

Inspection report for children's home

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|--------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC046276    |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Paul Taylor |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full        |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Secure Unit |

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|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Registered person</b>         | Devon County Council                             |
| <b>Registered person address</b> | County Hall Topsham Road Exeter Devon EX2<br>4QD |
| <b>Responsible individual</b>    | Andrea Morris                                    |
| <b>Registered manager</b>        | Peter Richard Spearman                           |
| <b>Date of last inspection</b>   | 04/02/2014                                       |

|                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| <b>Inspection date</b> | 23/09/2014 |
|------------------------|------------|

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Previous inspection                      | good progress |
| Enforcement action since last inspection | none          |

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| <b>This inspection</b>                                |                 |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                          | <b>adequate</b> |
| Outcomes for children and young people                | good            |
| Quality of care                                       | adequate        |
| Keeping children and young people safe                | good            |
| Leadership and management                             | adequate        |
| Outcomes in education and related learning activities | adequate        |

## Overall effectiveness

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

Young people benefit from their placements in this home. Staff practice ensures their safety, and relationships between young people and members of staff are warm and respectful. Members of staff clearly know the needs of the young people in their care and this enables the young people to make good progress and develop trust in their carers.

While approaches to care are individualised, some key records such as care plans and risk assessments are not robustly reviewed to ensure they are still relevant and up to date. Although this has not compromised young people's safety, it does not provide secure evidence that plans of care and some risk assessments have been scrutinised closely. Records of sanctions have shortfalls that have not been identified during checks carried out by managers.

The management team is in a time of transition and this has entailed some changes in responsibilities and duties for key members of staff. As yet these changes have not become fully embedded and improvements to identified weaknesses in the service have not yet been robustly addressed. Nevertheless, aspirations for the

service are ambitious and the management team is committed to providing a high level of service and to develop the facilities on site.

Three requirements have been made as a result of this inspection together with eight recommendations. These relate to ensuring that key records, such as care plans and risk assessments, are kept up to date in line with regulations, that cleanliness of the home is of a high standard throughout, that the effectiveness of sanctions and reasons for their imposition are clearly in place and records of single separation include details of how members of staff have tried to re integrate the young people during the period away from their peers. There are four recommendations about the provision of education. These relate to: improving the quality of teaching and learning by embedding the best practice evident within the school; strengthening the effectiveness of target setting and monitoring of individuals progress; improving the use of ICT to support teaching and learning and resolving the staffing issues which impair improvement.

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to restrict young people's liberty. Education is provided on site.

The children's home can accommodate up to 10 young people, who are aged between 10 and 17 years. Young people subject of Section 25 of The Children Act 1989 and placed by local authorities. Admission of any young person under section 25 of The Children Act 1989 who is over the age of 10 but under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

### Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 04/02/2014      | Interim         | good progress        |
| 10/10/2013      | Full            | good                 |
| 04/12/2012      | Interim         | good progress        |
| 23/05/2012      | 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   |
|--------------|--|------------|
| 23<br>(2001) | ensure that any activities in which children participate are so far as reasonably practicable free from avoidable risks; specifically, that risk assessments are robust, regularly reviewed and kept up to date as required (Regulation 23(b)) | 31/10/2014 |
| 28<br>(2001) | maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in a   | 31/10/2014 |

|           |  |            |
|-----------|--|------------|
|           | permanent form which is kept up to date; specifically, care plans for each young person (Regulation 28(1)(b))                                |            |
| 31 (2001) | ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained. (Regulation 31 (2)(e)) | 31/10/2014 |

## Recommendations

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

- ensure sanctions for poor behaviour are not punitive and are restorative in nature; specifically, that any sanctions imposed are relevant to the misdemeanour and have an impact on the child or young person's behaviour (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.89)
- ensure the effectiveness of any sanction or disciplinary measure is consistently reviewed (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.92)
- ensure children are provided with appropriate education while in the home; specifically, that all lessons are pitched appropriately to meet the needs of all learners and by embedding best practice evident within the school (NMS 23.11)
- ensure children are provided with appropriate education while in the home; specifically, further strengthen the effectiveness of target setting and the monitoring of individuals progress (NMS 23.11)
- ensure children are provided with appropriate education while in the home; specifically, improve the use of ICT to support teaching and learning (NMS 23.11)
- ensure children are provided with appropriate education while in the home; specifically, resolve the staffing issues which are an impediment to improvement (NMS 23.11)
- ensure that accurate records are kept of staff working in the home demonstrate the staffing level; specifically, ensure the registered manager's hours on site are included in the rota (NMS 17.2)
- ensure that records kept for the use of single separation are sufficiently detailed to evidence what actions staff have taken to reintegrate young people and the outcome of any intervention; ensure the intervention is fully evaluated for effectiveness. (NMS 23.13)

## Inspection judgements

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

Young people benefit from their time in this home. They are able to take time to reflect upon their behaviours and histories and as a result develop better insight and strategies in how to improve their life chances.

Young people have their health needs met to a good standard. Their health improves and they have good health outcomes. They receive specialist input from health professionals such as psychiatrist, substance misuse workers as well as regular visits to the home by a General Practitioner and nurse. The routines and consistent care in the home also ensure that the young people's emotional health is supported very well.

Young people's views are encouraged and they have a number of different forums where they can share their thoughts and opinions. These include young people's meetings, sessions with key workers, time with managers and social workers as well as visits from an independent visitor. As a result of this, young people have a voice in how they feel they are being cared for and can influence decisions such as choices of menus, activities and helping to develop a video which informs young people who are new to the home, what it is like to live here.

Young people are able to maintain contact with those that are important to them thorough telephone calls and visits. The young people are aware of any restrictions on contact and this is explained to them.

Transition planning is regularly reviewed; this enables managers to reflect on, learn from and inform placing authorities about the importance and need for robust plans to be identified to ensure successful transitions. Young people's exit plans show that they benefit from good preparation for their return to the community. This includes approved visits to new placements and increased outings into the local community so that the young people can develop trust and practice their coping skills and strategies.

### Quality of care **adequate**

The quality of care provided to young people is adequate. Not all young people have up-to-date placing authority care and pathways plans. The lack of these plans has affected the quality of some internal placement plans which vary in quality and are not all up-to-date. Scrutiny of these documents by managers and supervisors has not been robust. In addition, the quality of individual risk assessments is variable. Not all provide a clear understanding of the young people concerned and all risk indicators.

As a result, these documents do not consistently inform or provide evidence on how risks should be managed. This has not had an impact on the safety of young people as staff management of risky situations is sound.

The care team works effectively with education colleagues to ensure that young people have good educational opportunities. Effective systems are in place to ensure that communication and information sharing is well managed. The introduction of catch up sessions after school hours and reading club in September 2014, has promoted and enabled young people to continue their learning beyond the school day.

The management team and staff recognise and understand the diverse care needs of young people living at the home. The young people understand and respect consistently implemented rules, boundaries and expectations of behaviour. Young people are encouraged to consider, develop and show tolerance towards others.

Mealtimes are relaxed and sociable occasions. Young people are provided with meals that are varied, nutritious and plentiful. Young people say that they really enjoy the meals provided and alternatives are always available. All young people are encouraged to maintain a healthy weight through regular physical exercise. For example, the outdoor areas afford young people opportunities to play basketball and football. The home's gym and sports hall accommodates a wide range of exercise equipment. Communal areas are well utilised and provide a range of in-house activities such as a dance machine, table tennis, music room, arts and crafts.

For those young people that enjoy quiet time, they can access areas that enable them to read in a relaxed location. Those young people who are on mobility programmes are able to undertake activities such as, approved visits to the local swimming pools and walks on the beach. Additional activities are promoted by staff that have specific skills and interests. These include, drawing, beauty sessions, cooking and board games.

A particular area of strength identified is the strong relationships between staff and young people and the team work hard to establish and maintain these. A young person said, 'When I ask a question most of the care staff answer it; this makes me feel listened too and makes me feel that they do actually care.'

Young people are able to make a complaint should they need to. They have access to an independent advocate who visits regularly and who is available to take an active role in the complaints procedures, should a young person request this. Young people said they know how to make a complaint but do not do so often as staff listen to them. Records of complaints made include information on how the issue has been resolved and whether the complainant is satisfied with the outcome.

The health care team and care staff work effectively together to ensure the health care needs of all young people are promoted, monitored, reviewed and met. All

young people and staff are provided with good support from the in-house specialist health services that include a psychologist, psychiatrist and therapist.

The home's location, design and size support its purpose and function as a secure children's home. However, the standard of cleanliness and maintenance within this home is variable. Areas within the home are looking tired and worn. Young people who need support and guidance to maintain their bedroom to a good standard have not had this consistently provided.

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

The arrangements for safeguarding young people are good. Young people confirm that they feel safe and well protected and no concerns were raised by them during the inspection.

Young people's welfare is given the highest priority. Care practice is underpinned by robust safeguarding policies and procedures that are fully understood and implemented by staff. Child protection training is delivered at regular intervals ensuring staff keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date. This ensures staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in keeping young people safe and secure. When issues and concerns arise, staff are quick to take action to ensure the safety and well-being of all involved.

The home has good links with external safeguarding agencies and professionals. All allegations and child protection concerns are reported quickly and managed in the best interests of the safety and well-being of young people. These links are maintained throughout any investigation and managers are proactive in pursuing external agencies to ensure matters that are referred to them are processed effectively. Particularly strong links are maintained with the local authority designated officer (LADO) who speaks very positively about the staff who regularly utilise her skills and expertise. The LADO undertakes a monthly visit to the home to undertake an audit of safeguarding actions and records and to review closed circuit television (CCTV) footage of restraints. This external oversight ensures young people are safeguarded and child protection concerns are effectively managed.

Young people's risk of suicide and self-harm are rigorously assessed at the point of admission. A risk assessment is devised and reviewed on a regular basis to include any new or relevant information. Staff implement good risk management strategies and provide young people with a high level of emotional and practical support during their times of crisis. This includes high levels of supervision including regular checks through the night. As a result, highly vulnerable young people are protected.

Staff know young people in their care well and quickly identify and effectively manage tensions between individuals. Staff are acutely aware of the potential for bullying and the impact bullying can have on young people. They effectively manage



the environment and group dynamics through good use of supervision and positive relationships. This helps to ensure any form of bullying is promptly and proportionately challenged and addressed with those involved.

There have been no incidents of young people absconding when out on approved visits to the local community with staff. The home has good security regimes that staff consistently follow to ensure the integrity of the secure environment is maintained at all times. The home also has appropriate protocols in place should a young person abscond. These include agreed procedures with the local police that are based on young people's individual risks and vulnerabilities. This ensures there is a clearly established, risk-led and proportionate response in the event of any young person absconding.

On the whole there is a very positive approach to behaviour management. Staff constantly reinforce positive behaviour through recognition, praise and treats. This positive approach is further supplemented by the home's incentive scheme which is well embedded in the daily routine. Young people fully understand and talk positively about the scheme and clearly want to progress to higher levels in order to gain more privileges and rewards.

The home continues to move towards a more restorative approach to responding to negative behaviour; an area in which it has received a recognised award. This has proven effective in helping young people reflect on their behaviour and how it impacts on others. This has led to a reduction in the use of sanctions; only 45 since the last inspection. All sanctions are recorded and there is clear evidence that the views of young people are sought in a large majority of cases. However, there is an over reliance on the use of early bedtimes, which account for a significant proportion of the sanctions given and rarely bears relevance to the misdemeanour. This, and the lack of assessing the effectiveness of the sanction in changing behaviour, have not been picked up by managers who monitor and evaluate sanction records.

All staff are trained in the use of physical intervention. The home does not use pain compliance techniques. Restraint has been used on a number of occasions, but only where necessary and as a last resort to prevent young people harming themselves or others. All incidents of restraint are subject to rigorous scrutiny, including reviewing incidents using CCTV. This has proven effective in improving practice and identifying trends and patterns of behaviour. Staff work closely with the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) who also analyse this information and develop individual behaviour management strategies for staff to put in practice. This proactive approach has contributed to helping minimise the number of restraints for some very challenging young people with complex needs.

The use of single separation is appropriate and young people are only segregated from the group when they are a risk to themselves or others. Young people confirm that single separation is used appropriately and that staff make every effort to help them return to the group as quickly as possible. Records are maintained but vary in

quality. For example, they provide very little information about the management of the separation including key details such as what actions staff have taken to reintegrate young people, and what was the outcome of the intervention. This means it is difficult for managers to rigorously assess staff practice or evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention.

The use of searches is appropriate with staff suitably trained to carry them out. The searching of young people is determined by risk and young people are not subjected to unnecessary searches. Different levels of search are undertaken by staff. These range from asking the young people to empty their pockets, to a full search which involves young people removing their clothing and undergoing a pat down search over a dressing gown. The manager confirms that there have been no intimate searches, which would only be undertaken by a police surgeon. Records are kept of all searches and the risk-led approach ensures young people's dignity is promoted and balanced with the need to keep them and others safe.

Processes for recruiting staff are good. New staff are appropriately vetted to ensure they are suitable to work with vulnerable young people. All visitors must report and sign in and appropriate levels of supervision are provided throughout their visit.

Young people live in a physically safe and secure environment. They are well protected by a wide range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and routine checks that are regularly reviewed and kept up-to-date. Young people and staff are regularly involved in fire drills to ensure they know how to stay safe.

## **Leadership and management**

## **adequate**

The home has a qualified and experienced Registered Manager in post. However, the home is currently going through a period of transition whereby the management arrangements are undergoing change and members of staff are in acting up positions until a permanent resolution to the issue is found.

These changes to management arrangements have yet to show sustained effectiveness. For example, some key records, such as care plans, sanctions and risk assessments have gaps and do not show that shortfalls have been robustly addressed.

While young people's welfare has not been compromised by these shortfalls, the effective scrutiny to ensure that the records are of a high quality, has not been maintained. While there is a plan in place to store and update records electronically, this is yet to be put into practice.

A recommendation made at the last inspection to ensure that sanctions are understood by all members of staff has been addressed. A new incentive system has been put in place and this addresses problematic behaviour at school in a more

timely and relevant manner.

The home has clear Statement of Purpose which ensures that parents and placing authorities are aware of the services which the home provides. This is supplemented by a video as well as handbook for young people. The video has been made with the young people's input and gives a child centred view of what to expect when they are placed at the home.

The home has sufficient staff to ensure that the young people are supported and kept safe. They all receive varied training which means they have the skills to care for the young people. Members of staff report receiving good support from colleagues and managers. A staff member stated, 'There's always someone to talk to if I need to learn something or need advice.' However, the provision of formal recorded supervision is not consistently achieved. This means that some members of staff are not able to regularly discuss their performance or opinions about how they feel the home is being run in a structured and formal way.

The roster system records the hours that members of staff are on duty and when they are in the building. This system does not accurately record the hours that the Registered Manager is in the home and so it can be difficult for members of staff or external managers to know when he has been on duty or in the building.

The home has an effective system which ensures that any significant incidents are promptly passed on to the relevant agencies. This ensures that concerns can be acted upon and that the home is accountable and transparent in its practice.

Senior managers and the leadership team are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. The home is also having its performance assessed as part of a peer review involving professionals from within and external to the service. This approach ensures that the performance of the home is scrutinised and that external professionals can help develop practice and ensure that the home does not operate in isolation.

### **Outcomes in education and related learning activities**

### **adequate**

Young people settle well in education and many begin to develop a sense of purpose and achievement necessary for them to learn. They follow highly individualised programmes based on their social and behavioural needs and academic targets. Most make good progress in subjects during their time at the home; overall progress is better in mathematics than in English. A minority struggle to cope with the expectations of the classroom which limits their learning.

In design technology young people are detailed in their work, measure accurately and show responsibility when using power tools safely under close supervision. In

the 'forest school' setting they practise the skills needed to interact and work cooperatively. In PE physical education (PE) some young people act as coaches to others requiring them to explain tasks, correct mistakes and show patience. Young people enjoy and make progress in vocational studies which act as a taster in areas such as hair and beauty and design technology. Reported attendance at education is good at 95%.

Teaching is good overall but the school has not yet achieved sufficient levels of consistency in standards. Teachers increasingly draw on the outcomes of assessment on entry to inform their practice; the best set challenging learning targets and have clear expectations about conduct and behaviour in the classroom or workshop. They generally judge well the levels of challenge which young people are given and achieve a good balance of structure and informality. In the better lessons, they seamlessly combine teacher led elements with independent learning. Teachers link activities, in mathematics for example, with vocational lessons in cookery which young people attend later that day. There were good examples of simple but effective techniques in the classroom to support the school-wide strategy to improve young people's skills in speaking and listening. However, not all teachers incorporate these essential features into their planning or practice.

Overall, these refined approaches to teaching and learning are not sufficiently embedded and not all teachers are able to identify where and how their lessons can be improved.

All young people are assessed on entry and assigned a national curriculum level for all subjects. Screening for specific learning difficulties takes place, functional skills are assessed, and an induction period planned accordingly. Despite efforts on the part of managers, arrangements to support their wider developmental needs, particularly in respect of externally arranged speech and language assessments are weak. This is a reflection of poor information and records from placing authorities which weaken the home's capacity to devise comprehensive education plans or commission the right therapeutic support.

Recent activity to strengthen the effectiveness of individual monitoring includes the introduction of the 'assessing pupil progress' (APP) scheme. This aims to enable more accurate and timely assessment of reading and writing. The scheme potentially lends itself well to the needs of a transient and challenging school population; however, teachers have yet to become sufficiently familiar with its application. Consideration is being given to a similar approach for mathematics.

A 'student learning plan journey' document is in place which includes key targets for academic subjects. Notably, targets for young people's social and personal development are often missing. The document records progress in curriculum subjects well and staff meet regularly to discuss interventions and young people's needs. As it stands however, the document is unwieldy. End of session individual monitoring sheets lack input from young people and weekly subject plans serve a

limited purpose.

The curriculum has recently been reviewed to better meet needs. English and mathematics are programmed daily and there is improved access to PE, dance and performing arts. Vocational studies have also increased with young people having access to various options three times per week. New and more stretching accreditation arrangements in vocational areas, better aligned to promoting young people's employability skills, are in place but not yet fully tested. Managers have drawn on expertise from a local school to help secure these improvements and staff jointly moderate work. Careers information advice and guidance is provided by an external adviser.

Use of information and communication technology (ICT) is poor and electronic whiteboards significantly under-utilised. There is no clear strategy to determine best practice in using ICT to support teaching and learning. Scope exists for better and more imaginative classroom displays.

Young people engage in a good range of leisure and enrichment activities that they enjoy and which extend their knowledge and understanding. Where practical, approved external visits such as to local galleries are undertaken. Young people value these opportunities and appreciate them as an element of their broader education. The 'forest school' innovation provides a unique learning environment for young people and fulfils well a clear educational, social and therapeutic function. Themed weeks on, for example, creativity and film making take place with input from local partner organisations.

An educational monitoring board comprising external partners, provides guidance and scrutiny to the headteacher and senior staff. The board is still new but brings a significant amount of educational expertise to the school. In addition, an external school improvement partner provides a valuable insight and detailed analysis to senior school staff on teaching and learning. These are all positive and constructive developments. The local authority also provides good support. Senior staff carry out periodic 'learning walks' linked to particular themes. While of value, these need to be more closely aligned to teaching and learning and on helping teachers improve their lessons. Managers are responsive to teacher's continuing professional development (CPD) needs.

The quality of teaching and learning and the capacity to secure improvements are being adversely affected by staffing uncertainties. The school is therefore not yet in a position to ensure that there is the right mix of teaching expertise to meet the home's ambitions for young people. There are too many occasions where authorised absences occur for non-school purposes, such as meetings, which could be rescheduled outside school hours. Too much teaching time has been lost in the current term to whole unit CPD sessions which occur during school time. Staff value these training sessions but school time is lost as a result.

## 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.