

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	20 April 2016
Unique reference number	SC456911
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Sally Nurse
Inspector	Michael Mulvaney

Inspection date	20 April 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Declined in 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	Good

SC456911

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children are making good progress because they live in this home.
- The staff group meets regularly to review and assess risk factors for the children. These assessments inform care plans.
- Children have made cautious steps in returning to education. The support from staff is helping to re-establish their educational targets. Teachers are confident that the children can improve on their current grades.
- Staff reward positive behaviour. As a result, behaviour has improved.
- Children have developed positive friendship groups in the local community.
- The staff are supporting the children to begin to develop age-appropriate self-help and independent living skills.
- Staff receive good quality regular supervision. This emphasises the safeguarding of children. It also ensures that staff are monitoring the progress that children make.
- There is a small core group of staff. They are committed to providing the best quality care that they can.
- The provider uses agency staff to bolster this small core group of staff. The provider has not completed an evaluation of the impact of the use of agency staff on the children and the effect on their progress.
- Some children go missing from this home. Staff follow the protocol and contact the police and other agencies to enable them to return quickly.
- The manager has not completed an assessment of the incidents of children going missing. Therefore, she is not aware of how the practice of the staff may need to be improved.
- Some children have not had routine health checks, such as their looked after children's medical, despite the efforts of the manager and staff. Consequently, there is a lack of clarity about meeting their long-term health needs.

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

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that staff encourage children to take a proactive role in looking after their day-to-day health and well-being. With particular regard to attending routine and looked after children's medical appointments ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations', page 34, paragraph 7.10).
- Ensure that an evaluation is completed of all incidents of going missing to identify any gaps in training skills or knowledge of staff ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations', page 45, paragraph 9.31).
- Ensure that there is careful monitoring of the use of agency staff to ensure that children receive continuity of care ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations', page 54, paragraph 10.16).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home is able to provide care and accommodation for up to six children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
7 January 2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
7 October 2015	Full	Good
20 January 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
19 November 2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Children make good progress because they live in this home. The manager encourages staff to reflect on how they work alongside children to help them make the most progress that they can. Risk assessments are completed and included into the care plans that staff use to work with the children. Consequently, staff have the most relevant information they need. As a result, they know the children's needs and can respond to them quickly. This has helped to improve relationships between children and the core staff. Direct work has seen an increase in children's confidence and an improvement in their social skills. As a result, children who previously felt anxious about going out into the community have made friends in the local area. Some children have made tentative steps towards returning to education. These children had not been to school for some considerable time. As a result, some children have very basic literacy and numeracy skills. The staff are working with tutors to help children to regain confidence in their learning skills. The tutor uses a number of creative methods, including using the children's interest in Marvel comics to engage them in reading and creative skills. At present, the tutor visits the home for three hours each day. Other children have made a positive start to attending a local school, full time. Teachers are confident that the children can improve on their current grades up to a strong GCSE grade C or perhaps higher. Tutors and school staff speak highly of the staff in the home and their commitment to the children's education. A school staff member commented that staff, 'do all they can to meet his needs around education, they cannot be faulted.' There are regular meetings with children, at which their views are gathered and considered. Activities such as visiting a trampoline centre and motor sports have happened because of this consultation. These meetings also inform the children of any changes within the home. Staff use these meetings to celebrate achievements, as well as to look for new ideas that the children may have for their leisure time. Recent holiday arrangements were organised through one such meeting. Children and staff planned two weeks of activities, from Segway adventures and theme park days to Easter egg hunting and a baking competition. Children commented on how much they 'enjoyed the Easter holiday arrangements' and would 'want to do more activities like that'. Staff support the children in maintaining positive contact with their families. This has seen an improvement in both the nature of and the level of contact for those children whose assessed needs are to have more contact. This helps to promote familial relationships and a better understanding of their backgrounds.	

At present, the children in this home are not old enough to be on pathway plans. The staff are supporting them to begin to develop age-appropriate knowledge. For example, some are learning to budget for clothing by shopping around and using the internet to locate the best value for money. Staff encourage children to tidy and clean their rooms as a first stage to independence.

There is a small core group of staff. They remain committed to providing the best care that they can. Staff have reflected on their management of these children. In particular, staff have developed skills when communicating with children where children's behaviour heightens and they become anxious quickly. This has helped to de-escalate situations without the need for physical intervention and has seen a reduction in damage to the home. Observations of staff showed that they remained calm and confident when working with children.

The provider supplements this small core of staff with agency staff. The manager completes suitable checks on the agency staff members to ensure that they have the training required to work in the home. But for the children, it means a lack of regular carers who they know and trust. There is a range of approaches from these staff, which can lead to inconsistency regarding the quality of care. The provider has not completed an evaluation of the impact of the use of agency staff on the children and the effect on their progress. The manager has attempted to get the same agency staff to cover shifts, so that they gain experience of working with the children, but this has not always been possible. The provider recently recruited two full-time members of staff who have started work, with three more permanent staff in the process of completing checks. When this recruitment is complete, and the staff are in situ, the need for the agency staff will reduce.

Staff try to support the children to maintain contact with professionals who will support them to meet their health needs. Some children are reluctant to participate in routine health checks, such as their looked after children's medical. This check has not taken place for one child. As a result, there is a lack of clarity about meeting their long-term health needs. The provider is considering alternative ways to ensure that these checks are completed. The manager has alerted the placing authorities to this shortfall to seek their guidance and involvement.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The manager encourages staff to reflect regularly on the risks for the children. She uses the staff meetings to gather the views of the staff on the risks for the children and through this, develops and updates their risk assessments. For example, one child was visiting a neighbour. Staff quickly established the identity of this person and through working with the police ensured that it was safe for the visits to take place. As a result, he has developed a safe and positive relationship with this child. Some children go missing from this home. When they do, staff follow the protocol	

and contact the police and other agencies to alert them to this. When children are absent, staff go looking in the local community to locate them. Staff have been proactive with the police in highlighting areas where they think the children might be. This has helped to broaden the intelligence base for all agencies in the area. They have also worked with members of the local community to include them in a wider safeguarding network. The police consider that staff are doing 'all they can' to work with the children and reduce the risks. The manager has not completed an evaluation of the incidents of children going missing. As a result, she is not fully aware of how the practice of staff may need to be improved or what factors may need to be considered in reducing the incidents of children going missing. Direct work sessions take place when children return, to identify any issues or concerns which may lead to them going missing. The manager has requested that local authorities complete their return interviews in line with the protocol.

Staff reward positive behaviour. Children receive extra activity money or trips out when behaviour has improved. Negative consequences, such as missing out on a trip, occur if they act in an anti-social or inappropriate manner. Trained staff intervene to prevent children from harming themselves or others. This training also highlights approaches to de-escalate situations. Staff use reflective practice to learn how to manage these situations. As a result, there have been no physical interventions since January 2016. These approaches have led to improvements in children's behaviour and a calmer atmosphere in the home.

Staff are able to relate the safeguarding policy to practical case examples. They are alert to the signs of exploitation in the home and in the community. There is regular discussion in staff meetings about safeguarding matters, which keeps staff informed of any concerns. The manager has a good working relationship with local safeguarding officers. Placing social workers have no concerns about the safeguarding practices in the home.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager has been in post for two years. She is yet to complete her national vocational qualification level 5. She does hold a BTEC National Diploma in caring services, along with the national vocational qualification level 3 in health and social care. She motivates the staff through good quality, regular supervision, which emphasises safeguarding, and monitoring the progress that the children make. Staff describe the induction and training as very good. The provider is re-evaluating the induction to ensure that it provides new staff with the skills to work with the children. Those staff appointed before April 2014 have completed the national vocational qualification level 3 in health and social care. All the recently appointed staff have begun this course. As a result, staff with suitable skills work with these children.	

The provider has recently reviewed the statement of purpose. The regular monitoring from the independent visitor and the manager ensures that the practice in the home is in line with this document. The provider's in-house therapy services support the work of the staff. The manager has been able to monitor the progress of the children through a range of processes. The in-house support helps and guides the manager to ensure the maintenance of good quality care.

There are good relationships with the placing authorities. A placing authority manager commented that the staff have, 'Been proactive in working with the other agencies to protect and promote his welfare needs.' The manager ensures that staff complete regular reports, which are sent out to placing authorities. These help to keep the focus of the work on the outcomes described in the care plans. Children have made progress because of the care they receive in this home. Some have been able to engage with education and others have developed self-care skills and better-managed personal health matters, which they had previously struggled with. Some have developed friends in the community; others have increased their level of contact with their families.

The manager understands the key issues in the home. The provider has a strategy for the recruitment and retention of new staff. Developing the skill set of this group and supporting the children to make further progress are the significant areas for this coming year. The manager considers that the staff commitment to the children and their willingness to build on their relationships is the central strength in the home.

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