

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC007284
Inspector	Jackie Graves
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	St Clair Simmons Muhammad
Date of last inspection	03/02/2014

Inspection date	23/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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This home continues to provide an outstanding quality of care to young people. This helps them achieve good outcomes. Safeguarding is given a very high priority in the home.

The home is held in high regard by placing authorities. A social worker says the home maintains consistently high standards and this has been the case for a number of years. They find that staff have young people's needs at the focus of all they do and give them the attention they need. Placing authorities say they are confident that when young people are placed in the home they will achieve good outcomes. A commissioning officer says the staff work well with individual young people 'but also with families using a holistic approach to "care".'

Parents say the staff listen to their views and they 'can't fault them'. They find the home 'very welcoming'. They find staff work in partnership with them, recognising the important role they as parents play in their children's lives.

Young people thrive in their strong relationships with staff. They remain attached to the home when they move on. One reflected that their experience of living in the home had 'made me a better person'. Young people feel the staff really care about them and want them to do well.

Leadership and management is good. There is good oversight of what goes on. The staff are well led. Weaker areas are that monitoring reports are not supplied to Ofsted in a timely manner. Evidence that one staff member received an annual appraisal is not available and records do not include the time and length of supervision and are not signed. These are minor shortfalls which do not affect young people's safety or well-being.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately run home accommodates six young people. The home offers care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/02/2014	Interim	good progress
23/07/2013	Full	outstanding
21/03/2013	Interim	good progress
14/11/2012	Full	outstanding

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that reports on the conduct of the home by an independent person are made available to HMCI, with specific reference to providing these in a more timely manner (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.13)
- make sure that supervision records include the time and length of each supervision and the record is signed by the supervisor and the member of staff at the end of the supervision (NMS 19.5)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and that there is a record of this. (NMS 19.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people make considerable progress in this home. They gain sufficient confidence and trust in the staff to be able to take part in decisions about their care, in some cases where they have previously refused to engage at all. For example, they give their opinions at reviews or participate in visits to prospective schools. As a result, young people feel that they are included, listened to and their views are respected.

Young people understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and take responsibility for managing decisions about their health care. Those who smoke are aware of the potential risks to health and are encouraged to give up. As a result, there is a decrease in smoking. Some young people's eating habits improve. For example, some reduce a reliance on fast foods by eating more nutritious food and are more adventurous about trying foods from different cultures.

Those young people, who have moved on from the home, look back on their time there very positively. They are able to visit or telephone staff for support. Many visit frequently and provide a valued mentoring role to new residents. Those young people currently living in the home, who have resided there for some time, also provide a useful mentoring role to new residents. This helps new arrivals settle and develop a sense of what they could get out of their stay in the home.

Young people, who have displayed very challenging behaviour and have difficulties managing their anger, are now a lot calmer and feel settled. A youth offending team professional says a young person has 'really turned a corner'. Young people say that they are able to better manage their feelings and anger.

Young people make rapid progress in improved personal care and hygiene. They look well dressed and presented. As a result of this and their increasing confidence, some go out more in the community. Some say they are better able to 'fit in' and have made more friends.

Some young people now attend college after previously not attending for a number of years or just a few days a year; this is very considerable progress. All those young people with education placements attend them regularly, with some making very positive progress when considering their starting points. Young people get themselves up and travel to their education placements on time. Some, who are temporarily without a school place, complete school work daily in the home. This maintains their skills while arrangements are made for their future schooling. For reasons outside of theirs or the staff control, a small minority of young people are not currently in education or training so are not making educational progress. However, a resolution is being sought.

Some young people now have plans for future careers. Some are pursuing vocational qualifications with additional support to improve their numeracy and literacy skills. One young person said that as a result of living in the home 'I now have aspirations'.

Relationships with other people improve. Young people say they get on well with each other. They experience strong, positive relationships with the staff. They benefit from appropriate contact with family members. Young people are helped to understand the reasons that have led to them living in the home and to make sense of their backgrounds.

There is a general decrease in offending behaviour; for some this is quite considerable and there has not been any involvement in the criminal justice system for a long period of time. A professional in the youth justice system observes 'an amazing turnaround' in a young person's willingness to engage with professionals and their non-involvement in criminal activity. For a minority, who have moved on from the home, there has been some offending behaviour which has resulted in criminal charges, although overall their offending reduced while in the home.

Young people develop very good skills in readiness for adult life. This includes learning to prepare snacks and meals and managing their laundry and ironing. Developing positive relationships with other residents is regarded as crucial, as risk taking behaviour is often linked to peer pressure.

Quality of care

outstanding

The home provides consistently exceptional quality of care. Staff are clear about the purpose of each young person's placement. Care incorporates individual needs and behaviours. Staff work very creatively with young people to help them make progress. Young people feel the staff have their best interests at heart and want the best for them. A placement officer says the service is of a 'high standard' and 'enables the young people to meet their outcomes and achieve targets'. A staff member says the home's strength is 'taking on young people others have given-up on and helping them realise their capabilities'.

Staff strongly advocate for young people's right to an education. At times this has exceeded expectations. For example, staff seek appropriate provision for young people and make excellent use of a careers advisor to help them focus on what they need to achieve in order to meet their long term goals. Staff make sure that young people are fully supported to study in the home when they are temporarily out of school. Young people feel well equipped to learn, for example, with the emphasis on getting to bed at a reasonable time on school nights and with the provision of text books and staff support with homework. Young people are empowered to take responsibility for getting themselves to their school or college place on time and attending regularly to maximise their independence.

Young people enjoy doing activities individually with staff and in groups, both in the home and the community. Football has been useful in helping young people to keep fit and develop their skills, as well as learning to work effectively in a team. Young people enjoy playing electronic and board games together. Their experience of going on a holiday is valued and provides young people with happy memories when they reflect on their time in the home.

The staff maintain essential links with young people when they move on from the home. Staff feel it is vital to remain in contact with young people when they leave so they 'avoid isolation and loneliness'. Those young people who have moved on visit or telephone the home frequently for support. Some help mentor the current residents; they provide valuable advice about the realities of living independently and about making the best use of their time in the home.

Young people are very well supported to express their views and make choices. They are helped to understand the importance of being involved in decision making about their future lives. For example, some now participate in reviews or engage with youth offending service professionals for the first time. Young people are empowered to make a contribution, for example, about the suitability of new staff when they are on a trial shift in the home. This helps young people feel their views are listened to and respected.

There is exceptional partnership working. Staff work effectively with all professionals involved in young people's lives to ensure they get the support and services they need. A social worker says the home 'always has good communication' and staff will 'chase for anything the young people need'. A youth offending team professional says the staff achieve much in a short time with young people and must 'have a magic wand!' They find there is 'good communication - staff keep me informed'.

There are strong arrangements to manage complaints. Young people are given full information about how to raise complaints and details of external agencies they may approach. They feel confident about raising any complaints, although none have been made since the last inspection. They have close relationships and frequent support from their key workers but also identify other members of staff or management they would go to with any concerns or worries. An ex-resident says, 'If I wanted to talk to someone, someone was always there for me.'

The home is appropriately located and designed. Management have assessed the local area to ensure the home is in an appropriate location and any risks are identified. Some young people say they have come to appreciate living in an area which has such a diverse population and this has opened their eyes to people's differences. They also appreciate the amenities and transport links in the home's location. The building is spacious; young people like the home and find it suits their needs. Parents say it is as 'homely as possible'. The home is clean and welcoming. Maintenance is ongoing, with plans to replace some carpet and establish a lawn in

the garden. Sometimes young people help with maintenance so that they can gain further skills and take pride in keeping the home in a good state.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of safe working practice. Risk to individuals is carefully identified in their care plans. Staff have a very good understanding of each young person's individual risks and vulnerabilities and adapt their practice as these change or further risks emerge. Nonetheless, young people are supported to take reasonable risks as they mature.

Staff deal appropriately with any unauthorised absences. These incidents are appropriately recorded and reported. Absences tend to be instances of 'pushing boundaries' when young people return late to the home. Staff respond very firmly and emphasise the importance of not breaking trust or their promises to return on time. Young people understand why they are vulnerable if staff do not know their whereabouts.

Staff are very skilled at managing young people's behaviour. They reflect on their practice and learn from incidents. They are resourceful as a team in finding new approaches to deal with challenging behaviour. Young people feel the staff team keep them safe and will protect them.

There is minimum use of restraint in the home. All staff are trained in physical intervention but in fact use this only rarely, with only one recorded incident since the last inspection. The technique used is appropriate. The strong, respectful relationships between staff and young people are central to behaviour management in the home. A young person said, 'Staff talk to manage behaviour.' Young people are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and consider how it may affect others.

There is an effective sanction and reward policy. Young people 'earn' monetary rewards for all aspects of their behaviour. They enjoy spending their rewards. Young people find any sanctions used are reasonable, for example, contributing towards the cost if intentional damage or losing the use of the TV for a while. Use of sanctions is low with only seven given since the last inspection. This is because there is an emphasis on positive behaviour management in the home.

A very strong approach towards dealing with any bullying ensures young people speak up if they experience bullying and any incidents are dealt with effectively. Behaviour, which may impact on others, is addressed effectively in one-to-one sessions and in residents' meetings. Young people do not find bullying to be an issue in the home.

Staff are knowledgeable about how to protect young people. They attend regular training in safeguarding to maintain their skills. No allegations about staff, or referrals to local authorities, have been made since the last inspection.

A very thorough recruitment process helps ensure that only suitable people are employed to work with young people. This includes sometimes obtaining more than the two required references and verifying these in detail directly with the referee. Ongoing monitoring of staff performance ensures that people remain suitable for the work.

Management ensures health and safety checks are completed so the premises are maintained in a safe condition. For example, there are checks of the gas installation and portable electrical appliances plus a health and safety risk assessment of the premises. Arrangements to administer and store medication are effective. These measures help ensure young people live in a safe environment.

Leadership and management

good

Management and leadership is strong. Young people benefit from being looked after by a Registered Manager and a sufficient team of staff who reflect their diversity and have worked at the home long-term. No staff have left since the last inspection which provides young people with stability. A placement officer states the home 'have a constant staff team who receive ongoing training'.

Staff find the home to be a supportive environment. There is an 'open door policy' with management always available to them. Regular team meetings and supervision sessions support their work with young people as well as their own development. Supervision sessions are regular and recorded. However, records are not always signed by both parties and the time and length of supervision is not recorded. Staff have opportunities to reflect on their performance in annual appraisals but one file does not contain a record of this.

Training opportunities are good and enable staff to provide very high quality care. Nine out of ten staff have achieved the appropriate level three qualification. Annual staff training schedules ensure staff are knowledgeable in all relevant areas, including equality and diversity, first aid and physical intervention in order to meet young people's needs.

There is good management oversight of the service. Regular monitoring, by both the manager and an independent visitor, checks what goes on and helps to improve the service. Reports of the independent person's monitoring are sent to Ofsted but sometimes there is delay in providing these. Managers seek feedback from all those connected to the home; this is incorporated into the home's annual development plan. Managers have met the one recommendation made at the last inspection which

indicates the service's capacity to improve; the home now assess any risks in the area within close proximity of the home to improve young people's safety.

The staff and leaders show commitment to the young people they care for. They can demonstrate the difference the home has made to young people's lives. A member of staff says, 'Staff are open to new ideas - they aren't regimental.'

Young people's files are very well maintained and provide an accurate record of residents' time in the home. Reports of young people's progress are clear and indicate young people's changing needs. Staff are proactive in securing information that they require in order to provide the best quality care.

The home operates according to its Statement of Purpose. The document is being reviewed to ensure it remains current. A commissioning manager says, 'The organisation delivered the services as stated in their brochure and Statement of Purpose.' Young people are given a version of this in a guide to the home so they know what to expect when they move in.

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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