

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC032058
Inspector	Jennie Christopher
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Buckinghamshire County Council
Registered person address	Chief Officer County Hall, Walton Street AYLESBURY Buckinghamshire HP20 1UA
Responsible individual	Steve Tanner
Registered manager	Carla Eve Keyte
Date of last inspection	17/10/2013

Inspection date	09/09/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Young people make good progress in their lives as a result of living in the home. They enjoy some excellent relationships with staff who invest in young people's development and listen to young people's views. Young people learn to build positive relationships with staff and each other in a safe, non-judgmental environment. Observations show young people feel relaxed and that staff are concerned for their well-being. Staff and managers have developed effective joint working relationships with parents, education and a range of specialist services to promote consistency in care and placement planning.

Young people are actively involved in consultation and service development through group meetings and individual sessions, leading to improvements in décor and opening a dialogue on changes to bedtimes and financial allowances.

The home is effectively managed by an enthusiastic Registered Manager, who is successfully fostering change in practice with the support of a willing team of staff. Strengths and weaknesses within the home are promptly rectified once identified. Development plans highlight areas for improvement in the quality of care and fabric of the building, enabling an improved living experience for young people. Staff comment positively on their training and opportunities for development of care practice in addition to regular support through supervision. Young people benefit

from continuity in staffing and a consistent approach to care.

Areas identified as requiring improvement as a result of this inspection include: updating documents and consent for the use of a listening device on the landing; further development and streamlining of internal care plans and continuing the refurbishment of the home, with particular regard to the kitchen.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home, providing residential care for up to six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/10/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
30/04/2013	Full	adequate
18/03/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
04/12/2012	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
22 (2001)	ensure that electronic monitoring devices for the surveillance of young people are not used except for the purpose of safeguarding young people. Further ensure the following conditions are met: (a) the placing authority consents to the use of the measure;(b) it is included in placement plans;(c) young people are informed in advance of the intention to use the measure. (Regulation 22(1)(a-c))	31/10/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure care plans reflect young people's individual identity and people and events that are important to them (NMS 2.1)
- continue the refurbishment of the home to ensure it provides a comfortable and homely environment, in particular the kitchen (NMS 10.3)
- further develop in house care plans and behaviour management plans to ensure they reflect young people's care in line with their individual Placement Plans. (NMS 25)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people make good progress while living in the home. They have consistent support to gain an understanding of their personal histories and the issues which led to them being in care. Young people are able to explore who they are in a safe and increasingly nurturing environment. As a result young people develop improved confidence and self-view. Young people learn the basis of healthy attachments through their relationships with staff, providing them with the skills to form appropriate relationships in the future.

Young people have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. Meals are home made and young people are encouraged to try new foods and expand their diets. Young people devise their own weekly activity plans, which include a variety of physically and emotionally stimulating pastimes. Some young people in the home smoke and/or misuse substances. External specialist support agencies are actively involved with individuals to address this and young people are very positive about the help they receive. As a result, there is a reduction in substance misuse but this is yet to be sustained. In addition, specialist sexual health workers engage with young people in the home in both group and individual sessions regarding sexual health and safe relationships, including the risks of exploitation. Being missing from care has dramatically reduced and in some cases ceased. Those who have been away from the home without permission benefit from independent returning home sessions from a national charity. Young people have previously been engaged with youth offending workers, however offending is not currently a concern.

Young people share their views and ideas for the home in group and individual meetings. Changes within the home have included a brighter décor throughout the building. Meetings are also a forum to explore issues within group relationships and for young people to raise issues they have with house rules.

Young people are all involved in full time education. Some have recently completed their GCSE's and have successfully transitioned to college courses. Young people demonstrate their commitment to learning, as many travel considerable distance to attend the college of their choice. In addition to formal education, young people are involved in youth engagement courses, including mechanics. An animal charity visited the home and commended a young person's care of their pet rabbits.

Young people learn skills for independence dependent on their age and ability. A young person who is on 'full independence' feels she is ready for her next move and is looking forward to her next stage. Many people who have moved on from the home remain in contact, including those who have children and grandchildren of their own.

Quality of care

good

Young people have very positive relationships with staff who are consistently concerned for all aspects of their wellbeing. Young people talk positively about staff, and a parent said 'they always make me welcome in the home'. Staff strive to form excellent working relationships with parents, carers and a range of external agencies to promote continuity and best practice in care for young people. Consistency in boundaries ensures young people are aware of the behavioural expectations and anti-social behaviour in the home and community has decreased as a result.

Young people's views are welcomed and acted upon when appropriate. Formal and ad hoc group meetings and individual sessions provide young people with the opportunity to share any ideas or concerns about the home and care they receive. Communication is open and young people are currently debating pocket money and bed times with staff. Young people are aware of the complaints procedure and are supported to make their voice heard both internally and with external agencies. Bullying is not raised as a concern within the home and staff are vigilant to any signs of power imbalance.

Young people's care plans are currently being overhauled to provide a greater level of individuality. They currently list the placement objectives rather than identify how these objectives will be met. The Registered Manager is aware of the lack of individuality and 'personal touch' in the plans. The behaviour support plans however provide an excellent insight into young people's placement needs and how to support them in all aspects of their lives. Young people are actively involved in the review process and staff ensure their views are heard during the meetings. A recently introduced system to review individual progress clearly demonstrates young people's achievements and areas where they require extra support. Contact with family and friends is facilitated as required. Contact is monitored and evaluated to ensure it remains beneficial for the young person.

All young people are engaged in full time education and have excellent support to overcome any barriers to learning. Observations demonstrate managers and staff liaising with schools, the education authority and youth engagement providers to ensure young people have a fulfilling education experience. Daily liaison with classroom staff ensures both home and school are aware of any concerns. This liaison increases consistency in approach across settings to managing difficulties and unwanted behaviours. As a result of careful planning and liaison with education, young people have the support they require to have the opportunity to succeed in line with their peers.

Young people's positive behaviour is promoted through consistently applied methods. The home's monetary based reward programme encourages positive behaviour in individually specified areas. Young people understand the system and use the money for a variety of activities or to save for something they would like. Sanctions are increasingly fair and proportionate. The Registered Manager monitors sanctions to

ensure they are reflective of the unwanted behaviour and that they are having an impact on improving behaviour.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people appear relaxed and comfortable with staff in the home, suggesting they feel safe. They identify staff they would go to if they were worried or upset and staff are aware of young people's needs and vulnerabilities. Staff work proactively to support young people to understand risky behaviours and to reduce individual risks. Staff are confident of the processes to follow should they be concerned for a young person's welfare and training in safeguarding and exploitation increases their knowledge in this area.

Bullying is not currently identified as a concern. Staff are vigilant to issues and dynamics within the group and respond in a robust manner to anything that could lead to bullying behaviour. Young people appear respectful of each other's differences and needs, but do get frustrated at times as a group of peers living together. Staff recognise the differences between sibling style arguments and genuine bullying and facilitate discussions between individuals in times of conflict.

Safeguarding investigations and concerns are responded to swiftly and managed in a robust manner. Records of concerns are clear and demonstrate the home follows local procedures. Great thought has been given to a specific concern to ensure all young people were kept safe while being able to act in an age appropriate manner, therefore respecting the individual's dignity. Policies within the home are devised in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. They are clear and updated in response to safeguarding concerns locally and nationally.

Young people do go missing on occasion. When young people leave the home without permission or do not return at the agreed time, staff try to remain in contact with them. Staff may follow young people or look for them in known locations when it is safe to do so. There are robust measures in place should a young person be missing. The home has excellent working relationships with local and specialist police officers. Staff identify with young people the reasons why they left the home without permission and how they can prevent this happening in the future. Workshops and return from missing sessions with an independent organisation further support young people to consider the risks when they are missing and how to reduce their vulnerability in the community and on line. Individual files contain up-to-date photographs of young people for use in case of emergency.

Highly individualised positive behaviour plans identify causes of and responses to negative behaviour. Young people are rewarded through verbal praise, small treats and the home's monetary based reward system. Staff support young people to reflect

on incidents and the causes of unwanted behaviour, including how they could respond differently in the future. Restraint is used, but always as a last resort. The Registered Manager monitors incidents of physical intervention to determine patterns in behaviour and consider what further support individuals may require. Staff are trained in safe physical intervention practice and focus on de-escalation. Records of sanctions and restraints are clear and young people are encouraged to have their views recorded.

Regular checks of the building, fire precautions and other safety procedures protect young people from unnecessary risk. Liaison with the fire service supported the home to address an issue of fire setting with young people and this has not been a concern since. The use of a listening device on the landing has not been specifically agreed with placing social workers, young people or included in young people's care plans. Room searches are conducted with appropriate reason, and staff gain young people's consent prior to the search when able. The organisation's recruitment practice is thorough, including robust personnel checks.

Leadership and management

good

The home has an effective and enthusiastic manager who was registered by Ofsted in February 2014. The manager holds an NVQ 4 qualification in management and caring for children and young people. Additionally they are currently undertaking the level 5 qualification in leadership and management.

The Registered Manager has an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the home. Their daily presence ensures staff are able to approach them with any concerns. Additionally, the manager gains knowledge of current issues and practice in the home. When shortfalls or poor practice are identified, the manager rectifies these swiftly. Quarterly scrutiny of manager's monthly monitoring identifies trends and patterns. Comprehensive reports in relation to visits conducted under Regulation 33 provide further insight into the quality of service provided and areas to be included in the home's development plan. Questionnaires completed by parents and various partner agencies provide valuable feedback regarding the home and staff.

The statement of purpose is reflective of the service provided. Staff understand their roles in meeting the needs of young people and the purpose of the home. The young person's guide is in an age appropriate format. It contains information about the home and staff and the role and contact details of local and national advice and advocacy services.

Managers and staff have formed effective multi-agency links to improve the care for young people. The manager is involved in multi-agency panels to identify local risks and how to support the most vulnerable young people. The network also enables prompt referral to specialist services when required. Services and practitioners who

are not performing effectively are challenged as necessary. If required, young people are supported to complain about services they receive in an appropriate manner. Complaints about the home from neighbours are rare. Any concerns are managed effectively and to the complainant's satisfaction, including formal apologies from young people when needed.

The home has a consistent core of staff with new members recently joining the team. The Registered Manager has worked tirelessly to support the team to modify practice and become increasingly child centred. Staff have embraced the change and, while still finding some processes and practice difficult to get accustomed to, are working to implement the new approach. The staff team have an excellent understanding of the young people they care for and are positive about their roles. Staff feel they have been supported well through the recent changes through team meetings, informal and formal supervision. Staff feel managers and senior staff are approachable and observations showed they were comfortable raising concerns and ideas regarding young people and practice in the home. Staff are engaged in a variety of training opportunities with development areas identified in annual appraisals. Recently appointed staff are completing an induction programme based on the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards.

The home is undergoing refurbishment and many areas have improved greatly. This is an ongoing project and most areas of the building are well maintained and homely. The kitchen in particular requires refurbishment and the manager recognises other areas in the home that still require redecoration to provide the quality of environment they feel young people deserve. The recent location assessment completed in conjunction with neighbourhood police officers demonstrates the home is located in an area that meets young people's needs.

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.

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