

Inspection report for children's home

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC036304
<b>Inspector</b>	Nick Veysey
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

---

<b>Registered person</b>	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
<b>Registered person address</b>	People Directorate, 9th Floor, Merton House, Stanley BOOTLE Merseyside L20 3JA
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Marlyn Sheila Banham
<b>Registered manager</b>	Sally-Ann Eveline Edwards
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	03/03/2014

<b>Inspection date</b>	14/07/2014
------------------------	------------

Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

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

## Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	<b>adequate</b>
-------------------	-----------------

The overall effectiveness of the children's home is adequate. Young people are making good progress in achieving better outcomes and receive a good quality of care. However, there are weaknesses in relation to dealing effectively with bullying, securing improvements in the monitoring of the home by elected members and the standard of the bathroom facilities. The leaders and managers show that they understand and recognise these areas for development, but so far have not made the necessary changes to improve the home's performance.

The manager and staff understand that protecting young people from bullying is a serious safeguarding issue and are working hard to address the problem, but progress is slow. Although some young people do not always feel safe because of other young people's behaviour, they are consistently positive about the quality of care, support and protection they receive from staff.

The home is fulfilling its objective to prepare young people to live in families. Care planning and staff's practice is personalised and tailored to meet the individual needs and circumstances of each young person. Young people are fully involved in planning for their care and support and are in agreement with the plans for their futures. Staff effectively use personalised placement plans to ensure they meet

young people's assessed needs on a daily basis.

Young people are making excellent progress in their education, building confidence in social skills, managing their worries and frustrations. Young people are now less involved in behaviour that poses a significant risk to their personal safety. Social workers and independent reviewing officers are positive about the quality of care the staff provide, including staff's expertise in building positive relationships with young people, and making positive changes in young people's lives. A social worker said, 'staff work hard to ensure children are safeguarded, and reach their maximum potential and present as happy and settled within the placement.'

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children and young people who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The primary task of the home is to provide short- to medium-term care to prepare children and young people to live in a foster family.

### Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
22/10/2013	Full	good
19/03/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
11/12/2012	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
11 (2001)	promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated. This relates to putting into practice effective strategies to protect children from bullying, negative attitudes and name-calling (Regulation 11(1)(a))	31/07/2014
31 (2001)	ensure that the bathrooms are kept in good structural repair, kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31 (2)(d)(e))	31/08/2014
33 (2001)	ensure that visits by an independent person take place at least once a month and may be	31/08/2014

	unannounced (Regulation 33(7))	
33 (2001)	ensure the independent person interviews, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the children's home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 33(8))	31/08/2014

## Recommendations

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

- ensure the written report showing the findings of the Regulation 33 monitoring visit is of a consistently high quality to assist the service to secure improvement and better outcomes for children. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.13)
- ensure children enjoy sound relationships, interact positively with others and behave appropriately (NMS 3)
- review incidents of bullying, examine trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice and develop effective strategies (NMS 3.21)
- ensure the written report showing the findings of the Regulation 33 monitoring visit is of a consistently high quality to assist the service to secure improvement and better outcomes for children. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.13)

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Overall young people are making good progress and achieving better outcomes in their education, health, social skills, managing their feelings and behaviour. Some young people have successfully moved to live with foster carers and are doing exceptionally well. Other young people are now ready to live with foster carers and waiting for suitable families. Young people are developing positive relationships with staff, showing emotional resilience, building confidence in their skills and taking pride in their achievements; for example one young person was extremely proud of her school report. Young people are becoming more socially confident and skilled, including feeling comfortable initiating conversations and taking on new challenges; for example dealing with the public during their work experience.

Young people are developing life skills appropriate to their age, abilities and level of understanding. Young people are successfully taking on more responsibilities and have every opportunity to build confidence in their skills. They routinely plan, shop and cook meals, and enjoy baking with staff. Young people routinely take part in a full range of enjoyable activities in the community, including playing and socialising with friends, going to the gym, swimming, joining an athletics club, music and singing. Activities in the community have helped young people feel more confident and comfortable around other people and develop a clearer understanding of how to act appropriately.

Young people enjoy good health and improved health outcomes. They enjoy a healthy diet and plenty of physical exercise. They understand about the importance of healthy lifestyles and key health risks, for example about using alcohol. As a result they make positive health choices that improve their own health. There has been a reduction in young people's involvement in behaviour harmful to their health and well-being.

Young people are making very good progress in education, with some doing exceptionally well. They are well-motivated to attend school and keen to do well. Their school attendance is very good and their participation in education and learning has significantly improved since moving in. Consequently, they have increased opportunities to achieve, develop their knowledge and skills, pursue their talents and gain qualifications. Young people are meeting their expected targets and their school reports they are making excellent progress. They play an active part in school life; for example singing in the school choir and taking part in dance and drama clubs.

Young people maintain good relationships with their parents and families through seeing them regularly. Staff work effectively with young people, families, social workers and support services to make sure that contact is a safe and rewarding experience that promotes and builds young people's relationships with important

people in their lives. Staff ensure that the arrangements for seeing their families are consistent with young people's care plans.

## **Quality of care**

**good**

.Young people live in a very supportive home that promotes their welfare and enables them to achieve better outcomes. Staff have aspirations for young people to do well. They are committed to enabling young people to lead happy and fulfilling lives, regardless of the challenges young people may present. They provide a consistently good standard of care, structure and routine in a caring atmosphere. As a result young people receive the stability and nurturing they require to prepare them to live with a family. Young people are very positive about how well they are being looked after. They feel that staff are interested their lives and concerned about the welfare. A young person said, 'the staff are very kind to me.' Social workers and independent reviewing officers are positive about the quality of care. They commented 'it is seen as the child's home and is comfortable and provides all the support a family home would offer' and 'it is nurturing and welcoming.'

Young people's views and wishes influence the running of the home and the decisions affecting their lives. Overall they feel that the staff always listen to them, take their complaints seriously and try hard to sort things out. A social worker said, 'from my experience, the young person has a positive relationship with key workers and has expressed that they feel able to talk to them if they have any worries or questions.'

Young people know their placement plans and are involved in writing them, including choosing their goals. The plans are detailed, set out all of their individual needs and the support to promote and safeguard their welfare. They are written from the young person's perspective and use language that young people find easy to understand. The plans clearly show what young people want to achieve, for example, 'get on better with my family' what the young person needs to do and what support they need to help them. Staff have a detailed knowledge of the young people they work with, ensuring that young people receive very good individual support and guidance. Staff put young people's placement plans into practice effectively. Staff's day-to-day practice recognises young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their diverse personal needs. Social workers and independent reviewing officers said, 'staff support the children in terms of reaching their desired goals and individually tailor their placement plans to meet their specific needs' and 'staff show commitment and endeavour in terms of planning good outcomes for children.' Staff routinely monitor and review plans with young people to make sure that they are comfortable with the plan, it is moving at the right pace for them and they have the right support and guidance now and in the future to make their move successful. In this way staff make sure the plans and their practice continue to meet

young people's needs. Staff develop strong partnerships with parents, social workers and the key people supporting young people. They appropriately share information about young people's progress and experiences. As a result they contribute effectively to plans for young people's futures.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. They have very good access to a full range of health services. Staff have a very good understanding of young people's specific health and emotional needs. They provide excellent advice on health issues, including diet, sexual health, alcohol and relationships and ensure young people's needs are met on a daily basis. They also ensure young people get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling poorly or have an accident.

Staff actively promote young people's education and are successful in developing young people's opportunities to learn and achieve. Staff ensure that the daily routine supports young people's participation in education and school attendance. Staff fully support young people with their homework. Young people have good access to plenty of books, art materials, games, computers and other educational resources. Staff have established strong links with schools and work effectively with teachers when young people are experiencing difficulties. The manager and staff work tenaciously to challenge any barriers to young people's full participation in education. Young people currently not in full-time education follow suitable online education packages and activities based on their interests. This is encouraging their involvement in education and preparing them to return to school after the summer holidays. Staff also work very hard to ensure that young people have opportunities to pursue their interests outside school and enjoy the same experiences as other young people, including going on holiday.

Young people live in a comfortable family house. Young people's bedrooms are suitably decorated and furnished to reflect young people's individual needs, personalities and tastes. Although the communal areas are reasonably decorated and furnished, the décor is showing signs of wear and tear. The bathrooms, however, are not maintained, furnished and decorated to a reasonable standard. The toilets, sinks, tiles and baths are old and worn and do not provide a pleasant environment for young people to carry out their personal care.

### **Keeping children and young people safe    adequate**

Young people do not always feel safe because of other young people's behaviour. They are sometimes exposed to bullying, negative attitudes and name-calling. Young people said 'It is alright here if you don't mind been called names'; 'I am happy here. I do not like it when other young people are home as they are always shouting and kicking off at staff or us. I do not like the way some young people speak to the staff'; and 'this behaviour effects the safety for me in the home because I tend to keep out of the way until the young person has gone out. There is always a lot of screaming



and shouting from some children at the home which is what I am not used to.' Young people said that staff 'try their best' to support them to deal with other young people's behaviour, 'but nothing has changed.' A social worker said '(young person) is in a difficult situation, she feels targeted by another young person, staff try hard to manage it. They provide her with good support and build up her self-esteem to help her feel good about herself when it happens.'

Staff are working hard to deal with bullying and behaviour that is having a negative impact on young people's well-being. The culture of the home reinforces a clear expectation that any form of bullying is totally unacceptable and must not happen. Staff use reasonable strategies to try to reduce the risk of bullying, including providing a good level of supervision, managing young people's time together, activities to promote positive relationships, challenging the behaviour, developing coping strategies for young people, helping young people understand the impact of their behaviours on others and mediation. The focus of the work is on building positive self-view, self-esteem and resilience of all the young people involved and to promote relationships and treat other people with respect. There are signs of some progress over time. Young people do not show physically aggressive or violent behaviour, they are able to talk about their feelings and there has been a reduction in risky behaviours, including being missing from home and using alcohol. However, the strategies are not being effective in reducing some young people's verbal aggression towards other young people and staff. As a result young people are choosing to avoid spending time with each other, reducing the opportunities to build better relationships, develop tolerance and respect for other people and work out disagreements constructively. In addition, there is a potential risk of the behaviour impacting on young people's emotional and social development.

Written risk assessments and plans for young people's safety clearly identify risks and are consistently put into practice. The risk assessments give a detailed picture of the specific measures staff need to take, including direct work about dealing with feelings, personal safety and the risks of sexual exploitation. Staff have a very clear understanding of young people's particular vulnerabilities relating to their level of understanding and emotional maturity. This enables them to ensure young people are safe at home and in the community. Staff effectively balance the need for protection with enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development. Staff give young people's safety the highest priority and they are well trained in safeguarding. They are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and risks relating to child sexual exploitation. They know exactly what they need to do when they have concerns about young people and take decisive action to protect young people. Staff work effectively with young people and the safeguarding agencies, including the police, to promote young people's safety. The manager and staff report all serious incidents that may impact on young people's safety to the relevant people and agencies.

Staff are fully aware of the factors that may lead young people to go missing and have taken effective action to reduce the risk. When young people have gone

missing in the past they have been found quickly and have received the reassurance and support they needed to be welcomed home safely. Staff have recorded young people's views about what happened and why they went missing. This has helped staff to understand young people's reasons and provide appropriate support to encourage them to not go missing.

The selection of staff has been very thorough to make sure young people are protected and staff have the skills, experience, qualifications and motivation to work with vulnerable young people. Young people are protected from any hazards by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency.

### **Leadership and management**

### **adequate**

The Registered Manager has been in charge of the home since 1999. She has substantial relevant experience and has the appropriate professional and management qualifications. She continues to develop her knowledge and skills through ongoing professional development; for example building her knowledge around social pedagogy. The manager provides strong leadership and effective day-to-day management of the home. The home has a strong culture of providing a supportive and nurturing environment for vulnerable young people and making a positive difference to their lives. The manager demonstrates a clear and realistic understanding of the home's strengths and has made some improvements. Since the last inspection the quality of written risk assessments and placement plans have improved to provide a more detailed picture of young people's progress and experiences. As a result the records provide accurate information that contributes to an understanding of young people's lives and informs the plans for their care. The records clearly show the difference the home is making to young people's lives and measurable outcomes.

Although the manager and leaders understand the home's weaknesses, they have not been able to secure necessary improvements that potentially impact on young people's care, including managing bullying behaviour, the standard of young people's bathroom facilities and the quality of the monitoring of the home by elected members. Elected members are not carrying out monitoring visits every month. This problem was also identified at our inspection in October 2013. The local authority does not have an effective system to ensure monitoring visits always take place. Consequently there is a lack of appropriate oversight of the running of the home. The quality of the monitoring reports prepared by elected members is not of a consistently high standard. Some reports are comprehensive and identify areas for improvement, but others do not provide a clear picture of young people's experiences and the quality of the care or include consultation with young people, parents or social workers and independent reviewing officers. This lack of thoroughness does not assist the manager and leaders to understand the effectiveness of the home's

approaches or to secure improvements and better outcomes for children.

Young people are looked after by very experienced, skilled, appropriately qualified, and compassionate people. Staff are effectively deployed to promote and safeguard young people's welfare. Staff work well together and follow a clear and consistent approach that provides young people with a suitable structure and routine. Staff feel very well supported by the manager. The manager and staff have professional supervision at regular intervals to provide them routine opportunities to discuss their performance, development and any concerns with a senior person. Team meetings take place routinely to provide staff with the chance as a group to review and reflect on young people's progress, the running of the home and how best to develop and improve the standard of care and support.

## 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.