

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	25/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC397293
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Derby City Council
Registered person address	Treasurer's Department, Council House, Corporation Street, Derby DE1 2FE
Responsible individual	Rodney Jones
Registered manager	Gemma Bullock
Inspectors	Ros Chapman Rachel Griffiths

Inspection date	25/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC397293

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children and young people are having positive experiences and making good progress in all areas of their lives. Their school attendance is excellent and they are achieving in line with expectations. They develop good social skills, life skills and independence skills that form the basis of a successful progression into adulthood.
- Staff have positive relationships with the children and young people. As a result, children and young people are happy and settled, and their behaviour is well managed.
- Children and young people are active participants in the community. They take part in a variety of activities that improve their social skills and self-confidence and enable them to have fun.
- Staff use a variety of communication tools creatively and effectively to ensure that children and young people can express their wishes and feelings and understand what is happening.
- Children and young people are safe because staff know them well and understand their vulnerabilities. Consequently, staff are able to assess risks effectively and provide appropriate strategies to minimise these.
- The manager is an effective, highly motivated and child-focused leader, who has changed the ethos of the home. She leads by example and is well respected by staff. As a result, the staff team is equally committed to promoting positive outcomes for children and young people.
- Shortfalls have been identified in relation to the qualifications of relief members of staff. Additionally, not all staff are receiving regular supervision and timely annual appraisals. The workforce plan does not clearly identify staff training needs and how these will be met. Staff files, particularly those of agency members of staff, do not provide sufficient evidence that appropriate recruitment practices have been carried out. These deficits have not had an impact on the safety and well-being of the children and young people at this home, but may do so if not rectified.

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

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 (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
Ensure that any individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification. (Regulation 32(4))	31/03/2017
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure safety. The requirements are that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(1)(3)(d))	28/10/2016
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-based supervision by a person with appropriate experience, and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33(4)(b)(c))	28/10/2016

Recommendations

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

- The registered manager should have a workforce plan, which is updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and should be used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of the staff. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home which is registered to provide care and accommodation for five (six if same-sex siblings share a bedroom) children and young people with learning disabilities. The statement of purpose specifies that it cares for children and young people on the autistic spectrum.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/07/2015	Full	Good
21/01/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
28/08/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Children and young people make good progress in all aspects of their development. One parent commented: 'The home has made a big difference to my son's life. He has come on in leaps and bounds. He is always happy and bouncing around.' All children and young people have appropriate educational placements and they have excellent attendance. Healthcare needs are responded to, and appropriate services accessed as necessary. One parent commented that her child was healthier now, due to a better diet and more exercise. Particular progress is evident in relation to self-care, social and independence skills. The communication skills of the children and young people have improved, they have matured and they are learning to cope with transitions and change much better. Staff use desensitisation techniques to help children and young people cope with situations and try new experiences. The home has a designated independence room that was once an office, and this has gradually been developed to provide a good environment for children and young people to develop their skills at an age-appropriate level. They can access this to make drinks and snacks, as the kitchen is industrial and not appropriate for children and young people to use unsupervised. A parent said of her son: 'He is more independent and he now takes pride in his appearance. He is like a typical teenager now.' There is a big emphasis on providing a good range of activities, particularly in the community. This provides children and young people with new and positive experiences, enables them to make a positive contribution to their community and helps them develop skills, become healthier and be more confident. A parent said: 'He is always doing activities and going out for the day. He is trying lots of new things.' Children and young people go to a disco on a regular basis. This particular resource enables them to have freedom in a safe environment and they can buy their own drinks and snacks, thereby learning money management skills. Children and young people also go swimming and trampolining regularly, thus improving their health. One child said: 'I love going to theme parks.' The home has a music and crafts room, and a 'music man' comes to the home regularly to engage children and young people in musical activities. He said: 'The staff are great. They have helped me build good relationships with the young people. The staff get involved in our sessions, they sing along, encourage the young people to participate and provide lots of praise.' The children and young people have all had individual holidays, designed to meet their interests, wishes and feelings. They are developing useful life skills, and their self-confidence and self-esteem improve as a result of their achievements.	

Relationships between staff, children and young people are good. A family member commented: 'The staff are really interested and really care. They are really nice people.' Another parent said of her son: 'He gets on well with the staff, who understand him.'

Care planning is individualised, and staff communicate creatively with the children and young people, to ensure that they can play a full part in their care plans and express their wishes and feelings in order to influence what happens to them. Social stories and symbol strips are used regularly to enable children and young people to understand what is happening and prepare them for any activities or events. One child is a member of the Children in Care Council, which affords him the opportunity of influencing the local authority's wider plans for children looked after. Celebrations and achievements are recognised very well. Each child or young person has a 'something to be proud of' file that charts their achievements and forms part of the memory book that they take with them when they leave the home.

Children and young people have positive contact with family and people who are important to them. As a result of children's and young people's improved behaviour and social skills, parents become more confident in being with their children, and consequently their relationships improve. One parent said: 'Our relationship has improved as a result of the support of staff.' Staff provide appropriate support to contact arrangements and involve parents and families in activities. For example, on the day of the inspection, one child's grandparents were going to a theme park with their grandson and a member of staff. This enables them to have a good time with each other, knowing they can relax and enjoy the occasion.

Transitions into and out of the home are well managed. Placements are planned and, even in an emergency situation, staff ensure that the new resource has all the necessary information to enable it to provide good and appropriate care. They ensure that all the children and young people understand what is happening and support them appropriately. Prior to a child or young person being placed at this home, staff ensure that they understand their needs well, work a shadow shift at the current placement and obtain all the necessary information. This has been an area where the manager feels she has gained some learning in order to give placements every chance of success, both for the new person and the existing group.

The manager and staff have worked hard to improve the premises. They have decorated many areas of the home, and it is now more attractive, welcoming and child-friendly. Staff have painted murals on the walls, because children and young people tend to take pictures down. This continues to be work in progress, in order to make the bedrooms more personalised.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Staff know the children and young people well and understand their vulnerabilities and complex needs. This enables them to make detailed, comprehensive risk assessments that inform appropriate strategies to minimise these risks. Staff are not risk-averse, and aspire for the children and young people to take part in any activities, as would their peers. They ensure that this happens safely through sensitive and well-considered risk assessment. For example, a child recently went abroad for a holiday with staff. He said: 'The best thing about living here was going on holiday. I wanted to go abroad. The flight was a most intense experience but I was so pleased I did it and I am proud of myself. I learned some Spanish too.' This demonstrates that children and young people benefit significantly because staff have a 'can-do' attitude which enables exciting activities and trips to be carried out safely. Children and young people do not go missing from this home, nor are they identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation. However, each child or young person has a detailed protocol for staff to follow in the event that they did go missing, in recognition of how vulnerable they would be should this occur. Behaviour is well managed. Staff have a good understanding of the triggers which may lead to episodes of challenging behaviour. They have detailed written support plans that give consistent guidance so that behaviour is managed appropriately. Consequently, there is minimal use of sanctions and physical intervention. When physical intervention is used, this is appropriate, well recorded and subject to managerial oversight, so that lessons, where relevant, can be learned. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding procedures. There is appropriate contact with the designated officer for advice and referral when necessary. The local authority has an appropriate staff recruitment procedure. However, the staff files do not demonstrate that the necessary checks and references have been carried out. For example, files on agency staff contain only their Disclosure and Barring Service check. Files on the two latest members of staff did not contain photographic evidence of their identity. Consequently, the manager cannot be fully assured that appropriately safe and competent staff are working at the home.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The home is led and managed effectively by an appropriately experienced manager, who has recently completed the level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare. She demonstrates a real passion and commitment to providing a service that is aspirational and child-focused. Her management style is empowering. One member of staff said: 'Since Gemma has been the manager, the impact has been massive. She is very empowering and a good motivator. She is constantly pushing staff in a good way to develop ourselves and give young people the best possible experiences.' Another member of staff commented: 'It is a nice place to work. We can do our jobs, we can be creative and our suggestions are listened to and put in place.' Consequently, staff feel valued and are prepared to go 'the extra mile' when required. This was very evident recently, when all staff worked over and above their hours and were very flexible in managing an extremely difficult situation. During this challenging time, the manager demonstrated her ability to make difficult yet child-focused decisions that have resulted in improved outcomes for all the children and young people. Her creative approach, fully supported by senior managers, ensured that children and young people remained safe. A social worker commented about this, saying: 'Staff were so committed. They did not give up and thought outside of the box all the time to try and meet his needs.' Staff feel well supported and work well together as a team. However, not all staff have received formal supervision at the expected frequency of once a month. Additionally, some annual appraisals are late. Consequently, opportunities for both the staff and managers to reflect on and improve practice are lost. In addition to motivation and dedication, staff demonstrate a good level of competence and knowledge that enables them to provide a good quality of service to the children and young people in their care. All the permanent residential childcare workers have undertaken, or are in the process of undertaking, the required qualification. However, not all of the relief members of staff have this qualification and, as yet, there are no plans for them to complete it. Although many staff have undertaken a number of relevant training courses to supplement their knowledge, there are some gaps, which the manager has already identified. She has arranged to meet with the training coordinator to discuss how to meet the training needs of the staff team. However, the workforce development plan is not specific in identifying staff training needs or how these will be met. It would benefit from being more detailed to enable the manager to have better oversight of staff development. The manager has good systems to ensure that she is fully aware of the progress children and young people are making in line with their plans. This includes the use	

of spider graphs, an outcomes database, monitoring of records, discussion in team meetings and through staff supervision. She has used her own learning from recent training as well as the input of experts in the field of autism to look at alternative strategies when progress is limited.

The manager has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement, and has realistic plans to develop the service. She welcomes and appreciates the support from her line manager, in what is a relatively recently reconfigured service. All staff are now designated as residential childcare workers, and the next stage is to look at identifying and developing some staff as future leaders.

The manager is a good advocate for the children and young people in the home. She has demonstrated appropriate challenge to partners when she has felt decisions were not being made in the best interests of children and young people. Despite that, she maintains positive relationships with stakeholders, and one social worker commented: 'The manager has a very open and honest approach. She is committed to multi-agency working and attends all meetings.' Relationships with families are very good. The manager has implemented a system whereby each family receives a monthly newsletter that contains information and photographs about their child's achievements over the month. One parent said: 'Staff keep me informed of everything that is happening and involve me. For example, when there is a parents' evening, we go together. We work together. I cannot fault the staff.' This sentiment was echoed by other family members, one of whom said: 'We are impressed with the service and think staff do a wonderful job.'

The home has an up-to-date statement of purpose that accurately reflects the service which is currently being operated. There is also an up-to-date location risk assessment which shows a good consideration of any potential risks in the area.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people, and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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 that 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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