SC408655

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

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, or are planned to be educated, at the provider's school approximately 10 miles away.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 May 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	**good**
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 4 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Declined in effectiveness

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people are making significant progress across a range of development areas. Some improvements have been made much more quickly than would have been expected and others had not been anticipated by parents or professionals.

- The manager and staff demonstrate an exemplary level of care. One parent commented, 'They are genuinely lovely people, like parents that really care.' This has been especially important for young people with no involved family, and staff have continued to maintain contact with them after they have left the home.

- The process for moving young people in and out of the home has led to smooth and successful transitions. When time has allowed, the manager and staff have thoroughly prepared young people for these significant steps.

- Staff regularly re-enforce messages with young people about keeping themselves safe and support them to increase levels of independence gradually while keeping potential risks to an acceptable level.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The manager has been proactive in responding to children's concerns as complaints, leading to positive outcomes. However, recording does not include whether the complainant is satisfied, and the home's complaints procedure does not give guidance as to what should happen if they are not.

- The home has not been able to employ enough staff members who are able to drive, leading to young people having insufficient opportunities to engage in community activities. Managers need to consider how they could provide alternative means of transport.

- Documents or entries on records do not always make it clear who the author is or the date when they were drawn up. This weakens accountability and makes it difficult for staff to know which version they should follow.

- Staff do not have ready access to personal education plans or individual education plans. This means that they cannot be sure that they are supporting young people's education in line with what has been agreed by other professionals.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/01/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
31/08/2016	Full	Good
10/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/10/2015	Full	Requires improvement

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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
If a home has a website, the registered person must ensure that a copy of the statement of purpose is published on that website unless the registered person considers that such publication would prejudice the welfare of children in the home. (Regulation 16 (4))	30/06/2017
The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation so that the process followed and how it has led to the outcome is clear. (Regulation 39 (3))	30/06/2017
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months and supply to HMCI a copy of the review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1) and (4)(a))	30/06/2017

Recommendations

- Staff in children's homes will play a key role in supporting children in line with their personal education plan or EHC plan and recommendations from education and health professionals. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 26, paragraph 5.3) This requires these plans to be available to staff and kept on file.
- The registered person should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside of the home (where appropriate) and are encouraged to participate in those activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)
- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

- The registered person must specify the procedures to be followed when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission and how staff should support the child on return to the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28) In particular, the home's policy and procedures must include the need for an independent return home interview by the placing authority in policy and procedures.

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff receive supervision of their practice which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

- Case records must be kept up-to-date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people receive care from a dedicated staff team that helps them make significant progress, some of it exceptional. Some parents said that their children have achieved things that they had not thought possible. One commented, 'There has been a complete turnaround, it has been unbelievable! Education is amazing – a massive change.'

Progress includes young people preparing their own meals (from making a sandwich to a cooked dinner), improving communication skills, and accepting responsibility for behaviour. One young person who was aggressively defiant when he came to the home, and was making allegations about staff, is now cooperative, keen to please and willing to acknowledge mistakes. In the words of his social worker, he is 'proud of his behaviour' and 'progresses continually'.

Monthly summaries give helpful updates on how young people are generally progressing, although 'progress charts' do not present data in an easily understood way. The manager and staff are considering various methods of recording how young people have progressed over time, but there is nothing currently in place to demonstrate this.

Young people are making educational progress but support given by staff is not informed by personal education and/or individual education plans, as these are not routinely held on files or read by staff. Liaison between the provider's school and the home has become disjointed, for example over approaches to managing a young person's play routines. Teachers apply different rules to those of the home, leaving the young person not understanding why this is the case.

Key workers record their sessions and significant interactions with young people. These

show that they are focused on helping young people to attain their goals and giving them an improved quality of life. The young person's voice is clearly presented in the records, in minutes of house meetings and in documentation regarding complaints made. The manager has been proactive in treating concerns raised by young people as complaints that he then formally addresses. This means that young people know that staff treat their views as important and has resulted in promoting good professional practice.

However, one record had no information about how the manager had dealt with a complaint, which undermines the value of the process. The home's complaints procedure does not detail what should happen if young people are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or how they might be helped to present their views, such as a referral to an advocate.

Some parents and staff indicated that a lack of staff team members who drive is hampering the opportunities for young people to participate in community activities, especially any regular attendance at clubs, as it is not possible to guarantee getting them there every week.

The most recent admission of a young person to the home was supported by a helpful impact risk assessment, liaison with other professionals and by preparing the existing residents. A professional said that he 'could speak very highly of the transition'; he and the young person's parents were particularly impressed by the level of communication from staff. This has contributed to a very smooth move into the home. During the inspection, the young person and staff were personalising his room, an example of the individual care provided.

Moves out of the home have been carefully prepared, with young people having as great a voice as possible in the process. This is evident from records made in key-work sessions and documents that show that thought has been given to practical arrangements, including a 'communication protocol' for contact between a young person and staff after the move. This gave her clear expectations of how things would be after she had made the transition.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Since the last inspection, a concern about a member of staff's professional boundaries was not initially escalated to managers by a supervisor. Once it came to the manager's attention, the appropriate notifications were made and the matter investigated. Recommendations made were proportionate, addressing the staff member's understanding, but did not consider wider learning by the organisation. Nevertheless, the manager is to incorporate the importance of escalating concerns into safeguarding training planned for his team. This is timely, as the inspection revealed that not all staff would be confident about going to senior managers if they thought that child protection concerns were not being dealt with properly within the home.

The level of supervision of young people is such that they are unlikely to go missing. On

occasions when someone has left without permission, staff have stayed with the young person and eventually been able to guide them back to the home. In one such case, managers took swift action, in conjunction with the placing authority and parents, when it was clear that this behaviour could not be reduced. Alternative provision was identified so that the young person's safety was prioritised and disruption to others kept to a minimum.

In another case, a young person's behaviour prior to admission was swiftly turned around, and his parents are particularly pleased with how staff keep their son safe.

Staff are aware of how they should respond if a young person was to go missing. However, they were not aware that the placing authority should arrange an independent return to care interview. This is not currently included in either the home's local procedure nor in the provider's missing from care policy.

Staff assist young people to keep themselves safe by addressing issues as they arise and then follow up in key-work sessions. For example, when one young person disclosed personal information to someone outside the organisation, the staff member with him spoke about the importance of privacy when you do not know people well. She re-enforced this message later, and the next time the young person was appropriately circumspect.

A careful balance is maintained between managing risks and allowing increased independence. Young people have the opportunity to experience greater autonomy while being given the tools and training to keep safe. Examples include travelling by public transport with decreasing levels of supervision, and taking responsibility for the use of a mobile phone.

Safer recruitment practice is robust: a review of files demonstrated that considerable lengths were taken to account for gaps in one applicant's employment history, including verifying the explanations given with previous employers. This guards against appointing someone to work in the home who hides information that would identify them as unsuitable.

Young people are able to name adults they trust within the home and can speak to about issues that trouble them. One took the significant and brave step of asking a member of staff to resolve a problem he had created by complaining about something that was not true. This demonstrated that he was prepared to admit what he had done and that he knew he could turn to staff to help put it right.

A young person who had only been living at the home for a few days at the time of the inspection said that staff had been very friendly towards him. He had identified someone he would choose as his key worker and with whom he had already been able to build rapport.

Contact is promoted, and improvements in the behaviour of young people have led to the lengthening of the time that they spend with family members, extending this to overnight stays where appropriate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has addressed the great majority of requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. Evidence collated to show this demonstrates the improved organisation of the home.

However, one requirement and one recommendation have been repeated; the former as the provider has yet to publish the home's statement of purpose on their website, and the latter as documents do not routinely state the author or the date when they were drawn up. In some instances, such as details about the medication that young people take, this means that it is unclear which version held on file is the most up to date and should be followed. The manager has instituted audits that are helping to ensure that files are otherwise in good order.

The provider has not supplied a copy of the review of the quality of care given to children, which regulation requires. An opportunity to formally monitor and evaluate the way in which the home is keeping young people safe and promotes their well-being has not been taken.

The provider has not conducted an equivalence exercise to ensure that the manager's existing qualification matches the components of the Level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare. Any gaps will need to be addressed by the time that the manager has been in post for three years.

Staff receive regular supervision in accordance with the frequency specified in the home's workforce plan. They reported that it meets their needs, and records show that it addresses professional development, interpersonal relationships and meeting the needs of young people.

The home is carrying vacancies and is relying on bank workers and staff volunteering to undertake overtime. This means that young people know those who are working with them, but care has to be taken to avoid overstretching willing workers, such as through undertaking a day shift after having done a waking night.

A new format for logging the use of sanctions and one for other significant incidents do provide for debriefs to consider lessons learned. They also ensure that staff enter dates for when the record is made and when young people are spoken to, demonstrating that timescales required by regulation are met. However, some entries are not legible to a reader unfamiliar with the author's handwriting.

Care planning for young people is good, with clear objectives and strategies that take into account actions from children looked after reviews. Staff spoken with at the inspection were able to explain how they seek to achieve these in their day-to-day work. The team is considering how young people can be involved in drawing up placement plans; a trial is taking place in which staff are helping young people to write personal profiles. These give brief descriptions of themselves, what they would like help with, and

their likes and dislikes.

Risk assessments and behaviour management plans are reviewed frequently, with amendments made when new concerns arise. Staff are not so good at identifying when risks have reduced and measures that had been required need no longer be specified as needing to be taken. This means that progress may not be recognised and communicated to others, such as to parents and social workers. Correspondence on files shows that staff ask professionals to read and agree to placement plans and risk assessments. Staff are now much better at completing signature sheets to show that they have read and understood these documents themselves.

The manager and staff are developing a new young person's guide designed to facilitate conversations between staff and young people about life in the home and the support that they are offered. This is designed to ensure that each resident has information conveyed at an appropriate level of understanding using preferred communication methods.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC408655

Provision sub-type: 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(s)

Chris Peel, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: http://www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017