June 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: 28 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people have positive experiences living in this friendly, nurturing and supportive home. The high standard of individualised care consistently meets their needs and enables them to make good progress. Young people are safe, happy, and healthy, and are taking part in education. They enjoy the same social experiences and activities as other young people. The house is warm and welcoming, and is decorated and maintained to a high standard.
- Young people enjoy trusting and meaningful relationships with staff. They feel at home, and develop a sense of belonging and stability. Staff are determined to maintain positive relationships when young people are struggling. Young people are encouraged to express their views, and to make choices and decisions about their lives. When the choices that young people make might not be in their best interest, the staff's open and engaging relationship with the young people enables them to work things out together. Staff listen to young people's feelings and worries, take them seriously, and respond appropriately. Young people know that staff are interested in their lives and want them to do well. The staff's positive and understanding approach supports young people to manage their feelings and frustrations constructively.
- Young people are protected from harm and are becoming increasingly safer. Staff identify and understand the risks for each young person and take appropriate action to make sure young people are safe.
- Effective care planning and productive working relationships between the staff, placing authorities, schools, health workers and mental health workers mean that young people receive the right support to meet their assessed needs. Staff routinely monitor young people's progress and work with other services to tackle any barriers to progress.
- The registered manager's strong and effective leadership is making a positive difference to young people's lives. Caring, experienced, skilled, qualified and well-supported staff provide a high quality of care for each young person. The staffing arrangements are efficiently organised to provide young people with a continuity of care that meets their needs, and provides opportunities for them to form positive attachments.
- The manager has a clear and accurate understanding of young people's progress and the key priorities for their development. His effective monitoring of the quality of care and support means that he has a realistic understanding of how well the staff are promoting and safeguarding young people's welfare, and how to make further improvements.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Young people's placement behavioural management plans should be more detailed, and specific to each young person's assessed needs. The plans need to clearly show the arrangements for supporting young people around drug dependency and offending behaviour. Also, they need to show in detail the agreed strategies for supporting each young person to manage their feelings and control their behaviour, including effective strategies to prevent situations getting out of control to the extent that restraint may be necessary.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/11/2016	Full	Requires improvement
22/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/11/2015	Full	Requires improvement

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

Statutory requirement

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 maintain records ("case records") for each child which are kept up to date. (Regulation 36(1)(b)) In particular, that placement plans devised by the registered person show the up to date arrangements for each young person's care set out in the placing authority's care plan, including any treatment plans and support for drug dependency, and work with the youth justice service and the targets for reducing offending behaviour.	28/07/2017

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that the behaviour management strategy for each child is set out clearly in the child's behaviour management plan ("individual crisis management plan"). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraphs 9.34 and 9.35)

In particular, the plan should show an understanding of each child's behaviour; set out the specific steps needed to support each child to manage their feelings and control their behaviour safely; involve the child in identifying the best ways to support them to manage their feelings and behaviour; the measures to be taken to prevent the need for the child to be restrained; and the precise practical measures to be used if it becomes necessary to restrain the child; and how to support the child after the use of restraint.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This children's home provides young people with a stable, nurturing and supportive place to live. They receive a high quality of individualised and well-planned care that meets their assessed needs, and this is helping them to achieve better developmental

outcomes. They enjoy positive day-to-day experiences, and are becoming happier and healthier. Young people are doing well in education, and increasingly they are safer from the risks of abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation, self-harm and drug dependency.

Young people enjoy trusting and meaningful relationships with their staff. Staff know the young people well and work out the best ways to engage with them. Staff are patient, and understand how difficult it may be for young people to learn to trust adults. They realise that some young people may need time and space to get to know new people and feel comfortable around them. The staff's friendly and insightful approach gives young people strong messages that staff care about them, are interested in their lives, and want what is best for them. Young people also become aware that this is a safe place for them to live. Young people who have moved in recently have quickly developed positive relationships with staff and show signs that they are starting to feel settled. Young people are comfortable around staff. A young person is becoming chatty, she gives staff more direct eye contact and enjoys staff combing her hair. Her independent reviewing officer said that, 'Staff are really in tune with her and show a real sense of care and investment in her. She has a good relationship with staff and is making remarkable progress.'

Staff treat young people with respect and always take their wishes and feelings into account. Young people are encouraged and supported to influence the running of the home, including how it is decorated and how they spend their spare time, make choices and take part in decisions about what happens to them in the future. Staff are open and honest when young people express wishes that are not always in their best interests. They clearly explain the reason why they have decided against following young people's wishes, in ways that the young people understand and can accept.

Effective care planning and strong working relationships between the staff and social workers, teachers, and health workers ensure that the arrangements for young people's care meet their assessed needs. Everyone works extremely well together to ensure that the relevant plans for each young person's care are reviewed on an ongoing basis, to reflect their progress and continue to meet their needs and circumstances. Clearly written records provide an accurate picture of the young people's progress, and contribute to a better understanding of their lives. The staff's individual work with young people is focused on specific issues identified in their plans, and emerging issues that include relationships with other young people and worries about the future. However, one young person's plan was not up to date and did not include all the arrangements for his care, as set out in the placing authority's care plan. It did not show the treatment plan and support for drug dependency, the arrangements for working with the youth justice service and the targets for reducing offending behaviour. In practice, staff are making sure that the young person is following his treatment plan and that he is working with his youth justice worker, but the lack of clarity in his plan may not always ensure that he receives a consistent level of support in these important areas.

Young people only come to live at the home when the registered manager is satisfied that the staff have the skills and expertise to meet each young person's assessed needs, and careful consideration is given to the impact on young people already living in the

home. For example, the registered manager, responsible individual and headteacher from the school visited a young person on a number of occasions where he was previously living, to get to know him and understand his needs, before agreeing that they could offer him a suitable place to live. They also worked closely with the placing authority, his carers and doctors to make sure that it was the right place for him, and that he could get the full range of support he required. Young people therefore move into the home in a carefully and sensitively planned way.

The registered manager and staff fully take into account the particular needs of young people living a long way from their family homes. They help the young people maintain important family links and ensure that they see their families frequently. The registered manager also makes sure that the young people have access to local education and health services that meet their assessed needs.

Carefully planned arrangements help young people to spend time with their parents, families, friends and other people who are important to them. Staff work actively and positively to help young people maintain and build meaningful relationships, understand their identity, feel part of their family and improve their self-esteem. Staff work sensitively with young people and their parents to try to overcome difficulties and rebuild relationships. This work includes thinking creatively about how to make sure that seeing family and friends is a safe and positive experience for young people.

Young people's participation and progress in education has improved since they moved into the home. Staff support young people to establish improved routines which enable them to engage fully in education. Young people who previously missed a lot of school are now attending every day, working hard and achieving positive results. The registered manager and staff are ambitious for every young person to do well. Most of the young people attend the provider's on-site school, and each of them is making good progress. Staff often support young people in class and are helping teachers to understand how individual young people learn and process information. The registered manager and staff are working effectively with schools, social workers, and the virtual school head to improve young people's participation, meet their education needs and interests, and help them to reach their potential. The staff have successfully supported a young person to attend a secondary school and take her GCSEs, and they are now supporting her to go to college. A member of staff and the virtual school head have worked closely together to make sure that she finds a course that she will enjoy and which is suited to her abilities. Staff also provide plenty of opportunities for informal learning. They are supporting a young person with her part-time job, and with gaining a sense of greater independence. Staff provide young people with opportunities to follow their interests and develop their talents through a wide range of fun activities, including sports, going to the gym, music, playing the keyboard, and drama. Staff also encourage young people to develop the practical skills they need for adult life, including managing money, housework and gardening, washing, shopping and cooking.

Staff actively promote young people's physical health and emotional well-being. They also encourage young people's awareness of healthy lifestyles, including the importance of healthy diets, exercise, good sexual health and good personal care. Staff manage

young people's specific health needs with sensitivity and confidence. They closely monitor young people to make sure that they are healthy, supporting them to attend routine health checks, including the dentist and optician. Staff also ensure that young people always have suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell. Staff help to improve young people's emotional well-being by providing them with warm and positive relationships that help young people feel safe. Staff work effectively with health, drugs and alcohol and mental health services to make sure they understand young people's emotional and psychological well-being, and to ensure that young people get the support they need to promote good emotional health.

The home is located in an area that supports young people's safety and well-being, and enables them to keep positive links with their own community. The young people live in a homely, pleasant and comfortable place, which is furnished and decorated to a very high standard. They have plenty of personal space, and their bedrooms and bathrooms are tidy and decorated to reflect their characters and interests. Young people are proud of the house, are keen to have photographs and pictures on the walls and work hard to keep it clean and tidy.

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

Young people live in a safe place and are protected from harm. They feel safe and are able to talk to members of staff if they are worried or upset. The registered manager and staff understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting young people. Their care and support is helping young people to be increasingly safe from the risks of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Staff are alert, and their practice enables them to identify risk. For example, the staff's routine monitoring of young people's use of social media picked up when a young person was at risk of exploitation. Staff take appropriate action to involve social workers, the designated safeguarding officer and the police when they have concerns about young people's safety. They work effectively with young people, parents, social workers, schools, health professionals and the police to understand and manage the risks to young people's welfare.

Detailed written risk assessments give staff clear and effective guidance on how to keep each young person safe. Staff actively and continuously assess the risks to ensure that the arrangements for young people's care protect them. Staff clearly understand young people's vulnerabilities and the risks associated with sexual exploitation, drug dependency and self-harming behaviour. Staff balance effectively protecting young people while enabling them to take appropriate risks to promote their personal growth. Staff take reasonable precautions to promote young people's independence in the community, and to promote their understanding of how to use social media safely. The registered manager and staff understand the guidance around the deprivation of liberty. Any restrictions on young people's free time or use of the internet are based on individual risk assessments that are reviewed regularly.

Staff work effectively to help young people understand risks and develop the skills to manage risk and keep themselves and others safe. This has included helping young people to understand what makes a healthy and supportive relationship, and to learn the skills required to resolve disagreements positively. Young people usually do not go missing from this home. Staff help young people to understand the risks and dangers involved if they go missing, and make sure that they know how to get help. On the occasions when young people have gone missing, staff always act quickly to try to find the young person by actively looking for them, making contact with their family and friends and informing the police and social workers. When young people return home after being missing, they always have the opportunity to see an independent person to talk about what happened, and to discuss the reasons for them not wanting to come home.

Staff promote acceptable behaviour based on positive relationships with young people. They give young people clear and unambiguous expectations for behaviour. Staff constantly praise, reward and celebrate young people's achievements. Young people receive rewards for getting to school on time and helping to keep their home clean and tidy. These rewards support young people to understand the benefits of positive behaviour, make positive choices and manage difficult emotions more safely.

Staff show empathy towards young people and understand how young people's experiences, and what is going on for them at the moment, may leave them feeling anxious, frustrated and angry, and may mean that they struggle to control their behaviour. Seeing behind the behaviour is helping staff to think about the best ways to help young people. They encourage young people to tell them what helps when they are feeling upset. For example, one young person asks staff to 'give me space and let me calm down'. It is clear that staff know the young people really well and are usually able to help young people manage their feelings constructively. A staff member said that, 'When the young person slams a door, she wants to be left alone until she is ready to talk.' However, the young person's individual crisis management plans did not include this information. This is a missed opportunity for staff to share their knowledge and understanding of the young person with each other, and to build a consistent approach to supporting this young person. Likewise, the other young people's individual crisis management plans were not detailed. They did not provide a clear picture of the specific steps needed to support each young person to manage their feelings and control their behaviour safely, and reduce the risk of aggressive behaviour when staff may need to use restraint to keep young people safe. Neither did the plans set out precise practical measures to be used if it becomes necessary to restrain a young person, such as any risks, and the impact of using restraint and how to support them afterwards.

Restraint is used only on rare occasions to prevent young people from hurting themselves or other people. Staff keep detailed records of each use of restraint and consistently seek the young person's views about what happened. The registered manager provides effective scrutiny of the use of restraint, and as a result he is able to identify the effectiveness of staff practice and any concerns or learning points, to improve the quality of the support for young people in the future.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has been in charge of the home since January 2016, and is suitably experienced and qualified. Through strong and effective leadership he has brought stability and structure to the management of the home. He has encouraged and supported staff to provide young people with a warm and nurturing place to live. The registered manager and staff deliver a high quality of individualised care that meets each young person's assessed needs. They have high aspirations for every young person, and give them the help and opportunities required to reach their potential and have improved outcomes. The registered manager and staff have made visible improvements to the ways they work together and help the young people. Communication between staff is effective, and they work with more consistency to meet young people's needs. Young people now live in a pleasant and comfortable home environment where they feel valued and have a sense of belonging. A young person recognised that things are getting better when he told the inspector that, 'I've lived here for three years and it's the best it has ever been.'

The registered manager is never complacent and is determined to continue to make improvements. Thorough external scrutiny by an independent person, and the registered manager's detailed reviews of the quality of care, give him a good understanding of how well young people are being supported to meet their assessed needs. The findings inform the registered manager's dynamic development plan, which he uses to continue to improve the standard of support that young people receive and to develop the staff's skills and knowledge.

The registered manager and staff have a clear understanding of the progress every young person is making. They closely monitor each young person's experiences and development. This helps them to identify when a young person's plan is not meeting their needs, in which case they can take effective action. Strong professional relationships with the people involved in the young people's lives means that partnerships work efficiently to ensure that each young person receives the right support at the right time.

The registered manager makes sure that staff work in the right environment to enable them to give vulnerable young people a high standard of care and support. The staffing arrangements ensure that there are sufficient knowledgeable, experienced and skilful staff available to meet all the young people's assessed needs. A stable and increasingly cohesive staff team ensures that young people receive the continuity of care that helps them form positive attachments and relationships with the people caring for them each day. The staff receive clear and effective support and guidance through regular practice-related supervision from appropriately qualified and experienced managers, and through shared learning at team meetings. Consequently, they have the regular opportunities they need to discuss young people's needs, reflect on their practice, share skills, and highlight any areas for their development. The registered manager supports and

encourages staff to develop expertise through good quality training relevant to the needs of the young people.

Staff have appropriate qualifications, including in social work and the level 3 diploma in residential child care. Senior managers and the registered manager encourage and support staff to develop professionally, including helping them to work towards higher qualifications and to gain new experiences and take on senior roles.

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: SC366002

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Alliance Care and Education Limited

Registered provider address: Brow Top Farm, Quernmore, Lancaster LA2 0QW

Responsible individual: Andrew Taylor

Registered manager: Robert Allen

Inspector

Nick Veysey, social care inspector

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