

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC398393
Inspector	Dawn Bennett
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Young Options College Limited
Registered person address	Turnpike Gate House Alcester Heath Alcester Warwickshire B49 5JG
Responsible individual	Graham Baker
Registered manager	Denise Mary Knowles
Date of last inspection	10/03/2014

Inspection date	25/06/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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Young people benefit from positive relationships with staff. They understand young people's individual needs and placing authorities state that young people are well cared for. Staff effectively manage very high risk behaviours and as a result some incidents, such as missing from home, have reduced. Staff promote education and are sensitive to some young people's difficulties in sustaining a fulltime timetable. For example, they support young people in school as well as at home to complete academic work. They also support young people to acknowledge when they are struggling to cope at school. Staff encourage young people to express their emotions and develop more interests in activities and hobbies. As a result, young people experience improving self-confidence and self-esteem.

This standard of care and level of discussion and interaction with the young people is not reflected in the home's or young people's records. The systems and structures are in place but the consistency and robustness of the recording does not show that the staff deliver care based on young people's wishes, needs or the aims of placement. Some key documents have not been signed and others have not been consistently completed. Managers and organisation's systems are not identifying or addressing shortfalls in standards of records or the quality of the recording.

The standard of accommodation is adequate. Significant work is being undertaken

though to ensure the home's furnishing and decor is to a good standard.

Agency staff vetting records did not demonstrate that someone who is not a citizen of the United Kingdom is suitable to work in the home. This was immediately addressed by the organisation, and to ensure the safety of young people, it was decided that the agency member of staff would not be employed until further checks have been completed.

The organisation and Registered Manager have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and are working to development plans to raise standards. The areas for improvement for this home do not impact negatively on young people's welfare or safety.

The Registered Manager has put in place new arrangements to gather the views of young people but issues raised by them have not yet been discussed with them. This does not support the young people to feel their views are listened to.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2014	Interim	good progress
19/11/2013	Full	adequate
07/03/2013	Interim	good progress
08/11/2012	Full	outstanding

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 children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained. This specifically relates to the timely completion of the home's development and refurbishment plan (Reg 31 (2) (e))	31/07/2014
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose and shall include all elements of Regulation 17b (3) (b), (c), (e), (f), (g), (h)	31/07/2014
26 (2001)	ensure the home does not employ a person to work at the children's home unless that person is fit to	31/07/2014

	work at a children's home. This specifically relates to the employment of agency staff (Reg 26 (1))	
12A (2001)	ensure in the case of a child who is looked after by a Local Authority the registered person must co-operate with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the plan for the child's placement prepared in accordance with the provisions in Regulation 9 or, as the case may be, Regulation 47C(2), of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 - (Reg 12a (1))	31/07/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure written records kept be the home when a child goes missing detail act taken by staff and any reasons given by the child for running away (NMS 5.10)
- ensure children develop and practice skills to build and maintain positive relationships, be assertive and resolve conflicts positively. This specifically refers to records being kept of discussions with young people after key incidents such as missing from home, physical intervention and permissible measures of control (NMS 3.5)
- ensure each child's Placement Plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child. This specifically refers to the plan being kept up to date (NMS 25.2)
- ensure the home implements a written policy that clarifies the purpose, format and content of information to be kept on the registered person's files and information to be kept on the child's file. Staff understand the nature of records maintained. There is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed (NMS 22.1)
- ensure children understand how their views have been taken into account, and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon, they are helped to understand why (NMS 1.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

The young people are encouraged by staff to pursue hobbies and activities but have limited involvement in community based social clubs or groups. Staff work hard with young people to engage them in activities that take them away from their normal house based pursuits and widen their experiences and horizons. When this is successfully achieved, young people are positive about the outcomes, for example, a recent long distance walk. However, their interests might not be sustained on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis. When young people are interested in an activity, such as fishing or football, this is incorporated into their daily routine. These opportunities help young people to explore skills, experience success and develop a positive self-image.

Young people enjoy a healthy and tasty diet that takes account of their personal preferences. Meals are sociable occasions between the young people and staff where a variety of topics are discussed and everyone reflects on their achievements during the day. This means that young people learn valuable social skills.

Young people lead healthy lifestyles with the support and encouragement of staff. As a result they generally enjoy good health. They benefit from encouragement to exercise. They successfully attend all medical appointments and access regular health sessions for example weekly appointments with the speech and language therapist.

Young People have adequate school attendance and are making adequate academic progress. They are continually encouraged and supported in their education placement and to complete school work. For example, one young person completes a part-time timetable at the organisation's school. The home's staff team supplement this timetable by supervising education sessions in the home. When young people struggle in school there are strategies in place to support them and help phase them back into fulltime education.

Quality of care **adequate**

Staff know the young people well and have positive working relationships with them. The welfare, safety and needs of the young people are central to the care provided by the staff team who ensure they are treated as individuals, fully taking into account their wishes and feelings wherever possible. A placing authority social worker stated, 'The quality of care is good and as a team they continue to work closely in partnership with the local authority.' This good practice it not, however, reflected throughout the home's records where there are a number of shortfalls in the quality

of recording.

Staff support young people in line with their care plans which are drawn up by the local authority responsible for their care. However, some plans have not been signed by the social worker or the Registered Manager. Young people also have individual internal placement plans, risk assessments and behaviour plans and these are inconsistent in standard and do not always contain up to date information. This means staff are not working to documents that detail young people's current needs and information about young people is not recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to them when they access their files now or in the future.

There are arrangements for ensuring the views and wishes of young people are taken into account in relation to decisions about the daily running of the home. However, key worker sessions about progress in line with their individual plan of care have not taken place since the beginning of March. There is no evidence of other records of discussions with young people about key events in their lives, or of strategies to help them manage any issues or incidents. This means there are no records available to the young people or the staff team to measure the impact of strategies implemented or the progress the young people have made.

The home and its grounds are adequately maintained and continue to be in the process of being repaired, redecorated and refurbished. Some major and some minor work has been undertaken but has not yet been fully completed. The Registered Manager ensures that if the young people cause serious damage to the environment the maintenance team and staff team make sure the area is made safe. However, damaged areas are not brought back up to a good standard in a timely manner. As a result areas in the home are looking tired and worn. This does not promote a sense of ownership by the staff team or young people and does not create a homely atmosphere.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people are safe and state that they feel safe in the home. Policies and procedures support and promote safe work practices. Staff have a clear understanding of safeguarding procedures and receive regular training to support their knowledge. Allegations and suspicions of harm are effectively recorded, managed and referred to the appropriate agencies. Safeguarding procedures are supported by a multi-agency approach to investigations. As a result, the management of allegations provide effective protection and support for young people.

Staff at the home promote young people's positive behaviour and relationships and manage their difficult behaviour appropriately. To try and reduce inappropriate and challenging behaviour, the home has clear routines which are fair and known by the young people. The young people receive rewards and incentives for positive

behaviour. Staff implement individualised behaviour management strategies to encourage the young people to display socially acceptable behaviour and promote their safety.

Staff receive training in physical intervention and de-escalation techniques. When young people exhibit high risk behaviours physical intervention and permissible measures of control are on occasions used. Not all records of these events though are robust. They do not consistently give details of the actions staff take during an incident; the actions of each member of staff during the physical restraint; if medical attention was required by staff or the young person; the effectiveness and consequence of the intervention; the de-brief of staff or the conversation with the young person after the incident. This means that managers are unable to monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of practice and the well-being of staff and the young people.

Staff work well with young people who have a history of putting themselves at risk by going missing from care. As a result of their practice and an increase in staffing, these incidents have reduced. An individualised risk assessment identifies triggers to missing from home episodes. Staff work closely with other agencies and local police to ensure that young people are kept safe. As a result, young people benefit from an integrated approach to reducing their vulnerabilities. There has only been one incident a young person being missing from the home since the last inspection. The record of the incident of missing from home though does not give enough detail for the Registered Manager to monitor the quality of staff practice because it does not distinguish between the staff involved. It also does not record any reasons given by the young person for running away from the home.

Staff vetting procedures for agency staff used in the home have recently been revised by the organisation. However, the home was using an agency member of staff who was not a citizen of the United Kingdom. The Registered Manager had not taken reasonable steps to ensure that this person was suitable to work in the home as none of the checks undertaken considered her country of origin where she had been residing until recently. The Registered Manager took immediate action on the day of the inspection and contacted the staffing agency. The home's line manager and Registered Manager made the decision that until these checks are seen by the Registered Manager the member of staff would no longer be employed.

Leadership and management

adequate

At the last interim inspection in March this year, the home was judged to be making good progress. Three recommendations were made as a result of the inspection. Two of these have been met. The recommendation to ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated is on-going and has been made a requirement at this inspection. Significant work has been undertaken but has not yet been completed. However, the Registered Manager has a

development plan in place with clear timescales for this work to be finished.

Staff are sufficient in number and say they are well supported in their role and receive regular and effective supervision by the home's Registered Manager. Staff meetings are held regularly. There has been one complaint recorded since the last inspection this has been effectively managed. All staff have completed mandatory training and are appropriately and professionally qualified.

The Registered Manager has established positive partnership working with other professionals and placing authorities. She promotes effective consultation with young people prior to their reviews and supports them to attend and express their wishes. As a result, young people are involved in decisions about their future.

Young people live in a home that is run by an experienced and permanent manager who is appropriately qualified and has been Registered Manager of this home since July 2009. There are systems in place that ensure that key areas are monitored and this ensures the improving quality of care at regular intervals. However, these systems have not effectively identified the shortfalls in recording and records observed during the inspection.

Under new Children's Homes Regulations, the manager has introduced systems for collating feedback from parents, placing authorities and children and this will be included in the first report to be sent to Ofsted in July 2014. Where feedback has been received through these questionnaires from the young people though there is no evidence that issues they have raised have been followed up with them This does not support young people to feel that any issues they raise are heard and taken seriously.

Any significant event relating to the protection of the young people in the home has been notified to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action has been taken following any incidents.

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.