

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	31/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC408655
Type of inspection	Full
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	31/08/2016
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	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC408655

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Managers and staff maintain a calm atmosphere in the home. Managers and staff are well prepared for the challenges that young people may present and successfully intervene to keep a good atmosphere in the home.
- Progress is being made by all young people. Some is gradual but still impressive, such as one young person now contributing to getting his own breakfast. Some progress has been remarkably swift, including the way in which a young person became settled after admission. He is accepting of boundaries and routines that he previously could not.
- Young people gain practical independent living skills, for example doing voluntary work, using public transport and self-medicating. Young people may learn or assist with meal preparation and to keeping their room's clean and tidy. Some of the progress has been attained surprisingly quickly.
- 'A young person-friendly placement plan, called 'About Me' has been introduced. It is a really useful document for young people and staff, which assesses the subject's current position in a range of areas, including being safe, using services, being healthy and personal care. It records the level of support required by a child or young person to achieve each of the elements considered, thus providing an informative view of abilities that can be tracked over time.
- One professional described the home as providing 'a safe and secure placement, meeting a young person's cognitive and emotional needs'. Although there are a number of requirements and recommendations for managers to respond to, this sentiment is true for all young people.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the registered persons 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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
In order to meet the positive relationship standard, the registered person must ensure: 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. (Regulation 11(2)(x))	31/10/2016
In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure: 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, obtaining daily records of fridge and freezer temperature checks and of the temperature of hot foods cooked on the premises, and ensuring that weekly water flush and vehicle safety checks are undertaken. (Regulation 12(2)(d))	31/10/2016
The registered person must ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction, and, in particular, that new employees are not given responsibilities for which they are not yet prepared. (Regulation 33(1)(a))	31/10/2016
The registered person must ensure that a record is made within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control or discipline; and that within 48 hours the user has been spoken to about the measure, and that they have signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and that within five days 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))	31/10/2016

Recommendations

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

- The record of the actual rosters worked should demonstrate that the home has enough suitably trained staff (including someone in a management role) on duty to meet the assessed needs of all children in the home. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 51, paragraph 10.1)
- 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 children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should make best use of information from internal monitoring to ensure continuous improvement. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. This is in particular regard to the timing of fire safety drills. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- 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 children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.9)
- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, 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)
- The children's guide must be age appropriate, provided in an accessible format and explained to each child, to make sure that they understand it. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.21)

Full report

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 ten miles away.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/10/2015	Full	Requires improvement
12/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
18/09/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The inspection was held towards the end of a summer break, when staff sensed that young people were becoming a little restless, having been out of routine for a month. However, for the large part, young people were enjoying activities prepared for them or relaxing in the home and garden. One young person was taken for a successful day trip with a member of staff of his choosing, local walks were taken by others when they indicated that they wished to spend time out of the house. One member of staff commented, 'we have people who really want to work, who give constructive ideas on how to make things better,' and there are many examples of staff demonstrating great enthusiasm for their work such as a Polish cultural day held during the inspection that engaged all young people well. This included young people listening to a traditional story, sampling the national cuisine, colouring and a quiz. It was enthusiastically prepared by staff to cater for the mixed abilities of young people, so that all gained something from the experience. This typifies the care given by staff; they take account of the preferences and abilities of each young person, respond to the choices they make for themselves but also encouraging them to try new experiences that broaden their horizons. One parent said that her son 'is doing things I thought he could not do'. These include being able to communicate what he wants and understanding more of what is said to him and then responding to it. All young people are making progress, from increasingly successful use of the toilet to being able to travel to shops and purchase food and toiletries independently. These improvements have often taken months or years to achieve and are testament to the perseverance of staff and to the atmosphere engendered, which thoughtfully engages young people. Some advances have been quicker, especially for young people who have more recently moved into the home, and those moving on from the home relatively soon. The way in which one young person has settled has surprised his family, who described the home as 'brilliant' and commented that their son 'loves it here'. His mother said, 'He knows more about his personal needs, like cleaning his teeth and showering, and will do them.' They are now hoping for progress in areas not previously thought likely. Another young person appears to have taken her cue from peers who have recently moved to provisions where they have more independence. As a result, she too has begun to do more for herself, for example preparing her own meals by	

budgeting and shopping to cooking for herself.

Staff set target to work towards with young people. These are well set out and recorded, and contribute to new assessments being drawn up, which detail the progress of each child or young person on a range of developmental areas. These effectively establish a baseline of abilities and enable progress to be more objectively measured over the time when an individual lives at the home.

In addition, staff promote young people's learning by taking opportunities to practise counting, recognise words or symbols, or name objects. Staff are adept at interpreting non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, that indicates that someone wants a drink or to use the toilet. Young people use more obvious behaviours to demonstrate their wishes and feelings, for example getting their shoes and coat to signal a desire to go outside. Staff respond to these, thereby increasing young people's sense of autonomy and ability to influence their environment.

Young people who have moved out of the home have been well prepared by staff, as evidenced in key-work session recording. However, files do not evidence either the planning or liaison with other agencies involved.

One social worker commented on the needs of Black children and young people, who require particular help with grooming and hair care, saying that methods were not quite exhausted and information was needed. The normally high standards slipped when a member of staff left, but returned when advice was taken from a social worker and mother.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Several staff say that there have been occasions when they have not been able to take young people out, as there have not been enough adults on shift. However, rosters do show sufficient numbers to supervise young people adequately and to keep them safe. Those records do indicate that there are times of pressure on staffing, especially early in the mornings. The manager reported that potential shortfalls, when waking night staff go off shift and all daytime workers start, are covered by himself or his deputy coming in early, but rosters do not confirm that this is the case.	

There have been no instances of children or young people going missing since the last inspection, but staff know the protocol to follow should this happen. They are also aware of the process for reporting safeguarding concerns. Efforts are made to help young people to keep themselves safe, with regular input and reminders for those who have a degree of independence, particularly about involvement with strangers and what to do if they are feeling uncomfortable. There is evidence that these reminders are followed, with one young person making phone contact with staff to get advice or reassurance.

From observations made during the inspection, staff are very conscious of safety issues, and the premises present no obvious hazards.

The manager is aware of the need to have checks undertaken that verify the safety of electrical or gas installations and appliances, and has chased one for the wiring of the home. Despite this, the check has not been done, and the certificate is out of date. An appointment has belatedly now been made. In addition, there are significant gaps in records of fridge and freezer temperature checks and the temperature at which hot food is prepared. Fire drills are not held at different times of the day to test evacuation in different circumstances, and arrangements have not been made to continue weekly water flushing procedures or vehicle checks when the responsible member of staff is on leave. None of these omissions has directly affected the safety of young people, but scrutiny that safeguards them has not been sufficiently strong.

Medication is generally well managed. When it has been missed, managers have responded appropriately by investigating the circumstances and taking remedial action, but have not promoted a culture of all errors being unacceptable.

One young person has been helped to readily take medication by explaining why it has been prescribed. This was a major issue before his admission. He recites what he takes and the exact dosage when having the medicine, to prevent him from being distracted, and this is an extra safeguarding measure. When he occasionally says he does not want to have his medication, he is told that it is his choice, but is reminded of the potential outcomes. This approach has led to him consistently taking it.

This exemplifies the way in which children and young people are protected and helped: relationships are established in which they trust what staff say and do, explanations are given for the procedures and rules that are in place and, when they are tested, clear consequences are put in place. As a result, children and young people are able to take more responsibility for themselves and enjoy the achievement and freedom that this gives.

Safer recruitment practice is followed, although there was an oversight on one occasion, which meant that a member of staff has been employed without a thorough check made of a gap in employment history.

Links to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board are made through senior managers, and there is a good relationship with the police constable with responsibility for missing persons in the area. He makes visits to the home, and has been invited to give a 'word of advice' to a young person. This has effectively addressed behavioural issues that might otherwise have escalated.

A young person has been admitted, who has had a history of making frequent, unsubstantiated allegations against staff. A protocol was drawn up with the placing authority and the designated officer of the local authority, addressing how this would be managed and how any accusation would be responded to. This has been an extremely effective piece of work, with no allegation having been made or any threat to make one for many months. As a result, the young person is now very settled in the home and able to manage potential triggers for conflict, such as when he is asked to turn off the television, well.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
A new manager has come into post since the last inspection. He does not have a level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare, and the provider has yet to undertake a comparison to establish equivalence for his existing qualifications. Over an interim period, the manager has had dual responsibilities that have impinged on the time that he has been able to give to his new role. This has led to delay in implementing plans, for example a review of the home's statement of purpose, and limited oversight, particularly supervision of staff. Records show lengthy gaps between supervision sessions provided to employees, partly due to interim management arrangements but also to changes of shift leaders. New staff in these roles are in the process of shadowing the deputy to learn about supervision, but, other than this, no specific training is planned. The home's workforce plan does not provide information about the frequency of supervision provided, nor is it detailed in the statement of purpose. Most staff spoken to say that they feel supported and are able to obtain advice or ask for a meeting when they require it. Nonetheless, supervision has been sporadic and this feeds into a sense of staff having to look for leadership, and the provider not giving the care of staff a high enough priority. There are disputes about roles and expectations among the team members, and a lack of confidence that senior	

managers take effective action or make the right decisions.

The majority of the induction programme is conducted at the provider's residential education provision, where new staff have been given responsibilities with children and young people that they have not been adequately prepared for. This has left adults feeling vulnerable and, on occasion, subject to minor assaults. A new induction syllabus is comprehensive and will require a significant commitment of time from new employees and those who oversee the process, to complete.

A recording format for sanctions has been introduced, which provides additional space for the manager to comment on their effectiveness and fairness. These demonstrate that effective monitoring is being undertaken, that young people are being consulted and that their views are taken into account, with one sanction being changed as a result. However, the opportunity has not been taken to address the requirement made at the last inspection, to ensure that the timescales stated in regulations, for the record to be made, staff debriefed and the child or young person spoken to, are evidenced. The record made by staff gives sufficient detail to enable understanding of what happened leading up to a sanction being given, although the location given is often imprecise.

Files are generally in good order, with placement plans, risk assessments and 'positive handling plans' all giving detailed information to help staff understand the needs of individual young people. Some details are incorrect, with the legal status of young people not being updated when they reach the age of 18. In one case, consent for the use of photographs is recorded as having been given, when the actual form states refusal by the placing authority.

These documents are not signed by parents or representatives of placing authorities. Staff signing sheets indicate that it is the same staff who tend not to sign documentation as having been read.

Key-worker records demonstrate the work being done to help young people meet targets, including illustrative photographs. The record of rewards shows that these are frequently given to recognise the achievement of these targets.

Emails on case files evidence challenge of other agencies, when decisions and planning are delayed, to the detriment of young people.

Professionals spoken to report good levels of reporting, regarding children and young people placed in the home, so that they are kept up to date with their progress. Families also generally report good communication.

Children's guides provide all the information required by statutory guidance other than details of how to contact the office of the Children's Commissioner. Neither version produced makes use of communication symbols, nor do many of the pictures aid understanding, as they do not illustrate what is written, resulting in their being of limited use to children and young people.

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 children looked after 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 that 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 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 whom 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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