

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	27/08/2015
Unique reference number	SC407430
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	Joanne Sams
Registered manager	Anita Howard
Inspector	Clare Davies

Inspection date	27/08/2015
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

SC407430

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Sound policies and procedures promote the safety and welfare of young people. Risk management is comprehensive, identifying known and likely risks for individual young people and details how these will be managed safely.
- Leaders and managers work in partnership with other agencies to effectively safeguard young people. Robust recruitment procedures ensure suitably checked staff support and care for young people.
- Young people are supported well with their health and medical care. The collaboration with clinical services ensures ready access to support young people with their emotional wellbeing.
- The manager and staff actively support young people in maintaining contact with their family and friends.
- Transition planning for young people is child focused and successful. Young people are appropriately prepared for when they move on from the home.
- Leaders and managers understand the strengths of the home and areas for development. The manager and the wider organisation strive for continuous improvement and welcome working with other agencies and professionals to achieve good outcomes for young people.
- Staff are not always consistent when implementing boundaries to ensure young people communicate with socially acceptable language and facilitate their use of the kitchen. Young people are not always kept up to date with plans to provide them with a permanent staff team, following the departure of three members of staff.

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, with particular reference to staffing arrangements, the registered person must ensure that staff- (2)(a)(iv) regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care.	30/09/2015

Recommendations

- Ensure that the fridge is suitably stocked for young people to make a snack. The design of the home should, where appropriate, enable children to develop independence skills within the supportive environment of the home, including through encouraging independent use of the kitchen and laundry areas. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 17 paragraph 3.25)
- Ensure that there is a consistent response to support young people to reduce and avoid the use of swearing. Positive behaviour and relationships should be reinforced, praised and encouraged; poor behaviour should be challenged and discussed. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 39 paragraph 8.11)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for four young people of either sex, with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is one of four children's homes operated by a private organisation. The organisation provides an independent school where young people from this home can attend.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/01/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
02/07/2014	Full	Good
20/01/2014	Interim	Satisfactory Progress
24/09/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Young people develop positive relationships with the staff and managers. They are encouraged and supported to build relationships with each other, forming friendships and developing tolerance of group living. Young people get along and join in activities together though, as with groups of teenagers, there are disagreements at times. Young people build and maintain friendships outside of the home developing their social circle and building connections in the community. Staff ensure young people celebrate special occasions. For example, young people in year 11 celebrated the end of their year with a prom style evening, cards are received for significant events and when young people leave this home the event is marked with an outing or a meal. Trips to theme parks and spa days are some of the events enjoyed by the young people in the summer holidays. Young people receive effective support with their education Young people benefit and make progress through attending a local school provided by the organisation. There are excellent outcomes for some young people who make progress so they are able to return in to mainstream education. Young people receive awards for educational achievement such as, making good progress and regular attendance. A social worker reported that 'there is a great commitment from the school and consequently the young person is making good progress.' Some young people are reluctant to engage with their learning and their progress is slow but steady. Young people who struggle in a classroom environment due to their learning ability, or behaviour, receive tuition at the home if appropriate for a short time with a planned return to school. Young people's health needs are met. Staff are trained in the management of medication and first aid. The organisation works in collaboration with a clinical team providing psychological and psychiatric support and intervention. This professional input is effective in meeting the emotional and behavioural needs of young people. Having direct access to these clinicians avoids the waiting time for community health services. Consequently, young people can benefit from this in-house provision for their emotional wellbeing. For example, when staff have reported concerns regarding self-harm behaviours, arrangements were made for the young person to meet with a member of the clinical team the following day. Staff receive professional support and guidance from the clinical team. This assists in their delivery of care practices and implementation of strategies in managing behaviour.	

The manager and staff recognise the importance for young people to maintain relationships with their family members and friends. In line with their care plans, young people are supported with these links through transport arrangements and staff presence where required.

Since the last inspection, structured transition plans have enabled young people to leave this home, move to foster care, return to their family and attend mainstream education. Social care professionals report very positively on these successful outcomes.

Regular meetings provide a formal forum to seek the views of young people and to share information about the home. Records confirm that at these meetings, young people plan activities, the menus and generate discussions about behaviour, charity events and how to welcome new young people.

The layout of the old building provides a homely environment. The kitchen is at the heart of the home where staff and young people gather to chat, eat and play games. Young people are encouraged to cook and make snacks towards their independence. As a result of previous incidents where young people wasted food, many provisions are locked away requiring young people to ask staff to get food for them from a fridge in the office. Young people say they want to be able to help themselves to food from the kitchen fridge.

The rural location of the home restricts young people travelling independently however, there are three vehicles for use to go to nearby towns for shopping and activities. The large grounds provide outdoor space for playing games and using a trampoline. A young person has created a vegetable patch with the hope of supplying vegetables towards the popular roast dinners enjoyed by all at the weekends.

Young people do not feel informed about the current staffing arrangements following three staff leaving in a short space of time. Regular temporary staff have contributed to ensuring that all staff are known to young people however, managers have failed to keep young people informed of the plans for a permanent staff team.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
There is a strong focus on the protection of young people. The staff effectively implement individual risk management plans to promote the safety and welfare of the young people in their care. Young people receive support to make decisions to	

keep safe by discussing known risks and how to reduce or avoid them. For example, their use of social media and mobile phones, forming safe relationships, the dangers of using drugs and alcohol, and keeping safe when out in the community.

Physical interventions are minimal. Young people report that staff only do this, 'if someone is going to get hurt or that something is going to be damaged'. Staff focus on de-escalation techniques, distraction and support to find alternative ways for young people to manage their behaviour. One serious incident of challenging behaviour led to police involvement and injuries to staff. Direct work with young people to restore relationships and consider the impact of their personal behaviour has effectively ensured that no further incidents have occurred. Following any incident of disruptive behaviour young people spend time with staff to reflect. A useful tool called 'thoughts and feelings' prompts young people to identify what happened and how they can be supported to avoid such behaviour again. A social worker commented how helpful this tool is.

Staff work effectively with young people to form trusting relationships and consequently, there is a significant reduction in the frequency of young people going missing. Clear policies and procedures enable staff to take decisive action to search and report when a young person is missing. Incidents are reported to the multi-agency safeguarding hub who assess the level of risk. This multi-agency approach ensures that young people receive appropriate resources to support them when they do place themselves at risk away from the home. Return interviews are completed either by a charity commissioned by the local authority, the placing authority or a staff member not involved with the incident at the time.

Managers within the organisation have strong links with the local police force, attending meetings each month. This partnership working involves the sharing of local information in order to promote the safety and welfare of young people at the home and in the community.

The reduction in the number of incidents of challenging behaviour is a reflection of young people feeling settled and responding well to the boundaries imposed by the staff. However, the use of swearing is not consistently challenged. Young people swear excessively at times and staff do not routinely address this to encourage young people to use more socially acceptable language.

This organisation adopts rigorous recruitment procedures. Careful selection and vetting of staff ensures that only suitable adults work at this home.

	Judgement grade
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The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
The manager of this home has been in post since January 2015. She is very experienced in residential care having been the deputy manager in this home prior to becoming the manager. The manager receives support with her professional development through the organisation's learning and development programme. She is currently working towards a management qualification. The manager has had periods of absence; an interim manager from within the organisation covers this shortfall. Quality assurance processes are thorough and have continued in the manager's absence. Embedded systems contribute to the monitoring and review of the quality of care provided and the progress young people make. Within the organisation there are key personnel to monitor health and safety requirements, and employment matters. A monitoring visit on behalf of placing authorities occurred in March 2015. This report identifies many strengths of this home and concludes that 'the provider is passionate about providing a high level of care to young people'. Prior to this inspection three staff left their employment within a few weeks of each other. Leaders and managers responded by transferring some staff from other homes within the organisation and deploying regular casual staff. This contingency plan provides young people with staff that they are familiar with and avoids the use of unknown agency staff. The shortfall in a permanent staff team impacts on stability for young people and has occurred during the summer holiday period. It is encouraging to note that this has not reflected in any deterioration in young people's behaviour. Social workers comment that the use of temporary staff has led to some occasional break-down in communication and young people say that they want to know what is happening with regards to permanent staffing arrangements. Leaders and managers have quickly identified permanent staff members who will provide consistent care from September 2015. Regular supervision of practice occurs for staff members, including temporary staff, along with opportunities to talk with the home's manager and managers within the organisation. Leaders and managers within this organisation keep up to date with changes in local and national policy, and current trends within the field of social care. This enables them to cascade information and training to the staff team to inform their practice and develop their skills and knowledge.	

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 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 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 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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