

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	13/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC486479
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Priory Education Services Limited
Registered provider address	Priory Group, 80 Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UD

Responsible individual	Clive Coombs
Registered manager	Tracey Beales
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	13/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC486479

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The manager and staff provide a tailored and dedicated service to children and young people from before they are admitted to the home until after they have left.
- The manager has an eye for detail, so that the standards of monitoring of recording, for example, are exemplary. She also has a wider vision for how she wants to see the service developing, striving to improve the lives of children and young people.
- Children's and young people's wishes and feelings are central to the work of the home. Staff routinely gather young people's opinions and explore their thoughts through team meetings, key-work sessions and daily interactions. These are well recorded and taken into consideration in decisions made.
- The manager has implemented an excellent system for measuring and recording the work done to assist children and young people to improve their daily living skills. Charts clearly demonstrate the progress they make from the point of the first to the most recent assessment.
- The manager analyses the records of both challenging and 'low-level' behaviours to identify trends and triggers. This information is used to develop strategies that staff successfully use to help young people to manage their behaviour more successfully.
- Care planning is detailed and thorough, as shown by excellent care planning and risk assessment documents. Staff regularly update these so that all adults working with children and young people are aware of their current circumstances and agreed approaches to their care.
- The manager and staff have forged admirable relationships with other agencies and families, based on reliable, child-centred practice and communications. As a result, professionals and parents have a great deal of confidence in the care provided for children and young people. One parent commented, 'Everything is done higher than expected. I feel so safe with the home.'

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) meet(s) the Care Standards Act 2000, the 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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
If a home has a website, the registered person must ensure that a copy of the statement of purpose is published on that website, unless the registered person considers that such publication would prejudice the welfare of children in the home. (Regulation 16(4))	28/04/2017

Recommendations

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

- The registered person must specify the procedures to be followed when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission and how staff should support the child on return to the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28) This includes having regard to the responsible authority's missing-from-care protocol, requesting an independent return home interview and, in the case of a child who persistently runs away, convening a risk management meeting.
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which should detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice and keep appropriate records for staff in the home. The arrangements for supervision of staff practice should be included in the statement of purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraphs 10.8 and 10.10) In particular, the frequency of supervision sessions should be specified.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a recently registered children's home for up to five young people who have learning difficulties. It is run by a private organisation and most of the young people who are resident at the home are educated at the provider's school, located at another site.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/07/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
01/12/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Young people are very well prepared when moving to live in this home. Staff visit children before they move in. The most recent young person to be admitted was given a 'social story' to explain what was going to happen, together with a 'countdown' so that she was aware of when she would move in. The social worker for the child commented that staff were 'accommodating, explaining things to the family, and very reassuring'. The manager was clear about the timescales in which the admission could be arranged, resisting pressure to hurry the process so that both the young person moving in and those already resident had time to prepare for the transition. This is well recorded in the impact risk assessment, excellent transition plans and recording of the process. As a result, the mother reports that the move 'went as smooth as it possibly could do' and is very happy that her daughter has settled well. Staff involve children and young people in the life of the home as far as their abilities allow, always seeking to extend this wherever possible. To meet the preference of young people for baths rather than showers, a former shower room has been converted into a bathroom. This means not only that more baths can be taken, but also that children and young people know that their views make a difference. Staff help young people to communicate using whatever method best suits them, often using a combination of speech, signing and symbols. Attempts are made to increase the range of terms that young people can use to express themselves so that 'improved communication' and 'saying more words' are cited by others as areas of progress being made. Young people are helped to manage their anxieties so that they can achieve more. One who attends a club in the community, for example, is encouraged by staff to participate in activities that he feels he is not capable of doing. Staff have liaised well with the organisation's leaders to take account of his particular needs and, although the young person can be apprehensive about how he will get on, he enjoys the club and the additional opportunities it affords him. The manager and staff set targets for children and young people to help them improve in such areas as self-care, independence skills and behaviour. This is frequently in conjunction with school staff. However, work on these is not well reported; recording is sporadic and there is no clear link to the overall assessments undertaken. 'Life skills assessments' are much wider in their scope and do have a wealth of evidence to support conclusions drawn about each young person's abilities. A scoring system indicates clearly the level of competency in a variety of tasks,	

including the amount of support required to achieve them. These scores are combined to produce a chart so that readers can readily appreciate the progress made. All young people are making some progress, at the pace they are able.

Staff help children and young people to have as much autonomy as possible within an environment that provides them with stability through a predictable routine. Choices are offered about activities, food and drink and who children and young people may want to spend time with.

The manager and staff take cognisance of a young person's age and understanding into account in accepting and acting on choices. For example, when one young person over statutory school age was objecting, through her behaviour, to having to attend school, the provider arranged for her to withdraw from education. Staff now offer other constructive activities at the home and in the community, and the young person is working towards an ASDAN award. She is engaging in this, is not presenting with as many problematic behaviours and is achieving.

The manager and staff are making good preparations to support young people who are about to move on to adult services. This includes liaising with potential providers and helping young people to understand the process in a way that helps them to know what is happening at each stage without making them anxious about their futures.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Children and young people have formed trusting relationships with those who care for them. Within these relationships, anxieties reduce and young people have the confidence to try new experiences and face challenges. This results in them having fewer incidents of behaviour requiring a physical intervention, and/or these incidents do not last as long or are not as severe. In one example, conduct anticipated prior to admission has not materialised. In another example, disruptive behaviours may return at times of stress or particular times of year but, as a professional commented about this young person, 'Some of his behaviours come back but staff are very aware of them and they work well to prevent or de-escalate them.' Having dependable staff and a stable environment means that children and young people develop the capacity to tolerate new people and situations. This enhances their ability to socialise together and in the wider community. One young person has gradually increased the areas of the home she will go into with other children. She will have her meals in the dining room and participate in house meetings too.	

In addition, she is now engaged in activities outside the home.

Staff help children and young people to understand each other and that they have different abilities and need different kinds of assistance. As a result, relationships improve and the more capable support those who need more help than they do. Some children still struggle with the fact that staff may apply rules differently with other young people and that this is still fair.

Staff generally manage young people's risky behaviours well. However, on one occasion staff did not anticipate or manage an incident effectively. The manager has addressed this with each member of staff, to enable them to learn lessons and improve vigilance. It has not been repeated.

Interventions are commissioned from outside agencies when needed. Young people's views are taken into account in doing so. In one instance, a professional commented that the manager had advocated well on a young person's behalf in sensitively arranging an appropriate service.

The home has good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), which the manager has used to source training and obtain advice. She has also initiated contact with the equivalent adult board, as some young people have now reached adulthood.

Personnel files demonstrate that the provider carefully follows safer recruitment processes.

The level of supervision given to children and young people means that none have gone missing since the home was opened. Safeguarding risks from outside the home are low. Nevertheless, staff ensure that children and young people are helped to keep safe through a variety of means. For instance, during the inspection safe or unsafe behaviours were demonstrated and discussed in a house meeting.

The provider's missing-from-care policy is not sufficiently detailed or comprehensive. Staff are aware of their responsibilities if they have a safeguarding concern and who they can speak to outside the home if a manager is implicated.

Contact is facilitated well. One parent commented, 'Staff make us feel very welcome. They give us space if we want it or we join in with the other children.' Staff have been instrumental in helping one young person to increase his contact with his family, so he is now able to stay with them for a few days at a time.

Staff administer and record medication with great care. One staff member gave an example of checking dosage when information appeared contradictory so that he could be confident that he was giving it correctly. Young people are therefore kept safe by the vigilance of staff.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The manager sets high standards for the care of children and young people, for rigour in monitoring and recording, for professionalism in relationships with other agencies and in the empathic support of families. She leads by example and inspires the same standards in her team. The manager responds to feedback from staff and, following discussion with a probationer, is introducing a buddy system for new staff. Some new recruits have little experience in this area of work so confidence can be low, and this measure could help them to develop the skills and understanding to help and support children and young people sooner. New staff report that their induction equips them well for their work; although the programme does not formally address appropriate professional relationships with those they are caring for. Staff spoken to understood what was expected of them. One described making sure that children and young people know that staff are 'friendly but not a friend'. Staff are aware of the need for children and young people to have physical expressions of affection and comfort. They practise this appropriately and have successfully helped some who previously avoided it to ask and receive 'a squeeze' when wanting reassurance. All staff spoken to feel well supported by their colleagues and manager. Supervision addresses issues of professional development, the emotional impact of the work and being part of a team. The statement of purpose and workforce plan do not specify the frequency of supervision for staff, which means that the organisation is not sufficiently clear about minimum expectations. However, logs show that sessions take place monthly, except for unavoidable reasons. In addition to mandatory training, staff have undertaken courses specific to the nature of their work with young people in this home. They are able to describe the impact of this on their personal practice. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable change of senior staff. It is a considerable achievement that children and young people have been relatively unaffected by this and that they have continued to make progress. There is evidence on files of regular audits, and these ensure that documentation is up to date and easily accessible. The quality of care planning and risk assessment is exceptionally high, with particular clarity about how staff can help children and young people in different states of anxiety to calm. Observation of staff interactions with children and young people were in keeping with this guidance. Such interactions led to periods of distress being shorter than they might otherwise have been and children and young people were supported to engage longer in constructive activities. Key-work sessions are used effectively. Key workers meet with young people	

frequently, often for short periods to maximise their attention. Staff use well-prepared tools to provide information, aid understanding and obtain views, including social stories and a 'who wants to be a millionaire' quiz on e-safety. These are included in records of the sessions and together they evidence communication that is highly attuned to individual young people.

The home sends out weekly reports on the experience of children and young people, in addition to any specific incidents, and there is frequent communication with parents and schools. One professional expressed particular admiration for the staff's networking practice. There is also evidence on files of requests being made of other agencies for necessary documentation to be provided. This flow of information helps all stakeholders to be up to date on developments and act on current information.

The manager has met the requirement and recommendation made in the interim inspection report. The quality of regulation 45 reviews has improved greatly since the manager completed her first for the home. The most recent demonstrates a strong grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and made recommendations to develop services further – some already implemented.

This willingness to look for improvement is shared by the staff team, one of whom said, 'People are not afraid to try new ideas. If you make a suggestion, something is always done; it will be recorded and discussed and taken forward.'

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors 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 the '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, 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 ensure that their welfare is 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 children looked after 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 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 that 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 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.

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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