

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC453372
Inspector	Nicholas Murphy
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	Gary Robert Snaith
Date of last inspection	03/03/2014

Inspection date	11/06/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	there has been no compliance action since the last inspection

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home enables young people to achieve good outcomes and enjoy life-enhancing experiences. Young people appreciate the difference the home makes to their lives. One young person said, 'I love it here. I just love the things you get to do.' Staff tailor programmes of care to the individual needs of each young person. They also work closely with placing social workers to ensure that residential plans are compatible with the objectives of the local authority plan. One social worker said, 'The relationship she has with her key worker is really excellent, the worker is very child focused and advocates on her behalf.'

Although young people's behaviour can at times be challenging, particularly to each other, the atmosphere within the home is usually relaxed. The excellent relationships between staff and young people form the bedrock of effective behaviour management. The staff place great importance on listening to the views of young people, while making appropriate decisions on their behalf to promote their welfare.

The sometimes volatile interactions between the young people lead to the possibility of bullying. Staff generally manage this well, although the quality of risk assessment and the level of staff awareness of anti-bullying practice are wanting. Nevertheless, staff are proactive in protecting young people from harm and as a result young

people feel safe.

Some aspects of leadership and management are weak. Several statutory requirements and recommendations have been made in order to improve practice. However, the quality of young people's experiences here, and the progress they have made, provides sound evidence of the home's good overall effectiveness.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to three children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and operated by a private provider.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/03/2014	Interim	good progress
12/12/2013	Full	adequate
17/10/2013	Full	inadequate

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose, specifically that the record contains all information required. (Regulation 17B(3)(a) to (i))	25/07/2014
26 (2001)	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to each member of staff, specifically, proof of identity including a recent photograph (Regulation 26(3)(d) Schedule 2(1))	25/07/2014
4 (2001)	ensure that the home's Statement of Purpose contains all the required information, specifically details about the company owning the home and	25/07/2014

	the work addresses of the registered provider and the Registered Manager (Regulation 4(1) Schedule 1(15))	
5 (2001)	notify HMCI of any revision to the Statement of Purpose within 28 days. (Regulation 5(a) and (b))	25/07/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the result of all statutory reviews are recorded on the child's file, individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home arising from reviews clearly identified (NMS 25.8)
- ensure that children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss incidents of restraint they have been involved in (NMS 3.17)
- ensure that staff are trained to recognise and deal with any indications or incidents of bullying, to act proactively and intervene positively (NMS 3.12)
- ensure that the learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and if necessary is updated. (NMS 18.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

All young people have formed attachments to staff in the home, some significantly so. They have learnt the value of secure relationships and as a result have developed greater confidence and belief in their own abilities. Young people maintain contact with family members and others who are important to them. They are now more able to understand their backgrounds and the sometimes complex dynamics within their families.

Young people are in excellent health. They take the opportunity of regular checks with dentists and opticians, as well as more specialist services such as the orthodontist. One young person has struggled to give up smoking but, with the help of staff, has made some progress in reducing. Young people understand the risks to health such as using alcohol, poor diet, or lack of exercise. Young people also make use of child and adolescent mental health services where necessary. This helps them to deal with issues in their lives which cause them emotional upset.

Young people have excellent school attendance. In general, young people also have good attainments, and are ambitious to do well. One young person has recently worked very hard in studying for her end-of-key-stage tests. Another is now able to work full-time in school without the need for additional classroom support. One young person is in the process of moving to a school which is nearer to the home. She has been fully involved in making this choice and is eagerly anticipating a more challenging learning environment where she can make new friends. She commented, 'The school I am moving to is stricter and it will help me to get the good grades I need to go to college.'

Young people enjoy the opportunity to interact with and care for the various animals within the grounds of the home. They are all enthusiastic horse riders; one young person is now able to take the reins herself. Another young person has developed a strong interest in gardening, and has planted some very attractive hanging baskets which enhance the home's exterior.

All young people, even the youngest, are encouraged to do things for themselves. One older young person is able to cook simple meals. Some young people have made significant progress in overcoming initial anxiety in travelling independently and undertaking everyday tasks such as making purchases in shops.

Quality of care **good**

Staff and young people enjoy excellent relationships. Staff are attentive and project a caring and concerned attitude towards young people. Even when young people are being challenging, staff respond with patience yet firmness. As well as addressing difficulties, staff celebrate young people's successes. For example, certificates and awards for good school work and attitude are proudly displayed for all to see. One member of staff said, 'I'm really proud of what we are doing with the young people and the progress they have made.'

Staff give young people as great a range of choice as possible in daily living. This gives the young people a sense of responsibility and that their views matter. There are formal house meetings where staff and young people can discuss issues in the home. By establishing a consensus in relation to rules and routines, young people are usually happy to abide by them without fuss, for example going to bed at the agreed time.

Care plans are detailed and take account of the range of needs of each young person. They ensure that any barriers to a young person's development are addressed, so promoting equality of opportunity. Young people are involved with their plans and understand their targets and objectives. One young person said, 'I help to put my plan together and I'm happy with it.' Staff support young people in attending or otherwise contributing to their looked after reviews. However, some case files did not contain notes, formal or otherwise, of the outcomes of these reviews. This means that staff cannot be aware of what decisions were made or who is responsible for undertaking agreed actions.

Staff support young people in making sure they attend all necessary health appointments. The home also promotes healthy lifestyles in its overall ethos. Many activities are outdoor-based and physical, helping to keep young people fit and well. The menu, while responsive to individual young people's likes and dislikes, encourages healthy eating. Staff are aware of each young person's health needs and use one-to-one conversations to discuss sensitive issues such as sexual health, or the onset of puberty. This reduces anxiety and ensures that young people are provided with the information they need. The home also works well with placing social workers and health professionals to agree on the best route for providing specialist therapeutic support.

Staff have good communication with schools. They have daily handovers of information, ensuring a smooth transition between home and school. Staff attend parent's evenings, demonstrating to young people that they have an active interest in their education. The structured routine within the home also supports educational achievement, for example, by ensuring that young people are up in time and smartly turned out. One member of staff was observed braiding a young person's hair as she was having her breakfast. This made her feel good about her appearance and fully prepared for a productive day at school.

As well as the activities provided by the home, many of the young people enjoy

recreational and cultural pursuits within the community. One young person plays football and goes swimming after school. She is currently rehearsing for a prominent singing part in the school play. Another has joined the local church, and is making friends within the Sunday school club. These opportunities are important in making young people feel part of their wider peer group within society.

The home is spacious, comfortable, and very well furnished and decorated. It gives ample space, inside and out, for the group to spend time with each other and with staff as well as providing privacy. The quality of the environment conveys to young people that they are valued. One of the downstairs rooms is currently being converted into a self-contained bedsit for one young person. This will provide her with the opportunity to further develop the skills she will need when she leaves care and also gain a flavour of what it means to live independently. The registered provider has fully involved the young person in this work. The young person said, 'I'm really pleased about the move to the semi-independent bedroom. I've chosen the colours (pink and blue) and also the style of kitchen units. When it is all ready I'm going shopping to choose some pictures and mirrors.'

Keeping children and young people safe good

The home is fully aware of its responsibilities to keep young people safe and its policies and procedures in this area are effective. Even the most recently appointed members of staff have received training in safeguarding and know how to respond if a young person expresses a concern.

Young people's behaviour towards each other is at times inconsiderate and can be intimidating or aggressive. Staff act quickly to protect young people in these situations and prevent more serious bullying. As a result, young people trust the staff to keep them safe, both in the home and outside it. However, some staff have an incomplete understanding of the complexities of bullying and ways in which they can support young people to deal with it. Each young person has a risk assessment which addresses bullying. These are generic and do not take account of factors specific to each young person. These shortfalls limit the ability of staff to deal with the issue as effectively as they might.

There are very few occasions when young people go missing. When a pattern of one young person failing to return from contact began to be established, staff acted promptly. They worked with the social worker and young person to review their contact plan and as a result the problem has been resolved.

For most of the time young people behave very well. Strong and positive relationships between staff and young people underpin the routine of the home which provides young people with structure. A social worker said, 'When I was placing the young person I met with the manager. We agreed at the outset that for her, the adults needed to be in control. This is in order to provide her with good care

and nurturing. I'm pleased to say that he and the staff have applied this with excellent results.' Because of this proactive approach, the use of sanctions is infrequent. However, the record of sanctions does not always show that a particular sanction has been evaluated for its effectiveness. This means that staff cannot know whether different ways of changing young people's behaviour might be more productive.

On occasions, staff use physical restraint to control young people when their behaviour causes harm to themselves or others, or significant damage to property. However, it is commendable that the use of this measure has declined over recent months. Any incident of restraint is followed up by a conversation with the young person so that they can understand the reason why it happened. Staff are also debriefed informally by a senior or the Registered Manager, to explore whether there are any lessons to be learned from the incident. However, these discussions are not recorded as having taken place, nor are incidents of restraint followed up in formal staff supervision. There is therefore no evidence that staff have had the opportunity to reflect on the restraint and what led up to it, and therefore improve their practice.

Recruitment procedures are thorough and safe; the vetting of staff ensures that only people who are suitable to work with children are employed. There is, however, a minor shortfall in the keeping of records. Although photographic evidence of identification is seen at interview, in one case a copy was not kept on the personnel file.

Leadership and management

adequate

The Registered Manager was registered in April 2013. He is not appropriately qualified but is currently enrolled on a training course which will provide the required qualification. The Registered Manager has fully addressed both recommendations made at the last inspection. Young people's case files are clear about who is responsible for giving consent for medical treatment, and also contain parental consent for first aid. This ensures that young people can receive any necessary medical treatment promptly and with due regard for who holds parental responsibility. The track record of management since the home opened indicates that the home remedies shortfalls identified in inspection and so has capacity for further improvement.

The home's Statement of Purpose accurately describes the services provided. This helps social workers and parents in making a choice about whether to refer a particular young person. However, some details required by regulation are missing. Also, the Registered Manager has not sent Ofsted a copy of the latest revision of the Statement. This limits the scrutiny that the regulator is able to exercise.

The excellent condition of the home, the adequacy of staffing, and the range of activities available, indicates that the service is adequately resourced. The home's

development plan also provides evidence of the home's financial viability. This gives assurance that the placements of young people are secure.

Both internal and external monitoring of the home provides reasonable oversight of its operation and performance. The registered provider has commissioned a new independent visitor whose relationship to the provider satisfies regulatory requirements.

The number of staff is adequate to ensure that young people receive the appropriate level of supervision and support at all times. The great majority of staff are qualified to the required level. Those that are not are studying for the qualification. Staff receive training in relevant and necessary areas, such as safeguarding and first aid. However, the Registered Manager does not routinely evaluate the learning needs of the staff group in order to identify skill deficiencies and target appropriate training. This means that there are areas of expertise that staff do not have. For example, staff have not undertaken any training in anti-bullying as described elsewhere in this report.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.