

SC414516

Registered provider: Blue Mountain Homes Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and provides care and accommodation to four young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD).

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 May 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	Outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 5/01/2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because

- Young people feel that staff care about them. Staff work at the home because they like being with and care about the young people.
- Young people are highly complimentary about the home and its family feel. Young people's comments about all elements of the home are all overwhelmingly positive.
- All staff and managers, whatever their roles, are absolutely committed to young people. They regularly 'go the extra mile' for them.
- The highly talented staff team is extremely creative in engaging with young people who have been previously hard to reach. This makes a very significant and positive difference to all aspects of young people's lives.
- Young people start to engage with staff and other professionals. They develop significantly improved self-esteem and confidence.
- Young people become very much safer than they were before. They go missing less and engage in significantly less risk-taking behaviour.
- Young people learn how to manage risk and are allowed to make their own mistakes, while being fully supported by staff.
- Young people engage in activities as they would if they were not in a children's home. The engagement in activities such as camping of some young people who display high-risk behaviours is instrumental in the development of their safety. This is because they learn about how to manage risk.
- Risk assessment is excellent in all areas. Risk assessment is not just a paper exercise and makes a very positive difference to young people's safety and welfare.
- The very strong registered manager and deputy manager lead the staff team very effectively.
- Young people engage in education, which is highly individual to them. This means that they engage and achieve well, often leaving the home with qualifications to make up for time lost in the past. This is extremely positive, given that, in the past, many young people have struggled to engage at all.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/09/2016	Full	Good
08/03/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
24/11/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people make excellent progress because staff are talented and gifted in their roles. Extremely positive relationships are forged between staff and young people. Young people said: 'They don't judge you', 'They are not here to get paid', 'They are here to help' and 'I feel like I can be myself. This is not a job to them. They care about us.'

Young people who have complex needs, some of whom have been traumatised and whose behaviour has been very high risk before coming to the home, make excellent improvements to their behaviour and safety. This is because of the strong and supportive relationships with staff. Staff use their diverse skills and own interests to creatively engage with young people. Young people's energy is channelled well, and staff make sure that they are never bored. Young people have absolute respect for staff. This is because staff have absolute respect for them.

Those young people who have been extremely difficult to engage with in the past quickly become very settled, happy and safe. They spend high-quality time with staff on activities such as cycling, trips to the seaside and in the local community. Rather than there being a formal approach to one-to-one support, young people readily talk about their worries and problems while walking, cycling and in the car. One staff member talked about the car being their 'one-to-one office'. Another staff member talked about the home and its positive effect on young people, saying: 'It's like being at the university of life.' There is a similar approach to education, where an inspirational teacher at the company's own on-site school is constantly creative about how to engage with young people.

The staff team works as a whole to ensure that young people's education has a 24-hour approach. During their planned, diverse activities, young people readily engage in education, sometimes without knowing it. Young people are reading, writing, doing maths and engaging in other subjects. This is extremely significant because they have not engaged like this before coming to the home. All young people have a very good trajectory of progress, and there are various educational strands planned to ensure that they achieve qualifications. One young person is sitting GCSEs and is also studying while on a rock climbing programme. The double-pronged approach gives young people the best chance to achieve qualifications and will make a difference to their life chances in the future. The teacher said: 'We look at what young people are interested in and then develop from there.' One young person is working towards team work, problem solving and self-management qualifications through camping activities, and this is working very well for him. One social worker said: 'It's nice that they can incorporate his studies into camping.'

The home's ethos is always young person centred and is based on developing good

relationships, trust and engagement. One staff member said: 'We offer it and they sign up to it.' Indeed, it is clear that young people do sign up to it. A young person told the inspector: 'How they are here is different to every other care home. Everyone here is equal and respected.' Staff demonstrate that they cherish, value and care about each young person. They speak about them proudly, describing young people as 'amazing'.

The good times are celebrated and young people have high-quality memory books and photographs to reflect on later in life. When young people move on, it is evident that they keep in touch with the home for support and a 'friendly ear'. This support can continue for months or even years. Young people appear to know that staff will always be there for them. Young people prepare well for their lives as adults and are highly supported. One young person said: 'Staff have been helping me and they have been there through thick and thin.'

One young person recently had a medical emergency and their parent was full of praise for the staff member involved, saying: 'They were fantastic.' This staff member made a very positive difference to the young person's health and well-being in this instance. Young people smoke less, drink less and their drug taking drastically reduces. Young people are healthier and learn about how to stay healthy in the future.

When young people need to come to terms with their past trauma, they receive the help that they need. Outside agencies and the company's own psychotherapist help young people to speak about and come to terms with their past. The psychotherapist spoke about helping young people to 'make sense of their life' and 'to know that it is not their fault'. Young people learn to understand their situations and are therefore better placed to move on and look forward to their futures.

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

Staff are highly influential in making a positive difference to young people's safety and welfare. It is not the rural nature of the setting that prevents young people from going missing. Their missing behaviour soon breaks down because they develop a sense of belonging and enjoyment in their placement. When there was a serious episode of missing for one young person soon after their admission, everything that could possibly be done was done to ensure their safe return. Young people 'sign up' to the ethos of talking about how they can make improvements to their safety. They do this while enjoying activities and being with staff. Young people engage very well, positively influencing their safety should they go missing again.

Young people make excellent progress with their safety and welfare because staff are highly creative in their approach. Staff are excellent at negotiating with young people. They think very carefully about how young people can live their lives and have some freedom, while keeping their safety as a top priority. Each time a young person tries something new or their free time increases, there is clear risk assessment and very careful consideration about what protective measures need to be put in place. Young people know that they have to build up trust gradually. One young person said: 'They

ring me every 30 minutes... They ring all the time... I ring them as well' and, 'They know what I am doing and who I am with.' Staff are adamant that the consistent team approach works very well because young people are clear about what is expected of them. Staff are not afraid to say 'no' and then manage behaviours resulting from this. They do not 'give into' any requests when they feel that young people will be at risk and are strong personally and collectively as a team. Young people receive a very strong and consistent message all the time about all aspects of safety.

Meticulous planning goes into risk reduction. Staff are not risk adverse. They help young people to learn about how to be safe and protected and how to take reasonable risks. This means that they can have experiences and learn from their mistakes. A developing camping and activity project is an excellent example of how young people have started to be involved in higher-risk activities. This project promotes their interests and skills and massively develops their confidence. Staff painstakingly plan each of the camping trips to which there are three stages. Each step is experienced by the young person, before a decision about whether they are ready for the next stage is made. Young people respond well to this approach and know that they have to demonstrate excellent behaviour. They are highly motivated to build up the trust of staff. The risk assessment of this and other adventure activities is very careful. Young people are not prevented from being able to try out adventurous activities, despite coming to the home presenting high-risk behaviours.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Young people are very positive about the leadership of this home. Team working is very strong and all staff work together towards improving the home all the time. Every staff member, whatever their level, is absolutely dedicated to young people. Staff regularly telephone the home to see how young people are when they are off duty and come in to see them on their days off. The team ethos and family feel impact very positively on young people. They feel highly valued and appreciate the extremely high commitment from staff.

The manager is very experienced and has an appropriate management qualification. He makes it his business to know about all aspects of the home's operation. He very effectively talks to staff and young people about how they are making progress. When young people have difficulties, they know that they can go to him. One young person said: 'The manager is sound. He does whatever he can for me.' Young people have a voice and have every confidence that he will sort things out for them.

The support of a strong deputy manager further complements the leadership. Managers lead by example and are often at the forefront of innovative practice. This 'rubs off' on to staff, who in turn are also highly innovative and creative in their approach to young people who have very complex needs. The very regular professional discussions, supervision sessions and extensive training are further complemented by an environment where staff are expected and led to make a difference to young people on a daily basis. Staff report that support from managers is 'brilliant' and they report a feeling of 'brilliant

work all round', reflecting the very positive team ethos.

There are very strong working relationships with other professionals, and contact with parents is centred around young peoples' and parents' needs. This means that some parents receive daily contact, which enables them to be fully involved in their young person's life.

The home is going from strength to strength. It continues to develop its sense of purpose. The manager knows that the staff are excellent at 'turning young people around' so that they can go on to be successful. The statement of purpose reflects the home's approach, and local authorities, parents and young people know what they can expect. The manager is planning to make some further adjustments as the work of the home develops, to ensure that the ethos set out in the statement of purpose is very clear.

The organisation asks its own independent visitor to visit the home once a month and to complete a report. These visits help the home to improve. The visitor goes into a lot of detail. They fully evaluate the quality of care and the impact on young people. When recommendations are made, action is consistently taken to further develop the home.

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 difference 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: SC414516

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blue Mountain Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: Flat 17, Leeland Mansions, Leeland Road, London W13 9HE

Responsible individual: Pradeep Manaktala

Registered manager: Douglas Harrison

Inspector

Caroline Brailsford, social care regulatory inspector

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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>

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