

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	12/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC472139
Type of inspection	Full
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
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	12/01/2016
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

SC472139

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- This is a very settled home in which children trust adults to care and make good decisions for them. Staff are impressively consistent in their approach so that expectations of behaviour are clear and positive attitudes and conduct are rewarded.
- Children are making good progress against most if not all areas of development, especially in managing their emotions. Consequently very few incidents of disruptive behaviour occur.
- Relationships are forged that allow children to overcome previous experiences and develop more successful ways of dealing with life's difficulties. They now seek reassurance and comfort from staff rather than resorting to aggressive or destructive behaviour.
- The manager and staff have made excellent links with education professionals, both in schools and local authorities, helping children to access and benefit from the best available provision. Educational activities such as regular reading are promoted too. Young people have, therefore, maintained or increased their academic attainment and have excellent attendance records.
- Healthy choices are promoted, particularly in regard to the encouragement of physical exercise. Children are also helped to participate in activities of their choosing and to develop interests, so gaining a sense of personal accomplishment whether that is identifying birds in the garden or scoring goals on a football pitch.
- Family members and professionals comment favourably about the homely atmosphere staff have created and the benefits of this. One said 'it is a family place and nice for children to be' and that 'staff are welcoming and easy to speak to'.
- Work is put into maintaining and promoting family relationships and contact is facilitated so that children get the most out seeing parents, siblings and grandparents.

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))	31 March 2016
Monitoring and surveillance should be no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy, and therefore be regularly reviewed. (Regulation 24 (1)(d))	12 February 2016
The registered person must ensure that a record is made within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control or discipline; within 48 hours that the user has been spoken to about the measure; and signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days an addition is made to the record that the child has been spoken to about the measure; in particular, records must show that these timescales have been adhered to. (Regulation 35 (3)(a-c))	12 February 2016
The registered person must maintain case records for each child which are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(b))	12 February 2016

Recommendations

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

- The home is required to prepare and implement a behaviour management policy that should describe the home's approach to promoting positive behaviour. This policy should address general principles for behaviour management. (Guide to Children's Homes Regulations 9.33 and 9.35, page 46)

Full report

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-Centred' 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
02/09/2015	CH - Interim	declined in effectiveness
26/03/2015	CH - Full	Good
14/01/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
04/11/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
The manager and staff have established a settled and calm home in which children are learning how to regulate their emotions and manage their behaviour. This is largely achieved though the relationships establish by staff and the consistent approach to expected standards of behaviour. They were observed to readily comment to children when these slipped and of strategies they could use to manage frustrations or provocations. In this way nothing escalated beyond a jibe or cross word between young people. The home's ethos is built around an understanding of the impact of early trauma on children's development and particular methods to help children recover from the effect of this. Some staff referred to 'developmental trauma' as a useful model but when asked how this informed their work gave examples of good practice – but not of the approach. The therapeutic methods described in the statement of purpose have yet to be embedded in practice and may explain why one professional said, 'we were told it is a therapeutic placement but it has not been made clear to us what that is'. Family members commented on how the home is 'clean and spacious' and 'the staff welcoming'. The appearance of the property has continued to improve and as children's behaviour has improved the focus has moved from continual repairs to enhancing the appearance. This is particularly so of bedrooms where children have chosen themes or favourite colours. Staff have added personal touches such as making a duvet cover from material a child chose. The overall impression was let down by the continued presence of window latches ungainly screwed down, as mentioned in the last report. Arrangements to have these replaced were made during the inspection. Care and support is offered in a way that meets individual needs, based on abilities and preferences; for example, a young person who likes sport is taken to football training and matches; the other, who enjoys practical things, has just had carpentry lessons set up. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged, particularly the promotion of physical exercise. During the inspection a young person expressed a wish to go swimming more often and it was organised for the next evening. This way the opportunity was grasped and the young person had staff's interest in his welfare and enjoyment re-enforced. Each young person has a personalised copy of the children's guide, which now	

covers all the issues required. The young people told me that they could raise any concerns they had with staff or the manager. Examples of how suggestions and ideas had been taken up including activities and menus were given. They don't therefore tend to use more formal means of communicating wishes and feelings and no complaints have been made by either child.

This is not a reason to ignore the proper recording of recognised means of consulting with young people, though; key work sessions and house meetings are infrequently written up and are limited in what they cover when they are. Such occasions can be informally convened or be made up of several conversations over an evening but should cover agreed agenda items and be formally recorded.

Contact with family is not only supported but actively promoted, with the initiative for one child to meet with extended members coming from the manager. Staff were complimented on how they have facilitated sessions, negotiated through difficulties and had a 'no problem' attitude by professionals and families alike. Plans to increase the level of unsupervised time for one child have been successfully implemented and now staff just drop him off and pick him up, making it a more natural and enjoyable experience for all.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Considerable effort is put into supporting education by the manager who was personally praised by professionals: 'he attends every Personal Education Plan meeting, is a brilliant advocate and has an excellent relationship with the child.' Young people's commitment to school was seen as 'partly down to the ethos of the home.' This has extended to inviting teachers for tea visits to help children establish better relationships with them, particularly in the run up to transitions. As a result children have excellent attendance records and are achieving targeted levels. Professionals spoke of children 'responding to the boundaries put in place' and family members have seen 'definite progress', with one commenting that a young person who has joined a football club 'is handled brilliantly as we were unable to get him into a club before', adding 'he is able to control himself better now.' The quality of relationships with staff and the high degree of supervision ensures children are safe, with the need for sanctions very low and no incidents of restraints or children going missing since the last inspection. Procedures are in place, though, for such eventualities. That for missing children should reference	

the need to request return to care interviews from the local authority.

Children undertake self-care tasks and undertake age-appropriate chores particularly around meal times, developing a sense of being able to contribute to the life of the home and their own positive experiences.

The format of records of sanctions does not currently demonstrate that regulations regarding timescales for staff and young people being consulted are being met and some lack the detail so that exactly what behaviour has occurred is unclear. The manager monitors their use, however, to ensure fairness and effectiveness in a timely way and helpfully comments on practice.

Silent door alarms are used to alert staff if children leave their rooms at night. However, these should be subject to periodic review and not used as a matter of routine.

A rigorous induction programme is in place for new recruits (although no new staff from outside the organisation have joined since the last inspection); one said she regarded it as 'fantastic... the toughest I have experienced' and as a result felt very prepared for her role. Comprehensive training is provided for all staff, although sessional workers have not undertaken a child sexual exploitation course and trainers for the 'protect' initiative are still in the process of being identified. These are low risk areas for children at the home.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
The manager has recently been registered by Ofsted for this and another of the provider's homes close by. He is undertaking the Level 5 diploma qualification and is on track to complete within three year of being appointed to the role. This dual management arrangement affords some advantages such as joint training sessions and drawing on the experience of staff in each establishment. The potential advantage of learning from each home's inspections has not been realised and so requirements regarding review of surveillance devices and recording of sanctions are repeated for this one There are disadvantages to the arrangement that need to be overcome, particularly that joint team meeting records are not available in this home and so not accessible. Staff spoken to do not think their manager being on two sites is an issue; 'we can always get hold of him', as one said, and another commented that senior managers in the organisation were also approachable. The provider makes all policies for running the home available on line; one for	

behaviour management is stored there but is difficult for staff to navigate. Specific guidance on the promotion of positive behaviour could not be found during the inspection and at least one link led to out of date documentation.

These deficiencies do not have an immediate detrimental effect on children and the manager is aware of them. However, as he has only begun addressing them improvement has not been achieved.

A workforce plan and a location risk assessment are both now in place. The latter particularly is a comprehensive document, providing a helpful overview of the potential risks and benefits of the home being situated where it is. The advantages of being in a rural setting are well exploited whether by walks in the woods, bird watching or going to the stables that are connected with the organisation.

In the areas that have a direct impact on children's welfare there is evidence of a significant positive effect. The manager and staff have good relationships with other professionals, including social workers, independent reviewing officers, virtual school staff and teachers. One commented that 'staff are supportive, on the ball and chase things up if they don't happen'. There is considerable evidence that late documents such as statutory review minutes are chased. Well-written reports are produced for those reviews and actions made are followed up in a timely fashion.

Placement plans are regularly reviewed; detail aims and objectives for the young people describe potential issues and give strategies to manage them. Behaviour management plans are also frequently updated; they are clear, comprehensive and proving successful.

The comprehensive assessment model introduced during the last year remains at a preliminary stage for children in the home but is gathering useful baseline information to judge progress against.

Staff generally think highly of the manager and of the organisation as a whole. One said 'I like what they stand for and I like what they do', a sentiment echoed by the professionals and family members consulted in the inspection.

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 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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