

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	02/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC472139
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Amegreen Children's Services Limited
Registered person address	2 Granary Court, Fair Oak Green, Stratfield Saye, READING, RG7 2DL

Responsible individual	Gary Carlin
Registered manager	Adam Law (acting)
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	02/09/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged Good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has declined in effectiveness. A new person has recently taken over the management of this and another home in close proximity but has yet to be registered. He has been making an application to Ofsted and undertaking a level 5 qualification but is not yet fully aware of the statutory requirements and responsibilities laid on a registered person. These include having a behaviour management policy, a location risk assessment and workforce plan. Monitoring has not been as rigorous as should be the case with a health and safety inspection last conducted in May 2015. In addition the schedule does not include checking garden play equipment. Almost a fortnight after a young person broke two small panes in his bedroom window they are awaiting replacement. This and casements handles being crudely screwed down to prevent them from being opened detract from the homely nature of the room. Children's files do not have some information that staff use to inform their work, including up to date '24 hour therapeutic plans' and behavioural / physical intervention assessments. However, missing minutes and plans are sought from local authorities and have prompted their submission. An exception is child protection conference minutes and plans; one young person is subject to a plan, but this is not obvious from files and the manager was unaware. Internal compliance processes and visits by the independent person have not identified gaps in meeting statutory obligations or omissions in regard to monitoring the home and information held on children's files. Key work sessions tend to be informal due to the needs of the children but are unrecorded, meaning developments are not available to all staff and information potentially lost. New admissions have been taken without full written assessments but are proving successful. Up-to-date placement plans are available; they are thorough documents other than not reflecting the very good practice regarding sibling contact. Staff support this well, including facilitating a holiday for one young	

person together with his brother.

One young person said he particularly liked the quiet and settled atmosphere of the home. Incidents of damaging property and of physical interventions are reducing, partly a result of young people feeling comfortable enough with staff to ask for hugs when distressed rather than displaying it in behaviour.

Physical interventions that have occurred are recorded well; children make written comment on some and all are monitored by managers in a timely manner. One includes a statement to a child that he would be reincarnated, made by a staff member, impressing a religious belief that he did not hold. This was not commented on in the subsequent evaluation.

Staff demonstrate a close knowledge of the children and have high aspirations, particularly in regard to their emotional and physical wellbeing. One spoke of the need to be highly attuned to each child to meet individual needs, another of understanding how to respond so as to de-escalate difficult situations. This 'attunement' fits well with the ethos described in the Statement of Purpose, although a thorough understanding of the 'Systems Centered' approach is not as evident.

An experienced core staff team have a balance of skills in that contribute to a strong sense of cohesiveness and ability to rely on each other. They work together and ensure a common approach to behaviour management and daily routines. The children benefit from this stability, responding positively to boundaries; transitions to and from school and at bedtime are largely without incident.

Children and young people are being consulted about revising the Young Person's Guide to make it a more relevant document. Currently it does not include information about advocacy services and the children spoken to do not have an understanding of their role.

There are interesting and potentially helpful developments, including a drama class begun by a member of staff to help the expression of emotion and building of confidence. Rewards for behaviour or engaging in constructive pastimes have been given over the summer and are successful in re-enforcing progress being made.

The introduction of consultation initiatives by the manager has not yet been established. A wishes and feelings box for children to post comments and complaints has been decorated by them, but was placed on a difficult to reach shelf. A questionnaire for children to complete has been devised but not printed off for use. Children's views are not therefore formally captured. They are taken into account and acted on though, with a request for a particular meal being cooked on the day of the inspection and the bean bag asked for by one young person being followed up.

Despite the manager not spending as much time in this home as the other he is responsible for, staff say he is available to them when needed. At the same time

they feel self-sufficient and not all believe they require leadership. One commented that supervision is 'regular, too regular!' A skilled staff team are therefore delivering good quality care to children, but important omissions are undermining the effective running of the home that will have longer term implications if not rectified.

Information about this children's home

This privately owned service accommodates up to two children or young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home uses 'Systems-Centered' methods of working with children and young people who have experienced developmental trauma. It has access to equine therapy with the organisation's own horses.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/03/2015	Full	Good
14/01/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/11/2013	Full	Good

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
In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard the registered person is required to: ensure that staff understand and apply the home's statement of purpose – in particular the specific models of work employed (Regulation 6 (2) (i))	
In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard the registered person is required to: ensure that each child has access to the home's children's guide, as defined in Regulation 2 (Regulation 7 (b)(ii))	
In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered person is required to: ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health – particularly in undertaking regular inspections that include garden equipment (Regulation 12 (2)(d))	
The registered person must prepare a placement plan that sets out arrangements made for contact with the child's parents and relatives, which includes siblings. (Regulation 18 (5)(c))	
The registered person must prepare and implement a behaviour management policy which sets out how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home. (Regulation 35 (1))	
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises at least once a year. (Regulation 46)	

Recommendations

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

- Children's homes will be homely, domestic environments, which includes repairs being carried out in a timely manner and modifications completed attractively (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations 3.9, page 15)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations 10.8, page 53)
- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff receive supervision which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. In particular, this must ensure that personal views and beliefs are not impressed on children as facts. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations 13.2, page 61)
- Case records must be kept up-to-date and signed and dated by the author of each entry, including records of key work sessions (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations 14.3, page 62)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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Manchester
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