

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	08/01/2013
Inspector	Trevor Hall
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	02/05/2012
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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

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **satisfactory progress**.

At the last inspection in May 2012, the first inspection since the home was registered in January 2012, the overall quality rating for the service was judged as adequate. Three requirements and 13 recommendations were made at that inspection. The home has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and has appropriately dealt with all of the previously made statutory requirements. Most of the recommendations made at the first inspection have received appropriate attention, however, some continue to require on-going action to consolidate the progress made.

Young people's care records now include all information required by regulation, are being appropriately maintained and up to date. The home's records now include all information listed in schedule 4 of the Children's Home's Regulations 2001, and are being appropriately maintained and are receiving frequent management oversight. Senior management representatives regularly visit the home, to satisfy themselves that the home is functioning in such a way as to meet all statutory obligations, is adhering to its stated purpose and function and is meeting the needs of its residents.

These visits generate written reports which are shared with the regulator at monthly intervals.

Care planning in the home has improved considerably. Young people's emotional and behavioural needs are now set out in detailed, individualised care plans which take into account their age, gender, level of ability, sexual orientation, race, religion, culture and previous experience. Staff have a much better awareness of the identified needs of the young people in their care. Improved consistency in meeting these needs and in managing presenting behaviour has resulted in a more open and positive relationship developing between staff and young people.

Regular young people's meetings have been established and the improving relationships within the home have made it easier for staff to ascertain the views, wishes and feelings of the young people and to involve them positively in the day-to-day delivery of their care. Behaviour management has improved, with a marked reduction in the number of occasions when staff have had to resort to physical interventions to ensure their safety or the safety of the young people. Unauthorised absence from the home and the amount and degree of physical damage inflicted upon the environment are all significantly reducing. Young people are beginning to enjoy the more consistent and stable care environment. Young people are attending therapy regularly and good progress in this area is reported.

The home has developed and implemented a written education policy that clearly promotes and values the young people's educational development. All current residents are on the roll of the care organisation's own registered education unit. Chronic school refusal and school phobia are identified and acknowledged issues for both the home's current residents and they have personal education plans designed to address these issues and to encourage their gradual re-integration into the education unit. Staff actively support young people to attend the education provision provided, however, attendance while improving remains poor. This low level of education provision is currently supplemented by the school supplying outreach support to enable young people to receive some of their education in the home setting. This children's home is not joint registered as a school with Ofsted as such, the current educational arrangements are not supported by the current registration.

Environmental risk assessments have now been completed on the whole home environment. These identify any potential sources of harm to the young people, are recorded in writing and are being regularly reviewed, particularly following incidents when damage has been inflicted on the fabric of the home. The home provides a safe living environment where regular health and safety checks are undertaken all safety equipment is regularly serviced and tested. The physical environment has improved and there has been a marked reduction in the amount of damage to fixtures and fittings. However, the home remains somewhat spartan and institutional and some redecoration and refurbishment is still needed for the home to be truly nurturing and homely.

Since registration, leadership and management of the home have lacked consistency. The current manager being the fourth holder of the post in under twelve months.

Interim management arrangements, while acceptable have largely failed to provide the home with the degree of focus and consistency necessary to promote development and instil confidence, either for the young people in residence or for the staff group.

The home's current manager is an experienced and suitably qualified care manager, recruited specifically to provide the stability and consistency that has been lacking. The manager has previously been registered with Ofsted as a children's home manager and has a track record of providing a good quality of care. He has since his arrival instigated regular staff meetings and staff supervision. This has enabled staff to be more reflective of their practice, to be more consistent in their approaches and has given them appropriate support to better manage their responses and feelings when working with young people who have emotional issues and who display challenging behaviour. Staff meetings are being used more effectively in terms of staff development and enabling staff to take a greater part in future developments in the home. Staff have commented positively on how these improvements have helped them in increasing their skills and knowledge. The current manager has acted quickly to establish effective leadership, the home is now well managed and staffed in a manner that promotes the delivery of quality care that meets the individual needs of the young people in residence.

Since the last inspection the home has developed an appropriate written development plan. No young people have been admitted to the home since the last inspection, as such the effectiveness, or otherwise of the home's referral assessment procedures, particularly the home's ability to accurately assess potential impact of residents conflicting needs remains untested.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children are supported to attend school, college or alternative provision regularly (NMS 8.3)
- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. (NMS 10.3)

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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection*.