

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC069336
Inspector	Kevin Whatley
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Registered manager	Sarah Anne Butcher
Date of last inspection	28/10/2014

Inspection date	23/03/2015
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Previous inspection	good
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **sustained effectiveness**.

The home has sustained effectiveness since the last inspection of October 2014. Four recommendations were made on that occasion; these have been addressed. One recommendation is made as a result of this inspection.

Prior to this inspection, concerns were raised to Ofsted. These concerns were looked at during the course of the inspection and no evidence was found at this time to substantiate the concerns.

Positive actions have been taken to improve the quality of the accommodation and facilities. The medical centre has been relocated to an area that has been specifically developed to better meet the health care needs of young people. This is well equipped and provides a reasonable amount of space and privacy should young people require it. Medical care is overseen by qualified nurses with the new centre being located near to the therapy team which has enabled easier communication and improved the practicalities of integrated working.

The homes refurbishment programme has gathered momentum resulting in a number of houses being improved. This includes the replacement of bathroom suites and redecoration of communal living areas. The process for identifying and responding to repairs and refurbishment issues has been improved and a more robust approach enables house managers to regularly review the development of the living environment. Accommodation was found to be clean and hygienic with some nice homely touches such as pictures and art work adorning many areas.

Protocols for evidencing the actions taken following safeguarding concerns have been improved with a new format being introduced which provides a more robust recording process. This includes who has been notified of any concerns and their views and decisions, for example, Local Safeguarding Children's Boards,

parents/carers and placing social workers. A review of the process confirmed that all parties had been informed of events in a timely manner. No significant child protection concerns have occurred since the last inspection.

The policy for recruiting new staff has been amended to ensure the details of all gaps in employment history are obtained and considered before offers of employment are made. A review of new staff employed confirmed that this process is being followed in practice. This robust approach ensures that only persons deemed suitable to work with young people are employed at the home.

Young people continue to benefit from a balanced diet with menu's incorporating choice and variety on a daily basis. This includes salad and vegetarian options at the main meal alongside special dietary needs being catered for. Young people say they enjoy the food and had no complaints about the meals they are provided with. Good numbers of full-time staff are deployed to care for young people during the day and night which is further complimented by a group of regular bank staff. The use of agency staffing is low with all staff receiving high levels of induction, training and on-going supervision. Staff say morale is very good with leaders and managers providing guidance and support which places the needs of young people first.

The home has a suitable complaints procedure which is followed accurately in practice. On the rare occasions they are made the home responds swiftly and robustly with clear records evidencing the actions taken and their outcome. Where issues raised indicate a potential failure to maintain high standards of staff practice, thorough investigations take place to ensure concerns are looked at in detail and, where relevant, learning points for staff are incorporated into improvement plans.

In a vast majority of cases the home maintains accurate and up-to-date records which reflect the daily lives of young people. This includes the reporting of incidents that required the use of physical intervention. Restraints are only used when necessary and are applied for the shortest periods of time to ensure the safety and well-being of young people, staff and property. However one record of a physical intervention did not accurately reflect the length of time a measure was implemented; although this was evident in other logs. This shortfall was acknowledged and amended and did not place young people at risk of harm.

Young people continue to make progress at the home. In many instances such progress is excellent given their starting points. This is particularly telling for young people who pose considerable challenges to staff in meeting their extreme behaviour which can include violence and aggression. Bespoke staffing teams have been brought together to implement focused packages of support and intervention with staff providing intensive and consistent care. Such an approach is informed through expert assessment, advice and clinical overview. As a result significant progress has been made within care, education and social inclusion. For example young people who had previously not been able to manage visits outside of the home environment for a number of years have enjoyed successful outings to local parks and places of

interest. This not only ensures their involvement in their learning and personal development but considerably improves their life chances in community involvement and participation.

Care planning has been further improved with a more holistic approach in capturing specific needs and how these will be met. The implementation of the, 'provision maps' results in a more integrated planning process that takes account of speech and language, learning, occupational therapy and care needs in one easy to comprehend document. These incorporate clear aims, targets and, importantly, how individual progress is measured. The process although being positively received has only recently been introduced and will therefore require a period of time before the effectiveness of it can be fully evaluated.

This is a home that continues to improve, develop and fully promote the needs of young people with autism. The home is run by an experienced and motivated management team which is ably led by a Registered Manager who has appropriately high expectations of staff practice and aspirations for the home to be outstanding in all areas. Where staff practice is considered to have fallen below that expected swift actions are taken to address them which can include the instigation of disciplinary proceedings. Improvements have included recognising staff for achieving the required qualification in care through a salary increase and linking new staff with an experienced member of staff, 'buddy', to assist them in their induction and transition to the home. Such changes support the crucial role that staff play at the home, the high standards expected of them and the importance on acknowledging the commitment, effort and skills the role requires. The home can boast approximately 95% of care staff either holding the qualification in care or are undertaking it. Given the large size of the staffing team this shows an excellent commitment to raising standards and supporting professional development.

The atmosphere of the home and school is calm, relaxed and well ordered. Young people and staff continue to share positive and meaningful relationships with integrations between them confirming the depth at which staff understand the specific needs of young people in their care. This was most evident in the way staff appreciate and respond to young people and understanding the manner they communicate their feelings of concern, anxiety and happiness.

Information about this children's home

This school provides care and accommodation for up to 76 young people with autistic spectrum disorder and learning disabilities. It operates as an independent co-educational residential special school which also provides accommodation for a number of young people receiving up to 52 weeks placements and is therefore registered as a children's home. Approximately 54 young people are currently provided with residential care; a majority of these young people live at the home full time.

Young people are accommodated in nine on-site residential houses and one off-site house in a neighbouring village. The school is set around a restored country house, within acres of parkland.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/10/2014	Full	good
13/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
09/10/2013	Full	good
11/03/2013	Interim	good progress

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 records of restraint accurately detail the length of time specific physical intervention techniques are applied. (NMS 22.1)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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.