

Children's homes inspection - Full

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| Inspection date | 12/05/2015 |
| Unique reference number | SC040500 |
| Type of inspection | Full |
| Provision subtype | Secure Unit |
| Registered person | Salford City Council |
| Registered person address | Civic Centre, Chorley Road, Swinton, MANCHESTER, M27 5DA |

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| Responsible individual | Mr Michael Kelly |
| Registered manager | Mr Michael Lowry M.B.E. |
| Inspector | Mr Philip Cass |

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| Inspection date | 12/05/2015 |
| Previous inspection judgement | Outstanding |
| Enforcement action since last inspection | None |
| This inspection | |
| The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are | Outstanding |
| The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care. | |
| how well children and young people are helped and protected | Outstanding |
| the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers | Outstanding |
| outcomes in education and related learning activities | Good |

SC040500

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The home operates to an exceptionally high standard and has maintained these standards for several years. This is because the managers and staff are committed to continual service development. Robust quality assurance systems are highly effective in identifying areas that can be improved. Managers ensure that staff have sufficient time and resources to make these improvements.
- The views of parents, social workers and other stakeholders are exceptionally positive. Many provided their views to Ofsted. They describe the home as 'excellent', 'fantastic', 'particularly strong', and 'extremely good'.
- Behaviour management strategies are highly effective. They ensure that young people feel consistently safe. Young people quickly learn to take responsibility for their own conduct and overcome engrained patterns of challenging and damaging behaviour. Consequently, levels of restraint, sanctions and single separation are particularly low.
- Very positive interactions between staff and young people underpin the exceptionally high quality care provided. Staff are perceived to 'genuinely care', and have a 'genuine desire' to improve the lives of young people.
- Bullying does not take place in the home.
- All young people have high levels of school attendance and make great progress from their starting point at the time of placement.
- Young people make outstanding progress in relation to their physical, emotional, and mental health. They benefit from a wide range of very high quality health services that are individually tailored to meet individual needs.
- The home is particularly strong in recognising and addressing needs that stem from the culture, heritage, nationality and individual preferences of young people. Young people learn to celebrate and value their diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Staff and managers work very effectively with a range of external agencies. As a result, they are strong advocates for young people. Where appropriate, staff successfully challenge other agencies to improve the service provided to young people.

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

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful and clear recording. This is with particular reference to the recording of night time checks on young people (The Guide, page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- ensure that supervision records provide evidence that staff are allowed to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care (The Guide, page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- ensure that the planned increase in the variety and range of accredited vocational training available takes place (The Guide, page 28, paragraph 5.16)
- develop contingency plans to ensure staff absenteeism in education does not interrupt learning activities. (The Guide, page 28, paragraph 5.14)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home can accommodate up to 24 young people, who are aged between 10 and 17 years. These are young people who have received a custodial sentence and are placed at this home by the Youth Justice Board. Education is provided on site.

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 26/11/2014 | CH - Interim | improved effectiveness |
| 30/04/2014 | CH - Full | Outstanding |
| 26/11/2013 | CH - Interim | Good |
| 16/05/2013 | CH - Full | Outstanding |

Inspection Judgements

| | Judgement grade |
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| The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are | Outstanding |
| <p>Young people make outstanding progress during their time at the home. The quality of individualised care provided is exceptional. Young people thrive in an environment that is non-judgemental and committed to meeting their needs. They benefit from having a staff group that has the experience, knowledge and skills to assist them in making significant changes to their previous lifestyle. A parent stated, 'I know my son appreciated the help and kindness shown to him by all the staff. All members of staff within the unit have my child's best interests at heart.' Another parent stated that her son, 'has come on leaps and bounds, he is respectful and polite, he is also engaging in education and even taking some GCSEs.'</p> <p>Case management and planning are very well organised. Close monitoring and regular review ensure that plans are up to date so that they meet the changing needs of young people. All achievements are celebrated by staff and clearly recorded. This ensures that young people are helped to understand the progress they are making. For example, a young person stated, 'Being here has helped to improve my relationships with my family. They were not good when I came here, but they are much better now which means I am going back home to live.' He also said that, 'A big thing that has improved me is me becoming mature with the help of staff.' His parents reported that, as a result of placement at the home, 'We have got our son back.'</p> <p>Staff work effectively with external agencies to ensure transition plans are fully developed when young people leave the home. For example, following some complex negotiation, staff have arranged for a young person to take his GCSE exams at a school in his own community. Because transition planning is of a high quality, young people are given every opportunity to achieve continued success when they leave the home. Young people are provided with high quality support to reflect on and address their previous offending behaviours. Staff are highly skilled in the delivery of interventions designed to prevent re-offending and enable young people to make positive lifestyle choices in the community.</p> <p>The home celebrates diversity very well in both care planning and day-to-day arrangements. Individual needs that stem from culture, heritage, nationality, or religion are addressed well in consultation with families, religious organisations, and other agencies. The home demonstrates considerable commitment when supporting young people whose first language is not English. As well as making good use of translation services, staff find creative ways of ensuring that young</p> | |

people are able to communicate their wishes and feelings to advocates, legal advisors and decision makers. This is particularly effective for young people who are victims of child trafficking. In these cases staff very successfully advocate for young people so that positive outcomes are achieved.

Risk management and security systems are highly effective but do not lead to an institutional feel. Young people benefit from living in a bright, spacious, and nurturing environment. Managers go to considerable lengths to ensure that the design and external appearance of the building creates a positive impression to those seeing the building for the first time. Consequently, any anxieties experienced by young people on admission to the home are markedly reduced. A social worker stated that the appearance of the home is 'welcoming and friendly'.

Young people benefit from well-established and stable routines. These routines enable them to use their time constructively. Young people develop significantly improved self-esteem because they are provided with positive experiences on a daily basis. They also grow in self-confidence as they experience success and develop their artistic and sporting talents. Cohesive working practices between staff with different roles allows for an individualised programme of activity and interventions to be implemented for both short-term and longer-term placements. A parent stated that their child has a positive experience in the home because, 'There are so many different activities for the children to get involved in.'

Building strong, effective relationships with troubled young people in crisis is a key area of strength. Very strong interpersonal relationships span the whole remit of care, health, direct work and transition planning. Relationships are strong enough to survive periods of unrest and challenge, with staff acting as good role models. The strength of the relationships between staff and young people are the basis of the home's continued success. A parent commented that, 'My son gets along with staff and I have noticed a very positive improvement in my sons attitude and behaviour.' A social worker stated that a young person 'has grown stronger in all aspects of his personality and I feel this is indicative of the strong relationships he has with staff.'

Arrangements to promote young people's health have improved further since the previous inspection. For example, the previous part-time posts of nurse and mental health nurse are now full time. These, allied with the comprehensive arrangements with the visiting doctor, dentist and optician ensure young people's health needs are fully addressed within agreed time-scales. Young people also benefit from having quick access to specialist input that links into the full range of mental health services. This supports positive and effective interventions. For example, a young person has developed into a mature, confident young man following prompt diagnoses of a complex medical condition. His parents state that, prior to admission, he had 'no idea of what that meant and how to handle it. With the work that staff have done he now knows what to look out for as trigger signs.' Health promotion is strong, with a range of initiatives in place to encourage young people

to adopt a healthier lifestyle. For example, young people receive advice and guidance on healthy eating, weight management, fitness, sexual health, substance misuse and alcohol misuse. As a result, young people's physical, emotional, social and psychological well-being improves significantly during their time at the home.

Young people confirm that they are consulted regularly and can contribute positively to key decisions that affect their daily life. For example, following suggestions by young people, a mobile tuck shop has been created. Young people participate in monthly meetings chaired by an independent advocate without staff presence. These meetings are used effectively to ensure that young people can express their views freely, raise concerns and contribute ideas about the running of the home. This innovative practice demonstrates the home's commitment to seeking and acting on the views of young people.

The home is very supportive of family contact arrangements for young people. Parents report that they feel welcome and very comfortable with staff when they visit. Young people can receive visits regularly and this supports continuity of positive relationships. A parent states that it is, 'very easy to book visits and also get through to the unit my son is located on by phone to speak to him daily.' Because the home works flexibly to support parents and families, the quality and quantity of family contact is maximised.

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| | Judgement grade |
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | outstanding |
| <p>Staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding policy and procedures. This means that they know what to do if they are worried that a child has experienced abuse, or is at risk of harm. The home operates in a very transparent way. External agencies and professionals, including the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), are regularly invited to the home to carry out reviews of safeguarding practice. The home has a constructive working relationship with relevant agencies so that any allegations or disclosures are responded to promptly and robustly. The LADO stated that she has a 'really close and positive working relationship' with the home. Young people say that they are confident to report any concerns they may have directly to staff. A range of systems are in place to ensure that young people can also raise issues anonymously or through independent advocates. Highly effective monitoring, reporting and training minimise the likelihood of harm to young people in the home. The safety of young people is further promoted because the home carefully follows safe recruitment procedures. These include criminal record checks and telephone verification of references.</p> <p>Staff manage risk very well. Risks and vulnerabilities are identified clearly at the</p> | |

point of admission. The home ensures that each young person is carefully monitored and well supervised at all times. Staff intervene effectively to prevent harmful behaviours. When young people are admitted to the home with a history of self-harming behaviours, the home develops clear risk management plans. Staff adhere fully to these plans. Consequently, young people become significantly safer following admission to the home. A social worker stated that the home, 'manage safeguarding concerns and risks very well'. Vulnerable young people are monitored diligently through the night when necessary. However, checks are not always carefully or accurately recorded. The impact of this shortfall is minimal because staff adhere fully to agreed risk assessments. However, it has the potential to limit the effectiveness of quality assurance processes.

Very positive behaviour management strategies ensure that young people behave well consistently. Behaviour management is a key strength of the home. Staff are highly effective because compassion and understanding is combined with high expectation and high aspiration. As a result, young people become well mannered, learn to speak respectfully and have markedly improved social skills. Young people have a strong sense of safety because staff are so effective in promoting appropriate interactions. Young people confirm that there is no bullying in the home. They also express great confidence in staff to robustly tackle any bullying that might take place in the future. Staff are very effective communicators. They take the time to fully explain their decisions. Incentive schemes are well understood by young people and further promote good behaviour. Parents note the very positive impact that the home has on young people's behaviour. One parent stated, 'I have noticed a very positive improvement in my sons attitude and behaviour.' Another stated, 'The staff are all friendly and helpful and do their best to encourage and reward [young people] appropriately.' Because behaviours are so well managed, young people are provided with a positive environment in which to address previous traumatic life experiences.

Excellent behaviour management systems are also reflected in the very low level of restraint, single separation and sanctions used. All staff receive training to minimise the risk of accidental injury or trauma to young people during a restraint or single separation. Restraint techniques involving pain compliance are not used. Where restraint and single separation is used, a very careful review is carried out by senior managers. The home makes very effective use of closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems to evaluate the conduct of staff during restraint. Consequently, the home is able to demonstrate that all measures of control are appropriate, proportionate and in line with regulations and government guidance. Management review of incidents is supported by good quality written records maintained by staff involved.

There have been no incidents of young people absconding from the home. The Missing From Home policy is clear and well understood by all staff and managers. Risk assessments are in place for each young person. In addition, the home liaises well with local and specialist police services so that there are well defined

strategies to respond to any missing from home incidents.

Staff carry out searches in a very sensitive manner. Where it is necessary to carry out searches of bedrooms or communal areas for safety and security reasons, this is done efficiently and is carefully planned to minimise disruption to the routines of the home. Personal searches are carried out only where significant potential risk is identified, where they are likely to be effective and where other alternatives are not appropriate. The dignity and well-being of young people is fully promoted by the home's thoughtful and considered approach to searches.

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| | Judgement grade |
| The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers | outstanding |
| <p>The Registered Manager provides exceptional leadership. He is dynamic and has a wealth of experience in delivering high quality services to young people who have complex needs. He is suitably qualified to undertake his role. The standard of leadership is further strengthened by the senior management team who are highly effective in their roles. Although some senior managers are retiring in the near future, careful transition planning has taken place. This ensures that qualified and experienced staff are already in post and fully prepared to take on key management duties.</p> <p>The Registered Manager is not complacent. Although the home has consistently delivered very high quality care, he is committed to continual improvement. This is reflected in current plans to develop new vocational training provision and facilities to support young people as they move on from the home. A commitment to improvement is also evidenced in the homes detailed development planning process. This has driven improvement to the decoration, activity provision and educational programme. Monitoring and quality assurance, carried out by the Registered Manager and the home's independent visitor, is rigorous. Information is utilised well to identify the home's strengths and areas for improvement, which is positively acted upon to further improve the services provided to young people.</p> <p>Managers ensure that staff are qualified and have the necessary training to meet the changing needs of the young people. Where the home provides care to young people with particular social or health needs, specialised training is arranged promptly so that staff can understand these needs and deliver high quality care. Staff are very well supported and supervised. Managers are good at empowering staff to develop innovative strategies to improve care provision. Performance management systems are used well to set very high expectations of staff conduct. A wide range of forums are used effectively by staff to enable them to reflect on</p> | |

their practice, discuss their concerns and develop strategies to meet the needs of young people. However, this excellent practice is not consistently reflected within the supervision records maintained by the home.

The home's Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed. As a result, it is a comprehensive document that correctly reflects the objectives, ethos and specialism of the home. Parents, carers and stakeholders confirm that they are clear about the purpose of the home and the services and support provided. The home also produces guides for young people. This demonstrates the commitment of staff to ensure that young people understand their rights and responsibilities while living at the home.

Managers very effectively work with a range of external agencies to ensure that young people receive high quality services that are tailored to their needs. A social worker stated, 'Overall the service has been excellent with some really strong work and great multi-agency working and communication.' Where necessary, managers constructively challenge external agencies to improve the quality of services provided to young people. This means that the home acts as a very effective advocate. Good communication ensures that the needs and wishes of young people are understood by a range of health, education and social care agencies. The home is very good at responding to complaints. The complaints procedure is used very positively by the manager to ensure the views of young people, their families and other stakeholders are acknowledged and respected. Managers also use information from analysis of complaints constructively to improve service provision.

Managers have a clear understanding of risks presented by and to young people. They support staff very well to help them keep young people safe and maintain well-defined boundaries. Rewards schemes are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are effective in helping young people to develop and maintain acceptable behaviour. Cohesive working between managers ensures that all young people receive the right services and support to meet their individual needs. Managers have a clear understanding of the progress young people are making. The effectiveness of managers is evident in the significant progress young people make in all aspects of their lives, including emotional stability, resilience, personal development, education, social skills and relationships.

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| | Judgement grade |
| Outcomes in education and related learning activities | good |
| Overall, the educational outcomes of young people are good. Most achieve their planned learning goals. Young people make excellent progress given their starting | |

point. In English and mathematics, young people improve by one sub-level within three months of being in education when measured against national curriculum sub-levels. Standards of work are good. Particularly high standards are achieved in design technology and art. Young people make good progress in learning personal and social development skills, improving their self-esteem and becoming confident in their work. Data analysis indicates no significant gaps in achievement between different groups of young people.

Accommodation is excellent and provides good access to information learning technology. Technology is well utilised by teachers to support learning. Classrooms are bright and welcoming. Good use is made of wall space to celebrate young people's work and create a positive learning environment.

Initial assessment of young people takes place soon after arrival and correctly identifies the individual support needed to help improve English and mathematics. The previous attainment of young people is accurately identified as part of the initial assessment. Young people are quickly integrated into school, usually within two days of admission. A subsequent assessment of their wider educational needs take place, which enables the home to provide the most appropriate educational curriculum. The home is proactive in locating previous assessments and special education needs requirements, which helps in the planning for young people. Re-assessments take place frequently to monitor improvement and progress made. Education staff have received specialist training in speech and language. This means that they have developed skills in identifying and working with young people who have a range of specific needs.

Teaching, learning, and assessment are good with some aspects being outstanding. This reflects the findings from the home's internal observation process. Teachers are skilled at de-escalating challenging behaviour and successfully engage young people. Consequently, they maintain a positive learning environment. Teachers are well qualified and use their additional skills to enhance the curriculum offer. The best lessons challenge young people of all abilities to progress. Work is individualised to meet the needs of all learners. In the weaker sessions, lesson objectives are not always made clear to young people. Teachers make good links within lessons to other subject areas. This re-enforces prior learning. For example, in English, aspects of geography were re-enforced as part of the learning session. Learning support practitioners are utilised well by teachers to improve the learning experience of young people.

The majority of young people enjoy their classes, are interested and engaged. They become motivated to develop their learning further. Assessment is generally good with appropriate feedback provided to young people on what they need to do to progress. Teachers provide clear explanations to young people of what level they are working at and how this equates to GCSE grades. Tutorials take place every six weeks. These provide good opportunities for young people to work with tutors to develop individual targets for improvement. A good focus is on both

academic and personal development targets.

The education curriculum is appropriate for young people of this age group. A good focus is on English, mathematics and information technology. Courses are also available in art, design technology, science, cookery and humanities. Physical education is part of the school timetable. This provides a good variety of sporting activities. Opportunities available for young people to engage with accredited vocational training are insufficient. However, plans to introduce additional accredited vocational training are at an advanced stage. In addition, good links have been made with the local college to help provide accredited courses in vocational training.

Enrichment activities are good. They provide opportunities for young people to take part in a variety of leisure pursuits. These activities extend their knowledge and understanding. They also support their personal development. In addition, some activities have a focus on a small amount of accredited vocational training. Since the last inspection, a well-planned personal social health education programme is now in place. This is jointly delivered by education, residential and health staff. Courses address issues such as substance misuse, sexual health and finance. They help extend young people's understanding of how to lead successful adult lives.

Access to careers advice is good. An experienced designated careers advisor provides careers guidance for half a day per week. The careers advisor has a good working relationship with the school. The school is good at promoting the benefits of careers advice to young people. Links with youth offending services are generally effective. Information about the progress made by young people is shared appropriately by education staff and the careers advisor.

Personal development courses help young people learn independent living skills such as food preparation, budgeting and employability skills. Plans are in place to develop a specialist area for young people to live more independently so that they are able to develop their living skills in preparation for release. Effective use of mobility enables young people to attend college interviews.

Behaviour management in education is generally very effective. Standards of behaviour are generally very good and a harmonious relationship is in place between young people and education staff. Attendance at school is around 88%. The number and frequency of young people returned to the residential units from education is low. A review of the behaviour management of young people in education is taking place, with plans in place to introduce a designated inclusion classroom. It is envisioned that this will help further reduce the number of young people who need to be returned to the residential units because of poor behaviour. When young people are removed from school as a result of poor behaviour, they are managed back into learning quickly.

The operational management of education and related learning activities is very good. Staff qualifications are good. Good links have been made with external schools. Staff have regular opportunities to attend joint continued professional development events. Since the last inspection a new data system has been introduced which records and monitors young people's progress. The system provides a clear indication of what progress is made and uses a colour coding to visually identify where a young person may be falling behind. The information is used well in the planning of curriculum development. However, contingency planning has not always been effective in ensuring minimum disruption to learning activities during periods of staff absence.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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