

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC052946
Inspector	Jackie Graves
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	Mehnaaz Nina Chaudhary
Date of last inspection	26/02/2014

Inspection date	21/01/2015
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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	good
Leadership and management	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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The home continues to provide an outstanding quality of care. Young people have consistently positive views about the care they receive and the quality of their relationships with staff. Those who move on remain in touch with the staff and regard the place as 'home'. Young people are supported to make good progress and improve many aspects of their lives; there are particularly good outcomes regarding making the most of education and training opportunities, learning to do things independently and improved behaviour.

Leadership and management continues to be very strong. There is effective oversight and a constant focus on how the service to young people can be improved. A commissioning officer says the home goes 'over and above' what they expect and their professional relationship with the staff is 'very positive so far'.

Safety is strong. Young people feel safe in the home and report that no bullying goes on. Effective measures are taken to check people's suitability before they are employed. Behaviour management is effective and helps young people's progress.

Three recommendations are made as a result of this inspection. Records of checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service do not include the outcome of the check. Young people sometimes gain access to games on the internet which do not appear

to be appropriate for their age. Memorabilia is not compiled for all young people so they have a record to take with them when they move on from the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and run by a private organisation and provides care and accommodation for five young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/02/2014	Interim	good progress
21/10/2013	Full	outstanding
20/03/2013	Interim	good progress
13/11/2012	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):

- make sure that the activities young people take part in are age-appropriate, with specific reference to ensuring that they can only access computer games of an appropriate rating (NMS 7.5)
- ensure that records of DBS checks include the outcome of the check (NMS 16.3 (b))
- ensure staff support and encourage young people to reflect on and understand their history, according to their age and understanding, and to keep appropriate memorabilia of their time in the placement. Ensure staff record and help young people make a record of (subject to age and understanding) significant life events. (NMS 22.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Education improves significantly for some young people. A few, who have been out of school for a very long time, re-engage, attend regularly most of the time and sit exams. The majority of young people benefit from attending full-time courses in college or school. There are arrangements to tutor a minority who are currently out of school and there is recent improvement with their engagement. Some young people are learning valuable vocational skills which may lead to apprenticeships or employment.

Young people experience security and stability. One who felt they 'could do what they wanted' before moving in has come to accept boundaries and accept what staff and professionals try to do for them. Another who wasn't used to living with rules says of the rules in the home, 'They're reasonable and so are staff.' Young people appreciate feeling safe and secure after experiencing often disruptive and chaotic experiences prior to moving in. A social worker finds a young person has experienced 'stability after a lot of placement breakdowns' and is therefore calmer as a result. Those who move on to live semi-independently miss the structure of living in the home.

Young people experience warm, affectionate and trusting relationships with the staff. They enjoy doing things with staff when they go out together, for example, to have a meal, go to the theatre to see a show or to go bowling. They really enjoy going on holiday with staff and reflect on this experience as a high-point of their time in the home and a memorable experience.

Independence skills improve. Young people feel they are very well prepared practically for adult life. They say they are better at doing things for themselves as a result of living in the home, for example, managing their own washing and ironing. Some have better personal hygiene so have an improved self-view and better relate to others. Some learn to travel on public transport by themselves rather than relying on adults to take them to places.

Young people benefit from staying in touch with the home when they move on, by telephone and visits. They maintain emotional connections with the home and continue to rely on the staff as a constant feature in their lives.

Young people enjoy general good health. They eat home-cooked meals including fruits and vegetables. Most attend routine health appointments so they get the checks and treatment they need. Some develop better understanding of risks to their health, for example, the dangers of smoking, and accept help in trying to give up. A minority are helped to understand the consequences of some behaviour such as use of illegal substances, for example, by working with specialist drug and alcohol workers, but are not yet ready to decrease their use.

Some young people say their physical, emotional and mental health improves as a result of living in the home. Some feel calmer. A few report a more positive outlook on life and experience less distress and anxiety. In some cases this has led to a reduction in self-harming behaviour. A young person says staff 'change mood, routine, lift us up'. Some become better at negotiating for what they want rather than becoming upset.

Quality of care

outstanding

Young people benefit from being looked after by a diverse staff team. Young people like the different backgrounds and interests staff bring to the role. A placements officer finds the staff provide a consistently high standard of care and that the local authority receives a 'really good' service. The staff have high aspirations for young people and want them to do well. A young person finds the home 'very dedicated towards him...very supportive staff'. Staff really know the young people very well and provide care which meets their individual needs.

Young people are helped to focus on their future. An education officer is appointed to help young people think about employment or training so they can identify clear goals. Excellent records of achievement are devised which young people can use when applying for jobs or courses, including their goals and certificates of achievement. Any school qualifications are strengthened by undertaking some training which is normally available to staff, for example, first aid, record keeping and food hygiene. This is an imaginative way of helping young people as they enter the world of work or training.

Young people are listened to. They say they can 'voice their opinions in residents' meetings - about menus, activities, anything!' Staff take other opportunities to seek young people's views, for example, during key work sessions and informally when out on activities in the community. There is an accessible complaints procedure which ensures that young people's complaints are taken seriously, investigated and they are provided with a response.

Individual interests are encouraged. One young person says they 'get a lot of help and encouragement to do hobbies. The home is very well-resourced for young people's needs in terms of games, books, computer equipment and a gym.

Young people are encouraged to be healthy. Staff work with young people on changing any aspect of their lifestyle which could be detrimental to their health and make sure they can make informed choices, for example, about changing some aspects of their diet. They make sure young people get advice from health professionals when they require this and encourage them to attend routine health appointments. When a few young people find it hard to engage with health services, staff re-book appointments and continue to encourage their attendance.

Medication arrangements are strong. Staff are trained to administer medication and do so safely, with no errors in medication reported. Sometimes young people experience a slight delay in obtaining repeat prescriptions. This is something the manager says can be easily rectified. All staff are trained to administer first aid so young people can access emergency treatment when they need it from any member of staff.

The building is comfortable, clean and homely. Any damage is quickly repaired so the home is maintained to a very high standard. Young people like the building and say it suits their needs. They like their bedrooms which they personalise to their taste.

Keeping children and young people safe **good**

The manager has conducted a thorough assessment of the local area to identify any potential risks to young people, taking into account feedback from numerous services and professionals. This assessment proposes preventable measures to reduce risk and has had been used to work with placing authorities on improving young people's safety.

Behaviour management is effective. Young people find the staff are good at handling those who are out of control and helping them to express themselves in more positive ways. One describes the best thing about the home as 'handling young people when losing their temper - at calming them down'. A popular reward scheme reinforces positive behaviour and gives young people the opportunity to 'earn' more money in addition to their allowances. Sanctions are appropriate and relate to the behaviour staff are trying to help young people change. All staff are trained to physically restrain young people as a last resort. However, restraint is used very rarely, with only one use since the last inspection.

A robust recruitment system helps safeguard young people. For example, checks with previous employers are made, gaps in employment are accounted for and references are verified. Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service are conducted to ensure people are suitable to work with young people but records do not include the outcome of the check.

Most young people do not abscond. When they are late, most stay in touch with staff until they return. A young person says they 'used to constantly abscond' but staff have talked about the risks of going missing, including child sexual exploitation and they have changed this behaviour improving their safety. Appropriate steps are taken to improve the safety of those young people who do go missing, including working with the Youth Offending Service.

All young people feel safe in the home and feel staff are concerned about their safety. Young people get on with each other most of the time and there is a calm

atmosphere. Young people do not experience bullying while living in the home.

The environment is physically safe. Fire safety is promoted, for example, through drills, appropriate signs and equipment throughout the building. Regular checks are conducted of systems such as the gas installation as well as electrical items. These measures help keep the home safe for young people.

Arrangements for child protection are good. Staff are trained in safeguarding and have a good understanding of how to report any concerns. No concerns or allegations have been made since the last inspection. There are parental controls on the home's computer and staff do supervise young people's use. However, it appears that sometimes safety controls may be overcome and games of inappropriate age rating may be viewed.

Leadership and management

outstanding

The home benefits from being led by a Registered Manager who has worked at the home since it was established. They have appropriate experience, plus social work and management qualifications. As they are also registered to manage another home, a deputy fulfils some of the day-to-day management tasks. A placement officer finds the service to be 'well-managed - full of ideas - flexible'. They ensure the home is well resourced so that improvement is constant, for example, a new kitchen is to be fitted soon.

Communication with professionals is excellent. A social worker says they receive 'very good quality' reports about their young person frequently, for example, monthly reports and information for reviews. This ensures that they are clear about all matters relating to the young person. A placements officer finds that managers are 'not afraid to challenge the local authority' and have high expectations of them. For example, they question the quality of referral information if they feel this needs more work. Such a robust approach helps ensure management can make informed decisions about who is admitted and the impact they may have on existing residents.

The home is fully staffed. Young people really benefit from having a stable, established staff team to care for them who know their needs well. They do not experience much change in the staff team, for example, only one has left and one has joined since the last inspection. A placements officer says, 'They seem to be able to hold onto their staff.' Some staff have worked at the home for a very long time and continue to 'love it!'.

Staff skills are extended through appropriate training. Besides basic training in child protection and managing challenging behaviour, staff training addresses more specialist areas, for example, Asperger's. This ensures staff are knowledgeable and able to meet young people's individual needs. A high number of staff have achieved the minimum level 3 qualification, with one working towards achieving this.

Support for staff is very strong. They participate in regular supervision and team meetings, plus annual appraisals where their work with young people remains the focus. Staff say that in addition, 'The whole team is supportive. Managers can be approached anytime.'

Young people's files are in good order. They provide a clear record for any young person who chooses to read this information. The staff have in the past compiled books about what goes on in the home and significant life events with young people, in some cases performing the tasks normally undertaken by social workers. While they do gather a lot of photographs of young people doing various activities, these are not currently provided to young people when they move on. Staff feel that restoring this process would be useful in helping young people to reflect on and understand their history and their time in the home.

The home demonstrates continued capacity to improve. Effective monitoring of the home helps its development. The Registered Manager has met the one recommendation made at the last inspection. Staff and young people now understand the home's sanctions and rewards for behaviour and these are clear, reasonable and fair.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
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Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
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Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
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Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
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Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.
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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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