

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Trevor Hall
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Service information

Brief description of the service

Preston Springs Farmhouse is an independent provider's children's home looking after up to three young people aged from 8 to 16 years who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **adequate**.

This is the first inspection since the home was registered in January 2012. The home was initially failing, due to the inability of ineffective leadership to create an appropriate nurturing care environment. External monitoring of the home by senior staff quickly identified managerial weakness and took effective action to remedy this situation and to ensure that young people's needs were being met. This involved replacing the home's Registered Manager and deputy with a new management team. Young people currently receive adequate care because the new management team has successfully identified previous shortcomings and failings and is working hard to remedy these whilst mitigating the effects on the young people in residence.

Staff are beginning to provide consistency, stability and a safe nurturing environment. As a result, young people are starting to achieve acceptable outcomes although they are at the beginning of the process. The home works hard to ensure young people receive effective health care, assessment, treatment and support that reflect their particular needs. Placement planning is becoming more focused and individual, including clearer frameworks for behaviour management while celebrating and encouraging appropriate individuality. Young people's behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs are now more effectively supported. Recording deficiencies and consolidation of information, particularly in respect of health and education planning, still require attention, to help young people to maximise their educational and personal development.

Safeguarding young people's welfare is placed at a high priority in terms of both the health and safety of the environment and promoting their physical and mental well-being. Effective internal and external monitoring processes provide continuous

quality assurance; these have been vital to ensure that home maintains an acceptable standard of care and assists in promoting the ongoing improvement of the service.

The improving relationships observed between young people and staff are a testament to the efforts of the new management team. Young people now receive generally adequate ongoing care and support. The care team are focused on their needs, hard working and committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for them. They understand that there are areas that are in need to further development to fully support the positive outcomes for young people. The home has an energetic, motivated and well qualified manager, who leads by example and is ambitious to maintain the home's recent improvement and to achieve the best possible outcomes for the young people in his care.

Areas for improvement

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
28 (2001)	ensure that a record be maintained in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home, a record in a permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 (Regulation 28(1))	30/06/2012
29 (2001)	ensure that the registered person maintains in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure that they are kept up to date (Regulation 29 (1))	30/06/2012
33 (2001)	ensure that the registered provider supplies a copy of the report required to be made under paragraph (4) of Regulation 33 to Ofsted. (Regulation 33(5)a)	30/06/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day-to-day running of the home and in important decisions or changes in the child's life, unless this is contrary to their interests (NMS 1.1)
- ensure that the home meets children's emotional and behavioural needs, as set out in their care plan (NMS 3.7)
- ensure that staff are supported to manage their responses and feelings arising

from working with children, particularly where children display challenging behaviour or have difficult emotional issues (NMS 3.10)

- ensure that staff understand what is in the child's placement plan and have clarity about decisions they can make about day-to-day arrangements for the child, including such matters of education or leisure activities (NMS 7.3)
- ensure that children are supported to attend school, college or alternative provision regularly (NMS 8.3)
- ensure that the home has and is fully implementing, a written education policy that promotes and values children's education (NMS 8.5)
- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that risk assessments of the whole children's home environment are carried out to identify any potential sources of harm to the children are recorded in writing and are regularly reviewed (NMS 10.8)
- ensure that the children's home only provides admission to children whose assessed needs they can reasonably expect to meet (NMS 11.2)
- ensure that the manager exercises effective leadership of the home that is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers sound, good quality care that meets the individual needs of each child at the home (NMS. 14.5)
- locate at the home a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted (NMS 17.1)
- ensure staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (NMS 19.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **adequate**.

The home's original Registered Manager and deputy manager have left the home, having failed to establish a nurturing and secure care environment. This failure to establish consistent boundaries, security and structure, was clearly detrimental to the experience of the young people resident in the home at that time. Clear identification of young people's needs was not always apparent nor were these needs met consistently and cohesively. Early detection, through the home's external management monitoring system, enabled the care organisation, to take decisive action to revise the management structure of the home. The current manager has done much to minimise the impact on the young people of this lack of initial leadership and structure and has assisted the current staff team to create an adequate care environment that is now meeting the young people's assessed needs.

Relationships between young people and staff are improving and there has been a

dramatic reduction in both violent incidents and in the staff's use of physical interventions since the new management arrangements have been in place.

The home is developing a nurturing care environment that promotes a positive ethos that embraces diversity and difference. Young people confront, with staff's assistance, their feelings and emotions. As a result, they are beginning to learn to appreciate the significance of differing values and to have respect for other people. This ethos also supports the promotion of more positive behaviours, assists young people to understand the consequences of their actions, and encourages alternative and more acceptable responses.

All of the current young people, prior to their placement, had histories of minimal attendance in school and very poor levels of attainment. This home's registration does not cover the provision of education. All current residents are on the roll of the care company's own registered school and young people receive home tuition packages delivered by staff from the school. Each young person has an individual personal education plan designed to achieve a successful re-integration back into a more formal educational setting. Attendance and attainment continue to improve, but remain fragile. The lack of initial clarity in previous care planning, combined with the previous poor leadership has had a detrimental impact on the success of this strategy. Individual education plans whilst well known and understood by visiting education staff, are not reflected in the home's care plans making them inaccessible to the care staff, who are expected to support the young people through this process. However young people are beginning to succeed in their education, improve their poor self-image and build up their emotional resilience, prior to moving to the organisation's registered school.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **adequate**.

Young people's relationships with staff are generally good; however, this has not always been the case. Current behaviour management plans provide focus and clarity and support staff's efforts to maintain a secure supportive environment. Subsequently young people feel less vulnerable and unsafe and are developing confidence in the staff and the home's managers to maintain a safe environment. The positive promotion of focused key working has enabled some good individual attachments to be made, that are beginning to challenge some of the young people's more extreme behaviours and poor attitudes.

Care planning in the home is now much more effective. Each young person has an individualised care plan that identifies their needs, how these are to be addressed and by whom. Uniformity within care planning has improved, as such care plans are easier to locate and understand. Some deficiencies in required care planning paperwork, however, remain. The home's manager has taken appropriate remedial action to ensure that these elements are appropriately completed. He has acted to ensure that the impact of these deficiencies on the young people's care and welfare is minimal. Currently the home is providing the young people with an adequate level

of personal care.

Young people's identified health needs are met. Care records contain most of the health information, required to meet the national minimum standards but clearly identifiable and comprehensive health plans are not available for each young person. Registration of all young people with a General Practitioner is evident, but no detailed records of dental and optical services provided were available at inspection. Some required permissions documentation necessary to enable staff to meet young people's medical needs are either not fully completed or are not appropriately authorised. Staff do, however, adequately support and encourage young people to access external health professionals in line with their individual needs.

The effective safeguarding of young people's health is achieved because there are clear policies and procedures and staff are adequately trained. Accurate records of medication dispensed by staff ensure safe practice. Care planning and risk assessment have improved considerably under the new management regime, which ensures that staff have good up-to-date information about the young people in their care. Young people have their individual cultural, religious, language and racial needs identified and addressed. Regular meetings with key workers to discuss progress and any issues of concern have been instigated this has significantly enhanced young people's ability to effectively contribute to the way the home is run.

Attendance and improved attainment in education is actively encouraged and supported. Young people have individual education plans. The management and staff have established a culture within the home that promotes and values education attendance and attainment, recognising the difficulties the young people have experienced in sustaining education placements prior to their admission. Staff are supporting the young people's education and liaise regularly with organisation's own registered school to ensure that progress is maintained. Young people are encouraged to pursue their own interests, or to try new activities. This increases their experiences and helps them to develop confidence in their social skills and abilities.

Young people's care plans identify assessed needs and outline how these needs are met. Care plans contain sufficient information to ensure the provision of an adequate level of care. Some deficiencies in care planning documentation remain; however, the home's new manager is taking all necessary steps to remedy this situation and to mitigate the impact that these deficiencies have on the care that the young people receive. Social workers report that good communications exist between them and the home and that they consider the care practice of the home to be sound. Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of the care they have received and as a means of acknowledging the progress, they have made. Staff, young people and, where appropriate, their families are assisted to contribute effectively to such case reviews.

Due to the negative previous experiences of young people living in the home, the development of trust and mutual respect is only developing slowly. Improved communication between staff and young people is, however, being established and

relationships are improving, which has helped staff to be more responsive to young people's needs and given young people more confidence to express their needs more constructively. Young people have regular meetings with their key worker to discuss progress and any issues of concern. They are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives in line with their individual needs. As a result, they influence the running of the home. They have appropriate clothing and belongings. They receive pocket money and appropriate allowances to help purchase clothing and toiletries.

Young people live in a large refurbished mature building that provides sufficient space to meet their needs. Most parts of the home are decorated to a good standard, but due to considerable damage having been done, to both the fabric and furnishings of the home there is a need for some redecoration and redecoration. The home has effective maintenance procedures to cope with the day-to-day upkeep of the home, however, the garden in particular is overgrown and unkempt, is not young-person friendly and gives a poor first impression to visitors of the home. The home has good links to local facilities and is within easy reach of good transport links. Also the home has a vehicle that means that young people have convenient transport for activities, shopping and contact visits with family.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **adequate** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Young people are safe at the home and they acknowledge that the staff promote their safety. The home has a comprehensive set of individualised assessments of risk for the young people in residence; however, these have not been updated and amended following incidents. Overall these assessments cover aspects of young people's potential behaviour, the environment and the activities young people wish to undertake.

Staff guided by other relevant professionals, work hard to enable young people to moderate and improve their behaviour. The use of sanctions is fair but sometimes inconsistent, which is confusing to the young people and undermines the creation of clearly acknowledged boundaries. The recording of sanctions whilst adequate and does not always include young people's comments. There is a growing emphasis on recognising and rewarding positive behaviours, rather than purely punishing those behaviours identified as being unacceptable. This challenges young people to develop more socially acceptable behaviour and better prepares them to interact more positively with the wider community. Young people generally understand that the boundaries in place are there to ensure their safety.

Staff use physical interventions only as a last resort and only when necessary to ensure the safety of all. The implementation of the home's new management structure has seen a marked reduction in physical interventions by staff. Physical interventions are now infrequent. Firm use of staff support and the sensitive application of conflict resolution techniques, resolve most issues successfully. Records of physical interventions are generally good, but some minor shortfalls,

remain, particularly in respect of recording young people's comments following interventions. The home's manager now monitors each intervention and ensures that the intervention is necessary, applied correctly and recorded correctly. He also ensures that young people are aware of their right to complain, receive any medical attention if required or requested, and that social workers and, where appropriate, parents are fully informed.

Staff have all received appropriate safeguarding training. As a result, they demonstrate a good understanding of the action they should take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection is sound, due to their effective working with external partners such as the Local Authority Designated Officer. Episodes when young people are missing from care are infrequent and well-known policies and protocols are in place if such incidents should occur.

The home has a good range of detailed policies and procedures covering aspects such as prevention of bullying, complaints, safeguarding and behaviour management. Staff are knowledgeable about these policies which are effectively implemented. Staff receive good training with regular updates in all these areas, which enables them to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse. The regular and effective monitoring of the home's records and staff practice contribute to ensuring that young people receive safe care in line with their individual needs.

The home has a good health and safety regime, which ensures that all fire precautions, drills and equipment servicing are conducted routinely, consistently and within timescales set by the relevant regulations. The high turnover of staff in the home, particularly at a senior level, since the home's registration only three months ago has had an unsettling impact. High staffing levels have helped to keep young people safe and reduce any risk of harm, particularly at times of heightened tension. The need, however, to deploy large numbers of unfamiliar staff to maintain these high levels has had a detrimental impact on the young people's ability to develop meaningful and trusting relationships with a close knit staff team. Young people clearly need to feel safe being looked after by a team of staff who know them well. The organisation's effective recruitment procedures ensure the careful selection recruitment of staff. New staff are comprehensively vetted prior to their deployment in the home and before having unsupervised access to any young person.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **adequate**.

The home's current manager is both experienced and appropriately qualified, however, there remains a need to formalise this arrangement by the home's manager applying for registration. The current manager provides good leadership and support to the staff group. This means they are beginning to provide consistent care of an acceptable quality to the young people living in the home. The development of open and honest dialogue is assisting young people to learn from their mistakes and so improve their behaviour. Consequently, young people are

beginning to make significant changes in the way they react to others and in the choices that they make. There is strong, visible leadership, which promotes good care and encourages positive outcomes for young people.

The home has a clear accessible and comprehensive Statement of Purpose and young person's guide giving young people, their families and placing authorities' comprehensive information about the services offered by the home. The home is well-resourced, indicating the financial viability of the provider. The staff group treat young people with respect and dignity and support them in confronting significant and complex issues.

All staff members comment positively about the new manager's commitment, child-centred approach, staff support and clear monitoring processes. Newly developed lines of accountability in the home have created a stable and structured environment. Staff duty rotas and staff deployment confirm that the home keeps sufficient staff on the duty rota at all times. The home has a very good complaints system that young people are clearly aware of. All complaints made since the home's registration have been appropriately resolved, to the satisfaction of all involved.

Staff are receiving good support and guidance through a clear management structure. This new structure is successful at meeting the service's aims to foster social awareness and improve mutual respect within the home. It achieves this by encouraging a nurturing and supportive caring environment. Consistent and regular supervision, however, has not always been available to the staff group, which has created inconsistency of care for young people and a lack of focus within the staff team. The recent introduction of regular team meetings, coupled with improved staff supervision has provided staff the forum to discuss their role, their professional development and the impact of working with children with complex needs.

Staff confirm that prior to being deployed into the home they all receive an appropriate induction programme. Further training, support and additional resources, provided through a rolling programme of training delivered by the parent care company, ensures that staff understand the developmental needs of young people. This training covers all mandatory areas such as safeguarding, behaviour management and first aid. The staff focus on promoting positive outcomes and on enhancing the well-being of the young people in their care. The quality of communication between staff is improving and this has done much to ensure that young people's individual needs are met in a consistent manner. Young people are being encouraged to take a more active and positive part in the running of the home. They are encouraged to make their views known, through discussions with key working staff, although regular formal house meetings have not been introduced. Staff strive to ensure that a safe, and secure environment is maintained which assists young people to make progress and to fulfil their individual potential.

The home's new manager is in the process of establishing rigorous internal quality assurance monitoring systems. It is clear that he already checks all reporting systems regularly and has taken appropriate steps to rectify all deficiencies in these records to ensure that they meet both the home's policies and procedures and national

regulations. The organisation's senior managers ensure that the home is running in line with the company's policies and procedures by undertaking regular external monitoring visits. These visits also ensure that the home is meeting all national minimum standards and regulations. To ensure that young people are properly cared for and a safe care environment is sustained, decisive and effective action is taken, whenever this monitoring process highlights serious deficiencies. Written reports of these monthly external monitoring visits are made, however, they have not always been sent to the inspectorate as required.

The home has not produced a development plan for continuing improvement. Many of the home's recording systems are incomplete, or have minor deficiencies, this is acknowledged by the home's manager, who is working hard to rectify these shortfalls and minimise the impact on the care the young people receive. Records are stored securely, but currently would not contribute significantly, if they choose to access them, to the young people's understanding of their life in care. The registered person notifies the appropriate and agencies of all significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home and appropriate action is taken following the incident; this helps to support the safety of young people.

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 *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.