

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	26 April 2016
Unique reference number	SC429995
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	A Significant Other Limited

Responsible individual	Donna Thorne
Registered manager	Elizabeth Bennett
Inspector	Susan Atkinson-Millmoor

Inspection date	26 April 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained 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	Requires improvement

SC429995

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The staff have a nurturing approach to the care offered to young people.
- The atmosphere within the home is calm and relaxed.
- The location of the home offers a different experience for young people enhancing their views of the world around them
- Young people are able to make good progress towards acquiring skills for independent living.
- Young people are well supported to keep in contact with their family and friends where appropriate.
- The staff are committed to support educational achievement for young people and most young people are achieving well
- Individual work with young people is well planned and enables them to explore their feelings around situations that have happened in their life
- The staff work well with other professionals and family members to enhance the lives of young people.

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
The registered person must ensure that— (a) at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31 (2)(a))	31 May 2016
13. In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular regard to monitoring the impact of the home — (1) the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; (b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; (d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; (g) demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— (i) research and developments in relation to the ways in which the	31 May 2016

needs of children are best met; and (ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	
6. In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with particular reference to the decor and maintenance of the home — (1) that children receive care from staff who— (a) understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; (b) use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (vii) provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably.	31 May 2016

Recommendations

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

- The processes the registered person puts in place to enable such a review to take place, should allow for a report to be generated at least once every six months. The generated report should be sent to Ofsted and the placing local authority of all children in the home who are looked-after children ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.3).
- Children's home staff should seek to identify and provide appropriate opportunities for children to develop themselves in accordance with their wishes and feelings and as part of the home's plan for their care. Each child's talents and interests should be understood and nurtured, with children selecting activities based on their personal preferences and abilities, so far as is reasonable. Staff should also support children to try activities that are 'new' for them, where appropriate. In particular, that local activities are planned and talents of young people encouraged ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.4).
- As part of reviewing and revising where appropriate the statement of purpose

(Regulation 16 (3)(a)), the registered person should review and update the children's guide as necessary, and make sure children are given an explanation of any changes ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.23).

- Regulations 35 to 39 detail the records that must be kept in children's homes. All children's case records (Regulation 36) must be kept up to date and stored securely while they remain in the home. Case records must be kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. In particular, the records should be streamlined to allow staff to ensure that all records are completed, signed and dated ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3).

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private organisation and is registered to care for and accommodate up to four children and young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26 January 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
18 August 2015	Full	Good
16 January 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22 October 2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The home is located in a rural community and offers a large, homely environment where young people can live in peaceful surroundings. This offers young people a different experience from living in towns and cities. A young person said, 'It is beautiful here, but there is nothing to do.' The house is large and homely, offering a range of rooms for activities and meetings. However, while the property and smallholding are risk assessed, there are hazards in the grounds that need to be addressed. In addition, the home is in need of redecoration and repair in a number of rooms. The result is that the home feels bare in some of the communal rooms. Young people have good relationships with staff. The staff speak to young people in a calm, nurturing manner and use good humour to diffuse situations. Daily interactions are characterised by pleasant chat while undertaking tasks such as making meals, doing laundry and tidying up. Key worker sessions are regular and offer the opportunity for more in depth discussions about issues concerning young people or staff. Young people are encouraged to make choices about their activities at the start of each week and this forms the basis of their weekly plan. This process relies upon the knowledge and experiences of the young people. A more proactive approach by staff in offering opportunities, particularly in the surrounding area, would offer young people different experiences and benefit their health and well-being. The current group of young people are involved in feeding and cleaning the animals. This helps them to develop a sense of empathy and responsibility. The number of animals is limited at present and other than completing their tasks in terms of feeding, young people's involvement in animal care is low. A young person who has recently left the home benefited from her time working with the animals and has now secured a job and accommodation at a nearby farm. Most young people are making progress in their education and training. Staff support learning within the home and listen to the views of young people with regard to their education. One young person has a tutor supporting his learning daily. The tutor works well with staff and said, 'The staff are approachable and very helpful.' Staff support this process by ensuring that homework is completed. Another child is struggling to maintain his school placement. Staff are supporting the child and listening to his views, but the views are not shared by school staff. The child is new to the home and previously attended school regularly. Attendance is now dropping and ultimately this will impact on his ability to achieve education attainment. Staff have encouraged attendance by using incentives and agreeing to shorter days. The school do not agree with this approach. A teacher said, 'The home advocate well on behalf of the young person, but he has only been there a	

short while. We know him and his behaviours better.’ Staff are awaiting an education review to support his needs and enable him to return to education.

Transitions to and from the home are well planned and managed. Support is offered prior to admission through visits to the home and the appointment of a link person on the team. This ensures that young people feel welcomed and helps them to settle quickly. When leaving the home, staff ensure that young people are supported in a similar way with planning and visits. They maintain regular contact with young people who have left the home if they want it. The impact is a continued sense of belonging. Young people are supported to have their health needs met. All young people have access to services within the community, although they do not always take up appointments despite encouragement from staff. A number of young people are engaged in services where the professionals involved visit the home and the response to these services is positive.

Staff continue to work with an external psychologist to provide an individual service to young people. The work is evidenced by a range of tools used to assess, intervene and monitor progress. The system allows care planning to be targeted, in particular within the area of emotional growth and development. One young person, although still preferring at times to remain isolated from the group, is increasing their level of communication with professionals and making steady progress. His social worker said, ‘(Name) has made massive improvements.’ Progress for other young people can also be seen in the reduction of incidents and the number of absences at the home. A parent said, ‘There is an improvement in his behaviour and the way he speaks to me.’

Young people maintain contact with their family and friends where appropriate. Staff balance the need to achieve independent travel and support for contact. Family members of young people visited during the inspection were made welcome by staff. They were clearly comfortable around staff, readily sharing their thoughts and getting updates on how their young person was progressing. A parent said, ‘Staff are brilliant and keep me well up to date.’

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people at this home are kept safe. Staff understand the risks for each young person and take steps to minimise these using risk assessments that are regularly reviewed. Episodes of going missing have reduced over the previous 12 months. When such events do occur, the home ensures that social workers attend for return interviews, escalating these requests if necessary. Staff ensure that they make every effort to search for young people who go absent. Staff avoid the use of physical interventions, although they are suitably trained to	

intervene if required. There have been no restraints since 2014. This was confirmed by young people.

Young people at times, display challenging behaviour. Staff engage in strategies to diffuse the situation based on the individual young people's needs. This includes planned ignoring for one young person whose behaviour staff explained is used to shock. This has been shown to be the most effective way to prevent escalation. A system of positive rewards and incentives are in place, but the further use of restorative practice could be enhanced. Sanctions are used and these are usually reparative and focused on finance. There has been no management evaluation of the impact of this form of sanction, but its continued and regular use suggests the impact is low.

There have been, and continue to be, staff changes. The result of this is a relatively mixed ability team due to the changes resulting from experienced staff leaving. Recruitment processes are comprehensive and safe. Induction of new staff is thorough and evidenced in records.

There have been no child protection investigations relating to the home. A recent allegation against staff was notified and dealt with appropriately and had no further action.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced. The systems in place demonstrate that she is aware of all aspects of managing a children's home. However, the effective completion of these systems is not always evident. Many records that require manager sign off are incomplete. Effective systems for deputising for the manger are not in place and the additional impact of this can be seen in the lack of completion of internal monitoring systems and reports. The registered individual has taken over some aspects of the management during this period of absence. Young people are making progress and relationships with other professionals are good. A professional working with young people in the home said that the young people progress because of 'consistent support from staff'. However, the development of the home has been limited. A social worker said, 'The home's staff are very nurturing, but don't always push enough.' Direct work with young people is having a positive impact, but day-to-day the home lacks structure and oversight. This hampers development of staff, particularly those new in post, and processes, leading to uncertainty and the stretching of boundaries by young people. This is particularly evident in the newest resident. The young people's guide explains the process for raising concerns and complaints as well as outlining the local area, transport links and the staffing arrangements.	

Much of the information is now out of date and needs to be reviewed. Young people who have lived at the home for a while cannot recall having the leaflet, but are aware of how to complain.

Records, including case records, are up to date and comprehensive. Entries into the daily log are complete but not signed by each worker following an entry as required. There are a vast amount of records with duplicate entries making the systems unwieldy and increasing the likelihood of information being missed. In addition, the number of records means that staff spend a lot of time updating records in the office.

Two complaints by young people have been dealt with by the registered individual in the absence of the manager. Both were dealt with quickly and appropriately. The result is that young people feel listened to and able to raise concerns.

Supervision of staff is regular and comprehensive, and appraisals form part of the supervision plan. Team meetings are held regularly and recorded. There is a system in place for staff who do not attend to sign to say that they have read the minutes. This ensures continuity of messages and information.

The manager continues to develop good relationships with other professionals, including the police and workers from specialist services. The local beat officer said that he has 'a good working relationship with the home'. He reported that there were no complaints relating to the home from locals in the neighbourhood.

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 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 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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