

SC397112

Registered provider: Alliance Care & Education Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for four children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is owned and managed by a private provider.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 September 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: 8 March 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:

- Children develop secure and trusting relationships with staff who provide high-quality, consistent and nurturing care. This enables children to develop a sense of belonging and respond positively to guidance and support.
- Staff support children to make positive progress across all aspects of their lives from their individual starting points. If children's progress falters, staff demonstrate good therapeutic understanding of underlying factors and respond sensitively in encouraging them to maintain their routines and access any support that they may need.
- Children feel that they are valued and their views are listened to. The team is committed to children being fully involved in decision-making in the home, and the group is central to their practice.
- Staff respond proactively to ensure that children are safe. Staff follow all procedures, and work well with other agencies to promote children's well-being and reduce risks to their safety.
- Strong partnership working with other agencies and professionals ensures that children make academic progress, enjoy good health and access a range of activities and experiences to enhance their lives.
- Staff are led by a manager who is committed and able to continually develop the service. He ensures that staff are fully supported to professionally develop through high-quality training and regular, reflective supervision. He models good practice in the home, taking an active approach to ensure that he fully understands children's progress.
- The manager has high aspirations for children to achieve and enjoy positive outcomes. He and his team work hard to prepare children who transition successfully to independence.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Reports completed by the independent visitor must robustly assess and evaluate practice in the home, and how this safeguards children and promotes their well-being.
- Following the use of physical intervention, any debrief undertaken with staff must be included within written records.
- The registered person's report on the review of quality of care should identify and evaluate the strengths and areas for development. Any actions to address developmental needs for the following six months must be clearly identified in the report.
- All records, including reports following the use of physical intervention, must be clearly written to ensure that the reader can fully understand the circumstances,

and the response of staff.

- The home must ensure that placing authorities are challenged when they do not provide current relevant plans, so that staff are able to demonstrate how care provided complies with expectations of statutory care-planning.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/12/2016	Full	Good
24/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/10/2015	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
The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b)) In particular, the report should clearly evaluate the home's practice and its impact on children's progress.	03/11/2017
Within 48 hours of the use of a behaviour management measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— (i) has spoken to the user about the measure. (Regulation 35(b)(i)). In particular, the provider must record this discussion.	03/11/2017

Recommendations

- The registered person's review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weaknesses in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next 6 months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- Where the placing authority does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's need during their time in placement, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8) Specifically, placing authorities must be challenged when relevant plans for a child are not provided.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children's needs are met through individualised planning, and they benefit from the care and support provided by a nurturing staff team. The team works consistently well with other agencies to ensure that children's holistic needs are met, so that they make measurable progress from their individual starting points. Children feel that they are treated as individuals and have, or are forming, positive relationships with staff. They recognise how the support provided has helped them, with one child saying: '[The registered manager] teaches us how to love ourselves, and how to value ourselves, and respect ourselves.' Another said it is a 'good home, staff are all like friendly 'n' caring, the best house I have ever been in'.

Staff have a good therapeutic understanding of contributory factors when children's progress fluctuates, for example due to family illness or bereavement, and encourage children to maintain regular routines. Children can access support from a qualified therapist attached to the home, to explore their emotions and significant past events, so that they are better able to self-regulate and manage difficult experiences. A social worker said staff have 'shown they are committed to [a child], putting things in place; other homes might have served notice'. The resilience of the staff team supports children's sense of belonging.

Children enjoy good health, attend routine appointments, and accept support from staff when they are worried. A child who has recently moved from the home wrote in a letter about how staff would hold her hand and support her to overcome an eating disorder. The nurturing approach of staff is supported by consultation with the therapist, which has enabled care staff to help children reduce their self-harming behaviours and build their self-esteem and confidence. The home also uses relationships with external health practitioners, such as the allocated nurse for children looked after, to ensure that they receive annual health assessments and can access sexual health services.

Children attend school and college on a regular basis. For some, this is significant and positive progress following periods of not engaging in education. One child won a 'student of the year' award at college. The home supports children to make progress in Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards in conjunction with the provider's school. Staff are proactive in ensuring that children's personal education plan meetings take place so that appropriate support is in place for children to achieve academically.

One of the home's strengths is the commitment of the team to support children in developing independent living skills in preparation for moving on from the home, and one child is currently learning to drive. Children are encouraged to save money for the future, with the home matching savings as an incentive. Since the last inspection, two children have moved on to semi-independence. The home took an integral role during their transitions, holding discussions with new providers to ensure that future arrangements were mirrored in the home, reflecting the future care package and

available budgets for shopping. Staff supported one child to visit and register at college prior to their move.

Records reflect children's daily lives, and cover a range of experiences and activities that they enjoy, including trips to the cinema, go-karting and activity centres. Plans are in place for children to enjoy more significant activities such as concerts and major sporting events. Key working includes positive reflections on progress, as well as addressing specific issues to support individual development. Weekly progress reports are sent to social workers, and reports prepared for statutory reviews are comprehensive and of good quality, and include children's views on their progress. Although requested, not all children have current relevant plans supplied by their local placing authorities. The home needs to challenge placing authorities when these plans are not provided, to ensure that the home can demonstrate that it complies with the expectations of the placing authority.

Contact with family members is well supported and promoted. One child, who lives some distance from his family home, has been supported through a staged transition to use public transport to travel there independently. The home will clearly advocate for increased contact when this is appropriate to meet children's needs. Staff also support and supervise contact as required, with written reports for social workers.

There is a collective ownership across the staff team in supporting children's positive outcomes. Children's well-being is central to the home's practice, and children clearly feel valued, as reflected in their descriptions of the staff and home as 'amazing', 'kind', 'different' [from other homes] and simply, 'it's my home'.

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

Robust risk management plans ensure that staff have a thorough understanding of, and can respond to, risks to children's safety. Plans are reviewed and updated in response to any changes or emerging risks. The locality risk assessment includes all potential hazards in the community, and is used when considering any new admissions to the home. Staff use key-work sessions to help children to understand risks, so that they are able to learn how to keep themselves safe.

Children at the home say that they feel safe and are able to speak with staff if they have any worries or concerns. They feel listened to, and describe how staff have helped them to reduce risks to their well-being, for example by no longer misusing substances. Any safeguarding concerns raised by children are responded to rapidly and robustly, with immediate notification to placing authorities and measures implemented to reduce further risks.

When children go missing from the home, staff act quickly and follow all procedures to ensure that children return to the home safely. Children are encouraged to engage in independent return interviews, and the home liaises effectively with independent agencies such as Catch 22, as well as social workers and the police. A police officer commented on excellent working relationships with the home, and how their working

together was crucial in ensuring children's safe return. The manager robustly challenges other services to ensure that children are appropriately assessed for any risk of sexual exploitation, and is proactive in seeking child abduction warning notices when there are concerns about individuals with whom children associate when missing. Action is taken to reduce risks to children's safety, consequently the number of incidents are reducing.

Children clearly understand boundaries to promote positive behaviour in the home; they are able to describe their own responsibilities and accept the consequences if they breach them. One child said, 'They [staff] actually listen to me, [they] are just straightforward, no beating about the bush.' Another spoke about incentives to keep to boundaries, 'but if we blow it, it's our fault. [staff help us to] start afresh and work up again.' Children are encouraged to take risks responsibly. For example, they sign contracts for their mobile phone so that they understand expectations, risks and consequences if they do not keep to agreements. This helps to keep them safe while using technology.

Staff encourage children's positive behaviour through consistent praise and incentives. This means that rewards outnumber sanctions, and the use of physical intervention to manage children's behaviour is extremely rare. However, one record of restraint does not clearly describe the incident, or include a record of the staff debriefing meeting, so the reader cannot fully understand the course of events.

Staff are fully aware of, and follow procedures to respond to, any concerns about the safety of a child. They maintain up-to-date knowledge of legislation and guidance to protect children, and meet statutory and government requirements to promote children's welfare and safety. Robust health and safety procedures ensure that the home environment remains a safe place for children to live.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager, who enthuses his team with his passion, commitment and aspiration for children in the home. Staff, including the recently appointed deputy manager, feel well supported to develop, and find the manager approachable, valuing the quality of the regular, reflective supervision that they receive. His 'hands on' management style ensures that he has thorough oversight of children's progress, and is able to identify where they need any additional support.

Staff benefit from a recent change and improvement to their online training, with the opportunity to request specific training to enhance their practice. Those who do not currently hold an appropriate qualification are enrolled to complete this within regulatory timescales. Staff also access training via the Local Safeguarding Children Board and, when required, specialist support for understanding children's specific needs. This ensures that staff maintain current knowledge, which is reflected in the quality of their care for children.

The home has recently updated its statement of purpose. Practice in the home clearly reflects the home's stated aims and objectives. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in delivering therapeutic care that safeguards and supports children in their development. Robust recruitment practices ensure that only suitable individuals are employed to work with children, and new staff confirm that they receive a good quality induction when they commence work.

There are highly effective relationships with other professionals, including schools, the police and the allocated nurse for children looked after, as well as social workers. This ensures that children are supported in all aspects of their well-being. Social workers report that communication is regular, and that they are informed of any concerns immediately. When additional support is requested, for example additional or waking night staff, social workers note that they are updated and informed as soon as such support is no longer necessary to ensure children's safety. External professionals comment on the commitment of staff, and are positive about the care that children receive. One independent reviewing officer said he would 'have no hesitation to recommend the home for any young person'. A social worker for a child who has recently moved to the home commented on how a child 'was shown [their] room and was made to feel involved in the decoration of it by choosing the colour of paint', as part of a planned transition. This was in addition to meetings to discuss the child's needs and visits.

Children feel very much part of the home and have a voice. One child said, 'We have a say in everything, even in team meetings – they won't make any changes without asking kids first – even new staff, we get a say!' The manager is planning to hold a joint staff team and children's meeting to encourage further participation and involvement in the running of the home.

The manager has robust monitoring systems in place as part of his commitment to continuous development of the home. Although he has clear action and development plans in place, he has not included these in the review of quality of care report, to make it a dynamic document. A recommendation was made at the interim inspection in respect of the reports completed by the independent visitor, to ensure that they offered a robust assessment. Insufficient improvement has been made to the analysis and evaluation of the care provided, therefore a requirement is made to ensure that external scrutiny fully supports the manager's understanding of areas of strength and development.

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: SC397112

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Alliance Care & Education Limited

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

Responsible individual: Andrew Taylor

Registered manager: James Dawson

Inspector

Karen Willson, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017