

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC457318
Inspector	Janice Hawtin
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Advanced Childcare Limited
Registered person address	Pinnacle House 2 Oakwood Square, Cheadle Royal Business Park CHEADLE Cheshire SK8 3SB
Responsible individual	Stephen James Nevitt
Registered manager	Mark David Brazier
Date of last inspection	23/10/2013

Inspection date	04/06/2014
------------------------	------------

Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
-------------------	-----------------

The home provides a sound quality of care within an environment that supports the health, well-being, and safety of young people. Young people confirm that they are and feel safe in the home. A recently appointed manager is in place; he is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. There is evidence of and a commitment to continuous practice development.

The rural location of this home helps to keep young people safe by allowing them to escape negative influences and avoid risk-taking behaviour. They benefit from the care provided; some residents make exceptional progress whilst those recently placed are making some progress within a short space of time. Relationships between staff and young people are productive and contribute to the success of placements.

Care planning is robust; of particular note are the quality of the independence skills assessments and plans completed for young people approaching independence. This process contributes to providing young people with the knowledge, skills and emotional resilience needed to make a success of adult life.

While not possible to predict prior to placement, there is some irritation and lack of empathy between young people. However, the situation is not untenable. Staff are

aware of these difficulties and working towards improving and managing the situation until such time as it is possible and in the best interests of one young person to move in a planned way to an independent placement. Any discontent is generally expressed to staff rather than between the young people themselves which avoids the possibility of bullying.

Managers' monitoring reports do not effectively consider the information gathered and use it to inform practice or development needs. As a consequence there is the potential to miss further opportunities to improve the quality of care provided to young people.

The Statement of Purpose, although much improved, remains a work in progress. Some information is unclear or over-complicated and a description of how the home promotes appropriate role models relating to the gender mix of staff is missing. These and other issues raised during this inspection do not appear to be having a direct detrimental impact on the young people.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private organisation. It is registered for the accommodation and care of two young people, of either gender, with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/10/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
18/04/2013	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
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals which makes it possible to identify any patterns or trends and contributes to improving the quality of care provided. (Regulation 34 (1) (a)&(b))	31/07/2014

Recommendations

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

- provide a comfortable and homely environment which is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that the Statement of Purpose is clear and understood by staff and yo

people (NMS 13.1)

- remove any physical restrictions on normal movement within or from the home unless they are necessary to safeguard young people and promote their welfare and development (NMS 10.4)
- review incidents of challenging behaviour to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice; this applies particularly to the use and recording of sanctions (NMS 3.21)
- support and encourage young people to reflect on and understand their history, and to keep appropriate memorabilia of their time in the placement and ensure staff record and help young people to make a record of significant life events (NMS 22.6)
- ensure young people who have been excluded from school or do not have access to a full time school or college placement have access to appropriate education and training opportunities (NMS 8.8)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and this appraisal takes into account any views of the young people the service is provided for. (NMS19.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Contact with families supports young people's understanding of their backgrounds. The home also provides opportunities for young people to understand their backgrounds through discussion, planning, and consultation. This practice contributes towards young people developing confidence and self-esteem. It has also allowed them to develop trust and confidence in the adults caring for them, enabling them to make positive choices and avoid risk-taking behaviour. However, currently there is no system in place for collecting and maintaining photographs and other memorabilia. This means that young people do not have a visual record of their time in the home.

Young people have access to the health services they need to support their physical and emotional health. Some young people have made exceptional progress in reducing harmful negative behaviours which can lead to serious health issues. There is also clear evidence of young people taking increasing responsibility for managing their health issues in a way that prepares them for independence.

Some young people attend full-time educational provision and are making measurable progress which is providing them with the skills they need to compete for further education opportunities and/or employment. Despite the best efforts of the staff, other young people who have a history of poor attendance and attainment are not currently in education. While they are making some headway towards re-engagement, attainment continues to fall behind their peers.

Consultation takes account of young people's feelings and wishes. Young people are involved in all decisions made about the care provided; some are attending review and planning meetings for the first time. Young people commonly choose menus, activities, colour schemes for their bedrooms etc. In addition, they are consulted about behaviour management and problem-solving which contributes to the success of these interventions.

The extent to which young people engage in community activities is variable with some readily engaging in groups and others avoiding these until they feel more secure in life choice decisions. Community facilities are used for shopping and some leisure activities. Hobbies and interests are encouraged; this has led to one young person rebuilding a motorbike from parts with the help of the staff. This supports the young person's college course and will provide them with transport for the future.

Young people approaching adulthood feel prepared and confident about moving on. The home offers opportunities for them to develop practical skills and knowledge alongside emotional resilience and interpersonal skills.

Young people approaching adulthood feel prepared and confident about moving on. The home offers opportunities for them to develop both practical skills and

knowledge, alongside emotional resilience and interpersonal skills.

Quality of care

adequate

Feedback from parents about the care provided is positive with one mother commenting 'I would give the staff 10 out of 10, they really do care; communication is great and we know what's going on. I don't have any concerns; it's a nice place and a great environment.'

Details of how to make a complaint are readily available to young people. They are empowered to express their thoughts and opinions through regular individual support sessions and a number of formal meetings held for the purpose of understanding their views, wishes and feelings. Where it is not possible to act on requests made by young people, the staff help them to understand why. Consultation and discussion help young people to feel valued and contribute to the success of plans and staff interventions. Young people who know what is happening are less anxious and find it easier to develop trust and confidence in the staff caring for them. Relationships between staff and young people are positive.

While all benefit from living in this home, young people do not always get along with one another. Staff manage this situation and encourage young people to develop interpersonal skills and empathy, avoiding any issues of bullying. Staff are also dedicated to supporting all young people to move on in a positive and planned way.

Most care planning is robust; staff understand the individual needs of young people and work as a team to promote positive outcomes and provide consistency of care and support. Health care and specialist support services are readily available. Staff provide support sessions on making healthy lifestyle choices, including opportunities to discuss sexual health and relationships. With improved knowledge and understanding young people can make better informed choices.

By working in partnership with education providers, some young people have been enabled to make significant progress in both attendance and attainment. Other young people who have been out of education for some time are making small steps to re-engage. Plans to compensate for non-attendance at school by offering alternative opportunities for learning are not formalised. This could lead to young people getting further behind their peers in terms of attainment.

Young people are offered opportunities to engage in a wide range of activities which suit their interests and development needs. Some attend community groups which gives them an opportunity to spend time with peers and develop new skills. Other young people avoid community activities in order to avoid previous negative

influences but engage in formal support groups and individual hobbies.

The home's rural location offers a place of safety for young people whose behaviour puts them at significant risk from negative influences in the community and/or exploitation. It also offers a viable alternative for some young people for whom the level of concerns about their welfare might otherwise result in a secure placement. Staff are able to provide transport for young people to activities, community resources or contact as required.

There have been some significant improvements to the building in recent times, including new windows throughout and new flooring in the downstairs areas. Some other areas detract from what is otherwise a homely and suitable environment: the bathroom is shabby as are the sofas in the main lounge. The shed, which is used as a workshop and a place to store one young person's prized motor bike, is in need of repair and suitable 'hard standing' to avoid further deterioration.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people feel safe and are safe in this home; they can readily identify an adult they feel able to talk to. Regular contact with family members and other professionals means that young people also have access to other adults who would be able to act to protect young people should any concerns arise. The quality of care provided, and the level of partnership working with parents and professionals, mean that young people are no longer exposed to situations which threaten their safety and welfare and has enabled them to make positive life-changing decisions.

Some young people have a history of going missing and putting themselves at significant risk but since admission to the home these incidents have reduced. Proactive risk assessments and close collaboration with the police help to ensure the prompt return of young people.

All staff are trained in positive behaviour management and the safe use of physical restraint. Physical restraint is not currently used to manage behaviour. That helps to protect and maintain young people's dignity and avoid further trauma for those who have been abused in the past. It also reflects a belief that those approaching adulthood and independence are not expected to need restraining as they need to learn to regulate their own behaviour in preparation for living independently.

Incentives are used to encourage positive behaviour; staff discuss and negotiate with young people when any difficulties arise. This promotes empathy, self-awareness and resilience as well as developing young people's interpersonal skills, particularly around problem-solving.

The environment is physically safe and secure; environmental risk assessments support the location of the home and these have been shared with appropriate

stakeholders for consideration, including the police. Regular health and safety checks take place; the home is adequately protected against the risk of fire and detection systems are in place. Young people and staff take part in evacuations of the building so that they know what to do in the event of an emergency.

Individual risk assessments have not been reviewed to determine whether or not it is necessary to lock the kitchen door at night. Consequently it is not clear if this practice is necessary to safeguard young people and promote their welfare.

Care plans and risk assessments which detail the particular vulnerabilities of young people are regularly updated and considered by staff. The newly appointed manager has previously worked as a training facilitator. He has been using team meetings to provide additional training and updates to staff relating to the specific needs of young people. Consequently staff understand and have an increased knowledge of pertinent issues; they continue to implement protective factors to safeguard young people and build their resilience.

The company operates a safer recruitment process so that all staff are appropriately checked before starting work with young people. A summary of these checks is kept on the premises for scrutiny by the manager. This practice helps to safeguard young people from those who might seek to harm them or are not suitable to work with young people.

Leadership and management

adequate

The manager has recently been appointed but has worked for the company as a trainer and has had a quality assurance role, monitoring children's homes. identifying any shortfalls and helping to improve their performance. He has also experience of direct work with young people and of managing staff.

A development plan is in place and the manager has already made various improvements for the benefit of young people. These include making sure records are well ordered and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. A commitment to consultation with young people and, where appropriate, other stakeholders are evident.

Staff have access to the training and support they need; additional training can be provided on request either by specialist agencies or by the team manager. Formal supervision is provided on a regular basis and staff have confidence in the ability of the manager. Annual appraisals for staff are overdue; however these have now been planned so that staff have an opportunity to formally review their work and explore personal development options.

Previous requirements and recommendations have been fully or partly met. The

Statement of Purpose has been reviewed several times since the last inspection. Much of the information is clearer with unnecessary and over-complicated information and jargon being removed. It is still a work in progress and needs further amendment to remove some statements which are still ambiguous, vague or over-complicated.

Formal planning for independence is now much more robust and includes the assessment and review of the social, emotional and practical skills young people need to develop in order to succeed in adult life. Care planning can then focus on any identified needs. This document is worthy of wider distribution amongst care providers.

There is a commitment to compliance with regulations and standards. The manager and staff team welcome the challenge of inspection and regular monitoring. Monthly monitoring of the home is completed by other Registered Managers employed by the organisation. Their reports, which are generally thorough and identify actions to improve the home, are forwarded to Ofsted for independent quality assurance purposes.

The monitoring report completed by the manger demonstrates oversight of many aspects of the care provided. However, the summary report lacks analysis of any patterns and trends or detail of how the process contributes to developing the quality of care provided. In addition, monitoring of sanctions has not identified issues relating to poor recording, making it difficult to evaluate effectiveness.

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.