

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC407430
Inspector	Clare Davies
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Wessex College Limited
Registered person address	Boreham Mill Bishopstrow Road Warminster Wiltshire BA12 9HQ
Responsible individual	Joanna Sams
Registered manager	Sarah Jane Battlebury
Date of last inspection	20/01/2014

Inspection date	02/07/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Young people receive good quality care specific to their individual needs. They are helped to come to terms with their experiences and grow in confidence to make positive changes in their lives. Young people have developed some good relationships with staff members and each other. Young people benefit from collaborative working between the staff team, family members and other professionals. Social care professionals and parents are very complimentary about the care provided at this home.

Young people are positive about this home and feel secure in their placements as a result of the structure and boundaries in place. Consultation ensures that the views of young people are gathered and that they contribute to the development and running of the home. All young people are making progress through engaging with education, a significant achievement when some have had considerable disruption to their learning prior to this placement.

The manager has effective systems to monitor the quality of care and has a good grasp of the strengths of the service and areas for development. A minor shortfall identified relates to the need to review one document.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is owned by a private organisation that also operates other children's homes and a school in the locality.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/01/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
24/09/2013	Full	good
13/03/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
29/11/2012	Full	adequate

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
4 (2001)	ensure that the registered person shall compile in relation to the children's home a written statement (in these Regulations referred to as "the statement of purpose") which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 4 (1))	31/07/2014

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people who have experienced considerable disruption in their lives are making good progress in a relatively short period of time since living at this children's home. Effective key work sessions and access to additional services support young people in being able to understand their backgrounds and develop the confidence to talk about some of the difficulties they have experienced.

Young people receive good health care and support to attend appointments. Individual health passports document visits to the dentist, optician, doctor and any other health related information. This collation of information is not only helpful during this placement but a valuable source of information for young people to have when they leave and to keep as they move into their adult life. Young people have good access to community health services and to therapists within the organisation. Having such resources available in-house means young people receive a prompt response avoiding a long referral process, they can also receive professional help at times of crisis.

Young people are encouraged to eat a balanced diet, this incentive is linked to the awarding of points towards a financial gain. Eating five fruit and vegetables a day not only contributes to healthy eating but enables some young people to try new food items for the first time. For example, to celebrate the World Cup, young people sampled fruits from different countries that were represented in the football tournament.

In the relatively short time of six months or less that young people have lived at this home they have engaged successfully in accessing education. This is in contrast to previous experiences, where young people had disruptions with their learning and often refused to attend. Young people benefit from individualised programmes of education. This may be full time at the school operated by the organisation, plans for an introduction to mainstream education or a gradual build-up of home tuition leading to half day school attendance. When young people struggle to consistently engage, they still make improvements when compared with their starting points. For example, their participation in education activities and self-interest in learning increases over time.

Some young people have been involved with the police and offending behaviour prior to living here. There have been a few incidents involving the police at the beginning of some placements but young people have responded well to the sanctions and boundaries imposed with a reduction in incidents of anti-social behaviour and offending. One young person reported that initially he didn't like the boundaries and rules and rebelled against them but realised the staff team stick to them so he decided to 'make the most of the opportunities while I live here'. Those who admit to

misusing drugs and alcohol earlier in their lives report that they no longer feel the need to do so as they are settling into this placement. Young people who smoke acknowledge that they are provided with help and support to give up; they are not ready to accept this help at present.

Young people take part in activities in the wider community with some developing an interest in joining a sports club. The rural location of the home relies on transport, however the two cars available ensure that young people can access community resources. Young people say they would like to be nearer a town sometimes, on other occasions they report how lovely this home is in the countryside with extensive grounds and fields around them.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their families and are supported to do so. Parents report very good levels of satisfaction with this home stating that communication is good. One parent reported, 'I can't praise them enough, they are doing exceptionally well with my (child)'. Another parent said, 'They are doing a fantastic job', 'without the home I don't know where me and my (child) would be'.

Young people take part in domestic chores around the house to reflect family life and a contribution to group living. Young people are actively involved in the preparation and cooking of meals. Through this involvement they develop life skills and prepare for independence.

Quality of care

good

Young people have developed some good relationships with the staff and manager. Young people develop trust and confidence in the staff, this contributes to them making progress. Young people are getting to know each other as they have not lived together as a group for very long. Some friendships are forming and a young person spoke of the common bond in that they are looked after children in the same house, 'we are in care together'. Staff are vigilant with regard to peer relationships and intervene quickly if any bullying is displayed. Young people are confident to raise concerns and know how to make a formal complaint. One complaint has been made since the last inspection and this was resolved to the young person's satisfaction.

Young people are actively encouraged and supported to have their say about the care and support they receive, as well as day-to-day arrangements and routines of the home. This occurs through general discussion, weekly meetings and key work sessions. At school young people have chosen the design for a uniform and this will be ready to wear for the new term in September. There is a development and improvement panel with representatives from staff and young people across the organisation. These are excellent examples of consultation with young people and demonstrate how their views are valued.

Placement plans are regularly reviewed. This ensures that they are up to date

documents. The plans are supported by behaviour management plans and risk assessments. Young people are encouraged to be involved in the review of their plan, some are more involved than others. Young people are seen as individuals. Their specific needs, including those relating to their cultural identity are sensitively considered and planned for. A social worker reported that the young person has changed their eating habits and now takes more exercise as a result of support in this placement. Where appropriate, discussions with family members and the young person agree how best to meet individual needs. Placement plans identify targets for young people to work towards. Some of these are linked to financial rewards, this helps to motivate young people in reaching such targets.

Staff support young people to engage in education either at school or with an alternative provision. Attendance levels have increased and staff are creative in capturing young people's attention with model making, cooking and external visits to promote their learning outside the classroom. There are effective systems of communication between the home and the education staff. This ensures consistency of response to young people.

The farmhouse is a large building in a rural location, close to larger towns and cities. The kitchen/diner provides the heart of the home with seating for a gathering place. The house is suitably decorated and furnished with ornaments, pictures and soft furnishings to enhance the environment. Young people like this house and the grounds that provide a large garden and external buildings for activities.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding arrangements in the home. This practice is underpinned by regular training and the clear written procedures available. The manager reports safeguarding issues to other professionals as required, this ensures multi-agency decision making occurs. Young people recognise that staff work together to keep them safe, even when they don't like the restrictions placed on them, such as use of the internet and supervision by staff. A social care professional reported, 'the young person I work with feels safe and their behaviour has changed as a result'.

Young people have reduced the risks to their personal safety by rarely going missing, there have been two occasions since the last inspection. When these incidents occur, staff follow protocols and use the home's procedures to ensure the safe return of young people. Similarly the number of incidents of physical intervention is low with four reports since the last inspection. This home had an unsettled period with some young people engaged in drug use. These young people have since moved on to alternative placements. The number of sanctions increased over this period and staff took additional measures of control such as a reduction in free time, an increase in the supervision of spending pocket money and liaison with specialist services.

The current group of young people report that they are safe and they generally respond well to the boundaries imposed. A significant incident involved the police following an assault on a staff member and damage to the home. A disruption meeting concluded that the home wished to continue supporting the young people involved and to reduce their offending behaviour. Since then young people have responded positively and taken the opportunity to engage with some therapeutic support. The therapist effectively provides strategies for the staff and young people to utilise in reducing antisocial behaviour. This collaborative working is a strength of this home through having in-house resources; all but one of the young people are accessing this support.

To promote positive behaviour, young people can be rewarded with vouchers. These financial incentives are effective for most young people. Young people report, 'you get loads of money if you do the right thing'. Sanctions for misbehaviour can be loss of money, loss of an activity or some restorative work to put things right. For example making a mess in the home means helping to tidy up. Young people say that generally the rules are fair.

Processes for the recruitment, selection and vetting of all new staff are supported by the organisation's head office. Robust systems are rigorously applied adhering to current guidance and obtaining a minimum of three references. This ensures safer recruitment practices are followed to confirm each applicant's suitability to work with young people.

The environment is subject to regular health and safety checks. An external member of staff from head office has an excellent grasp of safety issues and ensures the home is well maintained to create a pleasant environment for young people. Staff and young people have opportunities to experience an evacuation of the building; this ensures that they know what action to take in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

good

The manager is very experienced, suitably qualified in management and holds the Registered Managers Award. She has been in this post for almost two years and is a founding member of the organisation. The manager is both approachable and supportive which is appreciated by staff and young people. The overall management of the home is supported by the deputy. The organisation recognises that the manager has a strategic role and will transfer the management of this home to the deputy. An application has been received by Ofsted in order for this new manager to be registered; this will provide consistency for the staff and young people.

No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection. However, the manager and staff have continued to address issues and make improvements to bring about positive changes for young people. For example, the development and improvement panel provides a good forum for discussion and the last meeting

considered; physical intervention, clothing allowance, access to wireless internet connection and consistency of staffing. Insightful use of effective monitoring systems helps to identify strengths and any areas for improvement that are incorporated into the development plan for the home. The recent introduction of a file audit ensures that recording systems are consistent and that the correct records are held and filed in the right place.

There is great attention given to records with consideration that they are young people's records and can be accessed by them at any time. Records are produced to support young people in placement and with the plan that they will have some records to take with them when they move on to alternative placements. The health passport, photographs and key documents are prepared to help young people make sense of their lives when they are young adults. In addition, where young people move on to another residential placement, a folder of key information is prepared to assist young people and a new staff team with the transition.

The manager has adapted procedures and practice to meet the revised regulations. However, the Statement of Purpose has yet to be amended in line with the new requirements. This has little impact on young people as they receive a colourful guide to the home with useful information.

The staffing arrangements vary between two to three staff on shift. Staff and young people report that this is sufficient and additional staffing is arranged for planned events. Staff shortages are covered by sessional staff within the organisation, this ensures that young people are cared for by people that they know. The monitoring of staffing ensures that there is minimal use of agency staff. When they are used they are subject to an induction and experience shadowing permanent staff before starting a shift. This good practice prepares temporary staff for their role and enables an introduction to young people and the routine of the home.

Staff members receive regular supervision and have good training opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills. Staff meetings and consultations with the clinical team enable staff to discuss practice and agree strategies to support young people.

The manager has very good relationships with other agencies. Placing social workers, independent reviewing officers and parents report very positively about this home with very good communication and 'partnership' working. 'I have been extremely impressed by the staff knowledge and care for the young person', stated one social worker. Another professional said 'This is a homely, warm and caring environment. Young people are valued and provided with care, support, time and education.'

The home has notified significant events to Ofsted and other agencies appropriately. This helps to ensure that all parties are kept fully informed of matters relating to young people and that the regulator has access to up-to-date information on safeguarding 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.