

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	28/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC372511
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered Provider	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Registered Provider address	Town Hall, King Williams Street, Blackburn BB1 7DY

Responsible Individual	Karen Barrick
Registered Manager	Jeremy Wood
Inspector	Ceri Evans

Inspection date	28/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged outstanding at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness. This home has had a sustained record of being outstanding since 2014, and is considered to be continuing to provide children and young people with exceptionally positive experiences. Two recommendations were made at the last inspection to improve practice further. These have been satisfactorily addressed at the point of the interim inspection. This shows that the manager learns from inspection activity to promote the continual development of the service. Children and young people continue to experience excellent levels of care and support in this service. Staff are extremely committed and have an excellent understanding of children's and young people's individual needs. Care planning and practice is highly personalised. Staff are extremely intuitive, and treat children and young people with the upmost dignity and respect. The underpinning ethos of the home is one of nurture and respect, and children and young people are at the very heart of everything in the home. The manager and staff team have an intrinsic knowledge and understanding of the complex needs of the children and young people whom they support. The manager and staff work meticulously with social workers, health professionals, education and families. This cohesive and multi-agency response ensures that children's and young people's known and emerging needs are understood, consistently managed and planned for effectively. Despite the complex needs and challenges that children and young people face, the manager continues to ensure that these barriers do not prevent them from safely enjoying the same experiences as their peers. Children and young people are expertly supported and assisted to engage in a range of new and exciting opportunities. These range from jewellery making, spending time in the sensory room and gardening to more adventurous activities such as canoeing and caving. These experiences help children and young people to thrive socially, as well as providing them with opportunities to enjoy their childhood. Parents and professionals are unequivocally positive about the service. One parent described the service as 'brilliant' and said: 'there is nowhere else like Appletrees. I	

know that my son is safe there and staff are just fantastic, so nurturing, and they genuinely like and care for my son. I can honestly say that we are a team. It's a real godsend for me and my son.'

The registered manager provides very effective leadership to the staff team and demonstrates a strong commitment to driving forward improvements at the home. Robust internal and external arrangements for monitoring practice ensure that there is excellent oversight of the care that is given and the progress that children and young people make.

The manager is supported well by an experienced and stable staff team. The staff team works together cohesively and embraces a team-centred approach to care. Aspirations for children and young people are extremely high, and complex needs and disability do not inhibit them for attaining their potential. Case records demonstrate that children and young people continue to flourish and make excellent progress as a result of their short break at this home.

Partnership working with external professionals remains consistently constructive and positive with a clear aim to promote children's and young people's development. The home seeks regular consultation with parents and carers, and it is evident from this consultation and surveys received that the service continues to be highly valued.

Communication levels among staff are excellent and staff morale is high. Staff continue to report that they feel well supported by leaders and managers. The formal programme of supervision, which is taking place consistently along with annual appraisal, supports this view. These levels of support and supervision allow for professional development to take place and help staff to understand better the implications of their actions and working practices. This gives them a greater insight into their strengths, areas for developments and own responsibilities.

The home continues to have high investment in staff training, and progression is valued by the senior leadership team. The manager is passionate about ensuring that his management team is skilled and trained to deliver an exceptional level of care which is supported by a theoretical base. Bespoke staff training is identified and delivered to the staff team to further enhance their skills and abilities in supporting children and young people effectively. Mandatory training is also updated regularly, and staff confirm that training is purposeful and informative. Effective training and development opportunities ensure that skills remain current to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care.

To conclude, the home continues to offer children and young people an outstanding service. Shortfalls from the last inspection have been met, which means that the home has improved its effectiveness. There are no identified shortfalls at this inspection. This further demonstrates the home's continued capacity to improve for the benefit of children and young people.

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and run by a local authority. The home provides short-break accommodation for young people with learning/physical disabilities and complex health needs. The service has two main functions. The home can accommodate up to five young people on a short break at any one time.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
08/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
02/12/2015	Full	Outstanding
24/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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

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