

Children's home – interim inspection

Inspection date	04/01/2017
Unique reference number	SC408655
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Priory Education Services Limited
Registered provider address	Priory Group, 80 Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UD

Responsible individual	Clive Coombs
Registered manager	Christopher Ward
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	04/01/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has declined in effectiveness. Planning for young people is, for the most part, of a very high standard from the point of admission to moving on from the home. Impact risk assessments are thorough, detailing how anticipated risks may affect young people, those already living in the home, and staff, as well as how the home can ameliorate the concerns. Positive handling plans provide excellent information about how particular young people will probably behave when at different levels of arousal and what strategies are most likely to assist them to become calm. Transition plans lay out the process that staff follow when someone moves on to alternative provision, demonstrating that they consider the practical and emotional aspects of assisting young people through the process. Such planning leads to successful and smooth introductions of children and young people to the home, staff being well prepared for the challenges that they may present and successfully intervening when difficulties arise, and to young people having a positive experience of leaving the home to begin a new phase of their lives. There are, however, significant shortfalls in some of these processes, leading to a lack of robust, collaborative working and to the absence of evidence of work undertaken. Placement plans either have not been produced or reviewed in a timely way, there is no record on file that the manager and staff have shared and agreed plans with other parties such as social workers and parents, and some staff frequently omit to sign to say that they have read and understood the plans made. Although planning of transition is good, the manager could not produce any records of what had actually occurred. Many of these issues are long standing and the subject of previous requirements and recommendations. There is no current system for auditing case files to ensure compliance with good practice. A form for obtaining the consent of young people and placing authorities for the independent person undertaking visits under regulation 44 has been produced but has not been routinely used, so that it was missing for the most recent young person admitted. The manager and staff acknowledge that organisation and recording generally	

need improving. There has been a lack of systematic processing of information and important documents so that a certificate demonstrating that electrical installations are safe could not be found. In addition, first aid training for a number of staff had lapsed, leading to some shifts, particularly at night, not having anyone with a current certificate on duty. There is no suggestion that young people were put at risk as a result of either oversight, but the manager has not effectively monitored these matters.

There have been improvements in the scrutiny of health and safety procedures, with temperature checks of fridges, freezers and hot food served to young people having far fewer omissions, and water flushes and car maintenance checks being carried out weekly without fail. Staff are now carrying out emergency evacuation drills at different times of the day.

Young people are able to express their views, including when they have concerns about the running of the home or how members of staff treat them. The manager has dealt with these concerns openly, investigating the issues, addressing matters with staff as appropriate and reaching a resolution with the young person. Although one of these concerns was referred to in documentation as a complaint, it was not dealt with or recorded as such.

Most young people are continuing to maintain progress, in such areas as increasing the amount that they are able to do for themselves and regulating their own behaviour. One young person who had presented with extremely challenging behaviour at the start of the placement has calmed to a remarkable degree. The consistency in approach by the staff does much to achieve this, as illustrated by one young person being keen to show the inspector the rules that he has for managing his favourite activity of water play. He had a good understanding of these, knew staff would help him keep to them and appreciated that in doing so he had a more enjoyable experience.

One young person has infrequent but serious episodes of verbally abusing, threatening to and actually physically attacking staff. Staff have largely dealt with these through the imposition of a sanction. This has been punitive rather than restorative in nature and the manager is aware that this is not the most age-appropriate response. He is leading a discussion within the team to formulate a more effective approach.

Staff have imposed relatively few sanctions since the last inspection and there have been no incidents of physical interventions in the same period – indicators of a settled home. Records of sanctions in logs do not give sufficient details as to the location of, or antecedents leading to, behaviour warranting the measure. They demonstrate that the manager monitors the sanction given and that young people have the opportunity to give their views. However, as reported in the last two inspections, the log does not demonstrate that the timescales stated in regulations are adhered to, for the record to be made, staff debriefed and the young person spoken to.

A young person had been able to walk off site, despite being on one-to-one supervision. The staff and manager responded appropriately and the young person was soon returned to the home with police assistance. Staff believe that known issues regarding the gate bolts and the practice of parking a mini bus so that it blocked the view of the main exit contributed to the young person being able to abscond; lessons have been learned and both issues have been resolved.

Shift rosters show that there have been sufficient staff to meet the needs of young people at all times, although to achieve this it has sometimes taken a lot of re-organisation of rotas, staff undertaking overtime and managers undertaking shifts. The home has not used agency staff since the last inspection and the bank workers employed are well known to young people.

Supervision has not been given the priority it should, and sessions have been postponed or missed when pressure of work has meant that staff are needed to support young people. Sometimes the manager has not arranged supervision due to having other responsibilities to attend to, adding to the impression the staff have that he has to 'juggle too many hats'. The statement of purpose and workforce plan do not specify the frequency of supervision for permanent staff, although they do for temporary workers. This means that there is no clarity of minimum expectations.

The manager has updated the statement of purpose in recent months but did not forward the document to Ofsted, nor is it available on the provider's website.

The young person's guide has been rewritten and now contains all the information required by regulation, presented in a coherent way with relevant illustrations. However, not all children and young people admitted would be able to read the guide, and the home does not have a version available that uses symbols to communicate the information in a simplified form.

The provider organisation has yet to undertake an exercise to satisfy itself that the registered manager's existing qualifications are equivalent to the level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare, but is still within timescales to achieve this.

Information about this children's home

This children's home is for seven young people. The home is run by a private organisation, providing care and accommodation for young people who have learning disabilities. All the young people currently resident at the home are educated at the provider's school approximately 10 miles away.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/08/2016	Full	Good
10/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/10/2015	Full	Requires improvement
12/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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
11. The positive relationships standard In order to meet the positive relationship standard, the registered person must ensure: (2)(x) that staff are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same.	05/03/2017
12. The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure: (2)(d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. This includes obtaining the necessary certificates to demonstrate that mains installations have been checked by a competent person and are safe.	05/03/2017
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement of purpose which covers arrangements for the professional supervision of staff, as listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. The registered person must also ensure that a copy of the statement of purpose is published on its website unless the registered person considers that such publication would prejudice the welfare of children in the home. (Regulation 16 (1)(3)(b)(4))	05/03/2017
The registered person must ensure that at all times at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31 (2)(a))	05/02/2017
The registered person must ensure that a record is made within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control or discipline; within	05/03/2017

48 hours of the use of the measure that the user has been spoken to about the measure and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure that an addition is made to the record that the child has been spoken to about the measure. In particular, records must show that these timescales have been adhered to. (Regulation 35 (3)(a-c))	
The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3))	05/02/2017
The registered person must ensure that the independent person carrying out visits to the home only inspects a child's case records if the child and the child's placing authority consent. (Regulation 44 (2)(b))	05/02/2017

Recommendations

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

- The registered person should have a workforce plan which should: detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice and keep appropriate records for staff in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53 paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should work with the placing authority to ensure that each child's transition is planned and help each child to prepare for leaving both practically and emotionally. This work should be adequately recorded. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 57 paragraph 11.9)
- Case records must be kept up-to-date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62 paragraph 14.3)
- The children's guide must be age appropriate, provided in an accessible format and explained to each child to make sure they understand it. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24 paragraph 4.21)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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