

SC472139

Registered provider: Amegreen Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned service accommodates up to two children or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. There are two other homes run by the same provider in the local area.

The registered manager has been in post since December 2017.

Inspection dates: 14 to 15 August 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 5 September 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/09/2017	Full	Good
13/12/2016	Full	Good
03/08/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/01/2016	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- Staff must 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. This includes supporting the child to develop emotional and mental resilience to cope without the home's support. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.29)
In particular, staff should think beyond the safe, contained, highly supervised environment of the home when assessing whether young people are vulnerable or at risk.
- The provider should improve the quality of the young people's residential care plans to better reflect the basis of their care. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.1)
In particular, these plans should identify specific, realistic and achievable goals for young people, with a focus on what success will look like.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people make exceptional and sustained progress from their starting points in all areas of their development. They benefit from positive relationships with a small, stable staff team. Staff provide nurturing, thoughtful care and demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the needs of the young people living in the home. A placing social worker commented, 'This is the best home I use.'

The young people in the home have 100% attendance in education. Staff work closely with schools to ensure that young people receive the support that they need to make progress in their studies and their social development.

Young people enjoy a wide range of constructive activities and are encouraged to make healthy lifestyle choices. Staff carefully monitor the health of young people. They work closely with health practitioners and keep health concerns under regular review. A parent was pleased that staff had helped her son to reduce his medication. She commented that he now 'has more life in him'. She feels that he now has a healthier appetite, has more confidence and is learning to be more independent.

Staff go to great lengths to support young people to sustain and develop positive relationships with their families and friends. A parent reported how much she appreciated the fact that staff supported her son to travel a long distance from the home in order to spend weekends with his grandparents. Friends are encouraged to visit and spend time in the home.

The therapeutic model of care that underpins practice in the home is extremely effective. Staff understand the journey into care of each young person and consider carefully how their past experiences may have an effect on their ability to thrive. Interventions are thoughtful and are informed by input from a team of highly experienced, suitably qualified specialists. A clinical psychologist described how well staff are able to reflect on their practice in order to understand how young people experience care.

Young people have a strong sense of belonging and live as a 'family' in the home. Staff work hard to create a normal, homely environment. Young people contribute to the running of the home in practical ways, such as doing chores and helping with meals. Their views and ideas are valued and staff are responsive when young people share their wishes and feelings about how they are cared for.

In summary, staff are able to deliver care with skill, compassion and common sense. Young people thrive on this and are able to make mistakes and enjoy success in a secure and loving environment.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Young people feel safe within the home and the local area. Staff are aware of the vulnerabilities and potential risks facing each young person. They provide high levels of supervision and support to reduce these risks. Incidents of concern are rare, and when they occur, staff take prompt and effective action to keep young people safe.

The young people have significantly reduced behaviours that had been putting themselves and others at risk of harm. Placing social workers and parents reported that young people are more able to talk through difficulties and share their feelings. This means that they are able to form and sustain positive relationships with their peers, staff and teachers. This significantly improves their life chances as they move on to adult life and independence.

Staff regularly meet with therapeutic practitioners to reflect on practice. They are able to learn from challenging situations and have excellent insight into how their actions influence young people in the home. In one example, a member of staff was able to identify that a particular form of words was unhelpful. He was able to reflect on this with the young person and share learning about how they could both do things differently to reduce the risk of incidents occurring in the future.

Staff reported that they have excellent support and that managers in the home model good behaviour by listening and caring about them. Staff are able to reflect on the emotional impact of their work. They are constantly vigilant and mindful to avoid interventions and behaviours that may unintentionally replicate or reinforce feelings of rejection and loss in young people. In practice, young people benefit considerably from the care and support that they receive.

Staff seek to 'catch young people being good' and are able to frame challenging

behaviours in constructive ways. For example, when one young person recently started to resist boundaries and argued more with staff, this was seen in a positive light. Staff feel that this young person is becoming more assertive and more able to say no; this is seen as an important skill and a protective factor as he moves towards independence.

The home is in an isolated location in the countryside and public transport links are not straightforward. This reduces the opportunity for young people to take acceptable risks by exploring the local town with reduced levels of supervision. It would be helpful for staff to consider how to broaden the young people's experiences of living in the wider community. This would better help them survive and thrive when they move away from the home into less sheltered settings.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager of the home is suitably experienced and holds a level 5 diploma in managing residential childcare. Since taking on the role in December 2017, he has built upon the success and excellent standards of care that were evident at the last full inspection in September 2017. The areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been addressed. Practice has improved in relation to helping young people to develop independence skills and the home now has a clear workforce development plan. The young people's guide to the home has also been updated in consultation with them, and it is now more accessible.

Staff appreciate the knowledge, support and commitment of the registered manager. He is accessible to them and to the young people living in the home. He has excellent oversight of practice and understands how young people are experiencing and benefiting from the care and support that they receive.

The registered manager is ambitious and has high expectations of success for young people. He leads by example as a reflective practitioner and is able to acknowledge mistakes and learn from them. He works effectively with the members of the therapeutic support team to ensure that their insight informs practice. This means that staff are thoughtful about what they do and constantly review the impact of their support to ensure that young people have a positive experience of care and make progress. Practice could be strengthened further in this area by making residential support plans more consistently joined up with the home's therapeutic assessments.

The professional network and parents spoke highly of the professionalism of the staff team and the manager. They consistently talked about the service 'going the extra mile' to meet the needs of young people. The manager leads a team that is described by other professionals as being resilient, imaginative and highly skilled.

Young people spoke positively about the manager. He works directly with them and has a positive relationship with them. This means he is closely in touch with practice and young people can confidently share their views and experiences with him.

The registered manager has effective systems in place to monitor the quality of care

provided to young people. His ability to reflect on incidents and learn from them is a particular strength. He has excellent administrative management skills and records in the home are accurate, relevant, up to date and well organised.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC472139

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Amegreen Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: 2 Granary Court, Fair Oak Green, Stratfield Saye, Reading RG7 2DL

Responsible individual: Gary Carlin

Registered manager: David Chedgey

Inspector

Lee Kirwin, social care inspector

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