

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC472164
Inspector	Angus Mackay
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 James Carlin
Registered manager	Linda Gaye Bursnall
Date of last inspection	14/01/2015

Inspection date	25/03/2015
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Previous inspection	sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	No enforcement action.

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	adequate
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Children like living in the home and have excellent relationships with staff. They make good progress in all aspects of their development. Some children and young people have made dramatic improvements in their behaviour, school attendance, reducing high risk behaviours and improving personal appearance. All young people are making progress in educational engagement and in improving social and life skills.

The home has built good relationships with local organisations and encourages them to work to the benefit of the young people in the home. For example local police community support officers (PCSOs) play football with the children and young people building relationships which then aids their work in the home discussing high risk areas in the local community and issues such as sexual exploitation.

The placement plans, risk assessments and health care plans do not adequately describe the often complex and detailed work staff are doing with children and young people. Targets are poorly defined and children and young people's starting points are often not clear. Improvements are required in the method of recording physical interventions, recruitment checks and contact with local authorities about new admissions and discharges. Internal monitoring and the development plans for the home are mainly descriptive documents rather than ones which provide a

structure for improvements to the quality of care or explain how this will be achieved. Managers provide staff with excellent training opportunities but not all staff have commenced a level 3 diploma course in a timely manner.

Full report

Information about this children's home

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

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/01/2015	Interim	sustained effectiveness
11/11/2013	Full	good

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
12B (2001)	notify, in writing, the local authority for the area in which the children's home is located of all new admissions and discharges from the home (Regulation 12B(1)(a)(b))	30/04/2015
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline a written record is made which, for restraints, must include the information detailed in paragraphs(4)(a)(b) of this regulation (Regulation 17B(3)(a)-(i),(4)(a)(b))	30/06/2015
26 (2001)	ensure satisfactory information is available in relation to any person recruited and employed as specified in Schedule 2 of these regulations (Regulation 26(1(a) 2(d))	30/04/2015
28 (2001)	improve record keeping on children's files, so that the information kept is more detailed, relevant and	30/06/2015

	kept up to date; this, in particular, relates to individual support plans, health care and risk assessments (Regulation 28)	
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for (a) monitoring the matters in schedule 6 at least once every three months and (b) improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. (Regulation 34(1)(a)(b))	30/06/2015

Recommendations

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

- monitor the effectiveness of sanctions (NMS 3.8)
- ensure that all staff hold the appropriate level 3 Diploma or be working towards this within 6 months of confirmation of employment. (NMS 18.5)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children and young people make good progress in stabilising previous highly disruptive and often violent behaviours. All children and young people show a reduction in their levels of aggression and violence. Most are not involved in situations requiring physical interventions, and the few who are have drastically reduced their number and intensity of these incidents. Young people regularly achieve rewards based on their behaviour and accept the fairness of staff judgements about these awards. They are gradually learning to control their own behaviours without staff prompts and interventions. Feedback from the local children and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) about one intervention was, 'Their careful analysis of his behaviour, skilled interventions, patience and dedication have been impressive in giving him the chance to settle down and feel safe and contained. Throughout the process they also took into consideration the impact his behaviour had on other residents and staff to ensure their well-being was not compromised.'

Young people enjoy living in the home and say they have lots to do there. They choose activities at their daily meeting and enjoy a wide range of sporting activities with staff. Staff are very active with children and young people and aid them to join in and profit socially as well as physically from the activities. One young person said, 'I am relaxed here. It is a good place; I would recommend it to others. I benefit from being here. I like that it is quite spacious.' The therapeutic approach within the home is evident in the engagement of the children and young people in their daily meetings where they set the tone for their desired behaviours during activities. Young people improve their health, empathy and social skills through their enthusiastic engagement in these activities. In addition they join in a wide range of board games learning to cooperate with others and to win or lose gracefully. One young person said, 'I am aware of healthy eating and keep pretty fit with all of the activities.'

Young people use their evening meeting to influence the running of the home and how they live within it. In addition to activities they make requests about: the menu; weekend activities; changes to the house or their rooms; describe how they wish to behave; and reflect on their previous 24 hours in the home. Describing the meeting one young person said, 'We have our daily meeting so we can ask for things there. We can get things we want if they are not too expensive. We talk about our behaviours and how we have been and how we should be with one another.'

All children and young people take part in school, college or in-house education. Those who have not been in school for several years have commenced education and in some cases attending local educational facilities. Those attending school have high attendance levels and are making good progress. Where young people are educated in the home they follow a structured day preparing them for reintegration into school. They engage positively in their programmes and consistently achieve their targets to

earn achievement awards.

Young people reduce serious high risk behaviours such as drug taking, self-harm, fire setting and personal neglect. Changes in behaviours are highly personal but some young people have achieved significant success in reducing high risk behaviours within weeks of commencing their therapeutic programmes. Other young people take longer but are showing gradual reduction in high risk behaviours.

Young people learn independence skills appropriate to their age and stage of development. Some young people cook meals for others by themselves and others with help from staff. They plan meals and purchase ingredients prior to preparation and actual cooking. The meal times are pleasant civilised events where children and young people eat together developing good interpersonal skills. All young people keep their rooms tidy and progress towards greater levels of self-care and independence at their own pace.

Quality of care

adequate

Children and young people like staff and enjoy their company. On return from school they are warmly greeted and staff go out of their way to talk to each person about their day. During shifts when children and young people are in the home staff spend their time with them engaging in discussions, activities or helping them with school work or independence skills. The relationships between staff and children are warm and friendly with displays of appropriate affection. One young person described the home for a potential new resident saying, 'It is a good place to live in. There are other kids to socialise with and the staff are nice. There is a lot to do here and you will have fun.'

Staff are very creative and enthusiastic in the provision of activities for children and young people. The day is highly structured and staff ensure a good balance between physical activities, in-house games and free time. The use of electronic games and television watching is appropriately controlled, ensuring that children and young people have to engage with others and join in a range of sports and board games. The day is structured to provide a gradual winding down prior to bedtime. Children and young people were observed interacting positively, learning to share and interact appropriately with one another. For example one young person was teaching another how to play chess and displaying patience understanding and kindness. The children and young people had a mature understanding of not relying on paid activities and consequently displayed a heightened appreciation of the weekend rewards of paid activities.

Good order is maintained largely by the quality of the relationships between staff and the children and young people. There is an evening meeting where expectations are set by the children and young people and they reflect on the previous day's behaviours. Staff display great skill in empowering children and young people in

these meetings which set the tone for the evening and allow each person to reflect on their behaviour and its impact on others. One young person said, 'We talk about our behaviours and how we have been and how we should be with one another.' Children and young people are developing self-awareness and empathy for others through this process.

Children and young people understand the house rules and in particular how to get help if they require it. One young person said, 'It is friendly and there are no bad people here.' Another young person said, 'If I have a problem I would talk to staff about it. If it was something serious I would talk to the manager. She is good she listened to me and gives helpful advice.' They have a clear understanding of sanctions and positive reward systems and how they work. They believe that staff are fair in their application of sanctions and that the sanctions are reasonable. The record of sanctions includes feedback from the young person and a comment from the manager but this does not always reflect on the effectiveness of the sanction. The inconsistent recording of effectiveness of sanctions makes it more difficult to analyse what works with individual children and young people.

Staff provide good assistance to children and young people in their preparation for school and in supporting their attendance and attainment. The head of one school said, 'The links with the home are excellent. Staff always attend meetings not just for personal education plans and reviews but also parent's evenings and other informal events plays or open days. I have nothing but praise for the home.' Where children are not attending school the home is a vocal advocate for an appropriate level of education. In these circumstances they ensure that education occurs and the school day remains structured and a timetable is adhered to. Staff aid children and young people in maximising their educational potential.

Children and young people are aware of their placement plans and care plans and say they discuss these with their key workers. Keyworker sessions are regular and recorded in helpful detail. However placement plans are very basic and do not adequately reflect the quality of engagement and range of work done by the staff with young people. Issues of culture, religion and language are not included in detail. Placement plans do not outline the structured work undertaken by staff or the therapeutic interventions agreed at formal reviews. The lack of clearly identified targets or areas of work makes the detailed tracking of progress difficult. In some cases the home are using a new assessment tool which provides helpful and detailed analysis of children and young people's starting points and their subsequently progress.

Staff are trained in medication control and apply this diligently and effectively with the children and young people. In addition they are all trained in first aid and in specific presenting problems children and young people have. Consequently children and young people's medication is safely stored and effectively administered by staff. However individual health care plans are of variable quality. Some children and young people have separate and detailed health care plans whilst others have only a

basic record of the interventions in the placement plan, without targets or objectives. This inconsistent approach to recording does not adequately support the excellent work done by the staff team in meeting children and young people's health needs.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Children and young people feel safe in the home. They trust staff and have good relationships with them. They say there is no bullying in the home although some behaviour which ranged from teasing to more provocative was witnessed during the inspection. Staff were very quick to intervene in a highly appropriate manner getting children to reflect on their comments and apologise for any hurt caused. Young people described how they are encouraged to behave positively and to reflect on their behaviours in particular in the evening meeting. One said of the evening meeting, 'We talk about our behaviours and how we have been and how we should be with one another. It is safe here there is no bullying.' Sanctions are appropriate and young people consider them to be fair. The manager reviews all sanctions but does not always comment on their effectiveness. One young person said, 'Staff are fair and sanctions are fair.'

There have been no incidents of young people going missing since the last inspection. Staff are familiar with the procedure to follow if children or young people do go missing and have developed good links with the local Police Community Support Officers to aid in protecting children and young people. Children and young people have clear risk assessments about going missing and in relation to some of their key risks. However these are not comprehensive and do not cover all salient risks presented. In addition differing formats are used which is potentially confusing. Staff are aware of the risks individual children and young people present and discuss these at the weekly meetings. However the lack of appropriately detailed records makes the tracking of progress in risk reduction difficult. The home is trialling a new assessment procedure which incorporates risk measurement to aid in their tracking of progress in the reduction of risk.

Staff have recently completed a course in safeguarding which has heightened their awareness of issues such as gang culture, drug abuse, self-harm and child sexual exploitation. The manager has further training arranged specifically addressing child sexual exploitation to ensure staff can appropriately care and protect the children and young people in the home. Training programmes have addressed other issues such as the pathology of fire setting to ensure staff can maintain a safe environment. The care of children and young people is enhanced by staff application of their training in these areas.

Staff recruitment involves the children and young people meeting potential new staff and allowing them to comment on their suitability. Managers responsible for appointing new staff are trained in safer recruitment and generally apply all of the

principles and regulatory requirements when appointing staff. One member of staff had unexplained gaps in his work history but these were addressed satisfactorily during the inspection.

All staff are trained and competent in the use of the homes chosen techniques for managing challenging behaviour. Staff only resort to the use of physical interventions as a last resort and are highly skilled at defusing aggressive and challenging situations. Most young people have not been involved in a physical restraint since the last inspection. Those who have are now subject to significantly reduced numbers of incidents compared to the high levels when they were admitted. The manager has commenced a detailed review of physical interventions to aid in the further reduction of incidents. Prior to the last inspection there were a small number of physical interventions, involving holding, which were not clearly in line with permissible restraints. There have been no such incidents since then. However where holding is part of a proposed therapeutic intervention the manager has altered care planning guidelines for staff. They ensure the holding is safe and legal and agree the appropriateness of the intervention, with placing social workers and parents, recording this in the placement plan. Records of physical interventions are detailed and helpful accounts of incidents. Young people's views are sought and included in the record. However the reports are held in a loose leaf folder which does not ensure the integrity of the record and is not in line with the regulatory requirement.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager has lengthy experience of working with children, young people and adults. She has appropriate qualifications for her role including as a senior accredited counsellor/psychotherapist. The manager has in-depth knowledge of all of the young people in the home and a firm grasp on the strengths and weakness of the service. She has recently completed a revision of the statement of purpose which was sent to Ofsted during the inspection. In addition she has commenced a management review, of the description of the home and the care offered to children and young people, to ensure the statement of purpose complies with imminent changes in regulations.

The manager conducts regular monitoring of the home and incorporates feedback from the detailed independent visitor reports into her review of the quality of care. The manager has not been monitoring using the Schedule 6 guidance as modified in April 2014. Consequently her reports lack complete detail and a full analysis of the conduct of the home. In addition the manager maintains an annual development plan for the home. The plan is highly descriptive of the activity of the home rather than outlining how the home is planning to develop the service and improve the quality of care. The manager has commenced a review of her monitoring to ensure that future reports are fully comprehensive and reflect the positive work in improving the quality of care which the home is completing.

Independent visitor reports cover all required areas and include detailed discussions with young people. The reports are a helpful commentary on the conduct of the home and aid in the safeguarding of children living there. Where appropriate the independent person recommends actions which the Registered Manager responds to and comments on in her monitoring of the home. The safe care of children and young people is aided by this helpful commentary and reflection of their views on their care.

All staff receive professional supervision which they describe as regular, helpful and always available if required for extra support. In addition the home has a strong focus on professional development for staff. Staff engaged in Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards, or level 3 diploma courses, receive excellent ongoing assessment and guidance from an externally appointed assessor. Where specific cultural, medical or behavioural issues are identified in children accommodated, the manager arranges training ensuring all children's needs are met. Currently not all staff have engaged in the level 3 diploma in the required time scale although the manager has set clear deadlines for this to be actioned. The creative and in-depth training programme ensures that staff are appropriately prepared for working with the children and young people in the home.

The manager regularly reviews all staff recording and comments on the quality of reports and records. Care planning is reviewed in team meetings where the effectiveness of interventions is regularly analysed and adjusted. Some records do not reflect the good ongoing review and reflection on care provided. The home maintains an accurate record of all admissions and discharges but notification, of new admissions and discharges, to the local authority is done verbally not in writing as required in regulations.

The home is well maintained and all health and safety checks and certificates are in place. Children and young people enjoy living in a suitably resourced, beautiful building in its own grounds. The grounds are well maintained and are adjacent to fields containing the home's own horses.

The manager has developed excellent working partnerships with local organisations and other professionals. These links are used positively to aid the safe care of children and young people and to enhance staff development. Links have been made with: local PCSOs; CAMHS; fire and rescue authority; and looked after children nurses. As well as social interactions these links have provided training in: sickle cell anaemia; enuresis; and the pathology of fire setting. PCSOs provide helpful discussion on issues of child sexual exploitation in particular highlighting areas which children and young people should avoid or be supervised in due to known risks.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.