

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	24/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC453726
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Aston Children's Care Limited
Registered provider address	73 Dudley Road, Dudley, West Midlands DY3 1TF

Responsible individual	Mahesh Mehan
Registered manager	Terence Bull
Inspector	Julia Wright

Inspection date	24/08/2016
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	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	Good

SC453726

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people are safe and settled and enjoy their lives at the home.
- Young people have very positive relationships with staff.
- Individualised care planning is in place.
- All young people are in education placements and they make progress with their educational achievements.
- Young people enjoy a range of activities of their choice.
- The home works well with other professionals and young people's families.
- Staff work very well together and receive good support and guidance from managers.
- There are a small number of shortfalls in practice. Staff communication with young people who have communication difficulties needs further development. When young people are missing or have absences without permission, an independent person does not always visit them. Not all records are cross referenced in a way that is clear to all. Young people's progress with learning independence skills is not always well recorded by staff. The safe area risk assessment does not include all significant risks in the locality.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
7: In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, the registered person must— (2)(a) ensure that staff— (ii) help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; (iv) regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care; (vi) help each child to prepare for any review of the child's relevant plans and to make the child's views, wishes and feelings known for the purposes of that review; (2)(b)(i) ensure that each child is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives; (ii) has access to the home's children's guide, and the home's complaints procedure, when the child's placement in the home is agreed and throughout the child's stay in the home; and (iii) is given appropriate advocacy support.	30/09/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information must always be recorded in a way that is helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- Ensure that staff help each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to another placement or adult care or to live independently. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27)
- Ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them, with particular reference to the safe area risk assessment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph, 9.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is privately operated and provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/11/2015	Full	Good
12/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
02/07/2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Good
Young people make good progress as a result of living at the home because they benefit from well-planned care, which is closely monitored. Managers and staff ensure that the service adapts to young people's changing needs and priorities. A small, stable staff team that takes time to get to know each individual, understand their needs and work well together to best meet them supports young people. Consequently, young people's emotional well-being, sense of self-esteem and confidence grows. Young people gain in maturity, self-respect and resilience as they understand that staff caring for them listen to them and respect their views and opinions. All young people attend school and education placements. For one young person who had been out of school for a long time prior to moving to the home, significant improvements have been made. Education was sought by staff at the home and secured quickly. The young person was successfully introduced to his placement remains engaged in education and is making progress. Other young people are in full-time school placements and their attendance and punctuality are very good. Young people are supported to achieve and progress. Staff prioritise young people's contact with their families. This includes those who live at a distance from their family. For some young people, contact has increased and one young person sees a sibling as well as other family members, leading to an improvement in his emotional health and general contentedness. Another young person has increased friendships with peers. He is learning how to manage friendships and the skills necessary to maintain them, improving his self-esteem. All young people attend routine health appointments and where necessary, more specialised therapeutic services are sought. Young people learn about healthy lifestyles including healthy eating. They take part in a range of activities promoting health and enjoyment while living at the home. Young people actively participate in regular meetings at the home. Most are able to express their views and wishes in meaningful ways. Some have difficulty expressing their views verbally and picture symbols help this process. In addition, staff know the young people extremely well. They observe and act upon any changes in presentation or mood, to find the underlying cause. Some young people may benefit from further exploration of suitable communication tools to aid their ability to express their views and wishes further and the allocation of an advocate. The children's guide is long and detailed and some young people may struggle to understand the information. This means that young people do not have all the information necessary to understand how the home works, or who to contact in an	

emergency.

Young people live in a very attractive, well-furnished and well-maintained home. Young people personalise their rooms according to their tastes. Staff have provided some sensory equipment for one young person and this helps him to relax and unwind prior to settling in the evening.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people say that they feel safe at the home. Staff ensure that appropriate and speedy steps are taken whenever there is concern about a young person's safety. For example, when there were concerns about a young person's going missing or criminalised behaviour, staff ensured that prompt and effective multi-agency responses minimised these risks, improving young people's safety and security. Caring relationships between young people and staff promote a positive atmosphere in the home. Staff work very well together to reinforce boundaries and young people respond positively to the clear structure and response of staff. Staff consistently focus on promoting positive behaviour and young people receive praise and rewards as a result of this approach. When young people's behaviour falls short of expected standards, staff talk to them calmly and patiently. Staff recognise triggers of behavioural escalation and are able to step in and de-escalate situations. Young people develop increased understanding about socially acceptable ways to behave towards others, improving citizenship skills. In addition, the number of incidents relating to some young people has decreased, contributing to a calm and welcoming feel in the home. A social worker commented, 'The home is well able to manage his, at times, unpredictable behaviour. They know him very well, and he is making good progress.' Managers have developed strategies to ensure that they maintain effective communication with other agencies. For example, staff complete a home to school communication sheet daily, so that school is prepared if a young person has had a difficult morning. Equally, school updates staff at the home as to how the young person's day has progressed and if there is anything that staff need to be aware of. Consequently, young people are supported throughout the day and evening as all adults are informed about their activities and demeanour during the day. Managers and staff update risk assessments and young people's plans in line with their organisational policy. This ensures that young people's changing needs are understood and any risks effectively managed by staff. Managers have reviewed the safe area risk assessment but this does not include all risks in the locality, for example, risks of busy roads and the steps that staff take to minimise these. This potentially hinders staff being sufficiently informed about risks in the environment of the home and their ability to take appropriate steps to fully protect young	

people.

Staff take the necessary steps to ensure that they know where young people are at all times. Staff talk to all young people in one-to-one sessions, reinforcing the need to prioritise their safety. Young people reported as missing from care do not always have independent interviews when they return, as recommended by statutory guidance. Young people may miss opportunities to talk to an independent adult if they are worried or concerned about any aspect of their life. In addition, staff recording of physical interventions do not always match and reflect the same incident potentially causing confusion for staff and young people alike.

	Judgment grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager has been in post since March 2014. He has a diploma level 5 in residential childcare leadership and management. The registered manager provides extremely effective management in the home. He is well supported by a deputy manager and senior team. Managers prioritise the needs and progress of young people in their care and strive to ensure that young people have all the support that they need to make sustained progress in all areas of their development. This includes making sure that young people receive services identified to meet their needs. A social worker praised the staff's proactive stance in this respect, 'staff and the young person contact me if there is an omission.' The home operates within the aims and objectives detailed in their statement of purpose. Consequently, placing authorities and other agencies understand how young people's needs will be met. A social worker praised the service, 'Staff work hard to get to know young people, and there is good evidence of multi-agency working to promote his needs.' This collaborative approach with families and professionals to meeting young people's needs supports their well-being and development. Staff said that they are well supported by managers. New staff receive a comprehensive induction, meaning that they feel prepared to meet the needs of young people in their care. All staff undertake a wide ranging training package of core training, including safeguarding and first aid, as well as more specific training, related to young people's individual needs such as understanding autism spectrum disorder. All staff have either gained their diploma 3 qualification in caring for children and young people in residential care, are undertaking it or will be enrolled once their probationary period has finished. As a result, staff are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet young people's wide-ranging needs. Staff receive regular supervision, which includes reflection on young people's needs and their development and training plans. When they have completed 12 months employment, staff complete an appraisal with managers, identifying, for example, staff training, development and areas to progress. This helps to enable staff to	

provide the best possible care to the young people that they look after.

Managers regularly monitor the quality of care provided by the home. Monitoring tools identify patterns and trends and highlight any areas of development needed. Managers work closely with the independent visitor and they welcome scrutiny and suggestions of how to improve the service offered in the home for the benefit of all young people in their care. The registered manager knows the strengths and areas for development in the home. The latter includes improving communication tools and the quality of independence work with young people and general enhancements to the home environment. These highlight the managers' commitment to continually improving the quality of care offered to young people.

Two recommendations were made at the last inspection. One related to improving communication methods with some young people. Work has been undertaken in this area, with some documentation presented in picture symbols, for example, to aid young people's understanding of the information. Further work is needed to enable young people with communication difficulties to play a full part in the life of the home, to express their views and, for example, to have help to prepare for and understand the nature of their looked after reviews. A second recommendation referred to the quality of work undertaken with young people to prepare them for independence. Not all young people are supported by staff to participate in the home's independence package, meaning that opportunities to try new tasks and evidence of their progress in achieving new goals are lost.

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'.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*, which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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, workbased learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It inspects services for looked after children 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 4234, 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 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 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: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016