

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	12/05/2015
Unique reference number	SC032163
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Dorset County Council
Registered person address	County Hall, Colliton Park, DORCHESTER, Dorset, DT1 1XJ

Responsible individual	Mr Stuart Riddle
Registered manager	Mr James Collins
Inspector	Mrs Jennifer Reed

Inspection date	12/05/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Good
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

SC032163

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Placement stability is excellent. Robust admission criteria and processes result in children and young people being appropriately placed in this home and they remain living here until they move on to adult provision.
- The quality of individualised planning and the delivery of consistent care and support to children and young people are outstanding, resulting in children and young people making exceptional progress in their development.
- The inclusion of children and young people in day-to-day decision-making about their lives and participating within the community underpins daily life within this home.
- Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of children and young people's individual needs and how they communicate their experiences and feelings through their behaviour.
- Challenging behaviour is exceptionally well managed, ensuring that children and young people are treated with dignity and respect at all times and their well-being is central in all aspects of their care.
- Safeguarding practice is robust. Children and young people live in a safe and homely environment where detailed risk assessments and sound care and safeguarding practice help to minimise the level of risk.
- Leadership and management of the home are strong. Leaders and managers are well qualified and very experienced. They have a realistic understanding of the home's operation and a clear vision for its development.
- The effective planning, monitoring and review of children and young people's individual progress underpins and influences the home's continual striving for improvement in practice to benefit outcomes for children and young people.
- Robust partnership working arrangements between staff, families, and professionals contributes to improving outcomes for children and young people.

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

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 (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

None

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that any amendment made to health plans or medication records are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (The Guide 14.3)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is part of a range of services provided by a local authority. The home is registered to accommodate up to 9 children and young people who have complex learning difficulties and disabilities.

The home provides long term placements for children and young people in accommodation provided by the four distinct units sited within the building. The occupancy levels of each unit are determined by the needs and the mix of the children and young people placed. Suitable equipment and adaptations are provided to meet individual need. Children and young people attend local special educational provision.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/02/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
25/11/2014	CH - Full	Good
14/01/2014	CH - Interim	Inadequate Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	outstanding
<p>The Registered Manager and his staff team have high aspirations for the children and young people they look after. The quality of care and support provided to children and young people are outstanding. This results in children and young people far exceeding the expectations of their families and professionals, in relation to the progress they are making and sustaining in their personal development and learning, given their starting points on admission. One parent summarised this by saying, 'the staff work tirelessly to achieve the needs of the children. The work they have done with my child is incredible; they have taken them further than we could ever despite our best efforts and they continue to improve in their behaviour and socially.'</p> <p>Independent reviewing officers and social workers report how individual young peoples' quality of life is being greatly improved as a result of the commitment, competence and creativity of the staff team. An independent reviewing officer said, 'young people coming to live in this home, spend more time taking part in community activities. They go to the theatre and can now sit throughout, laughing out loud and enjoying the show. They are sleeping through the night in their new double bed and their daily medication has been reduced. They no longer wear smear suits, but have a range of adapted clothing, obtained by their keyworker.'</p> <p>Children and young people's keyworkers draw up innovative, individualised support, plans and guidance for personal care, in partnership with specialist agencies and families. These excellent plans and their consistent implementation by the staff team, means that children and young people are effectively helped to better manage their presenting difficulties. The child-centred approach employed by staff empowers children and young people to take control over some aspects of their lives. The staff team's creative approach encourages individual young people to choose to use readily available day-to day items to assist them in reducing their anxieties. For example, during mealtimes, young people have chosen to place the condiments, tumblers and mats to form a barrier to limit their desire to bang their head on the table, rather than staff providing cushions. This method means young people are less likely to be discriminated against while out in the community.</p> <p>Children and young people are learning to follow the scripts, prompts and symbols provided by staff to better manage their behavioural difficulties and their personal emotions that they do not understand. They are becoming more adept at feeding themselves, better managing toileting and personal care tasks. They are helped to make daily living choices about what they eat and drink, choosing what clothing they wish to</p>	

wear, and deciding when they want private time and what activities they would like to do. Staff keep a photographic and written record of each child and young person's achievements. Each achievement is celebrated and children and young people really enjoy the praise they receive for their accomplishments.

The well-being of individual children and young people underpins all of the home's practice. Staff show an outstanding level of understanding of the meaning of each child or young person's non-verbal behaviour and fully understand children and young people's individualised communication methods. The staff team's vigilance and in-depth understanding of the needs and abilities of each individual, contributes to improving health and educational outcomes for children and young people. Their illnesses or pain, worries and fears are usually quickly recognised and action is taken to remedy that particular concern. Conversely, staff also know children and young people's preferences, and know what makes them happy. Children and young people have fun living in their home; they eat nutritious food that they like and spend time doing their favourite things.

Relationships between staff and children and young people are positive. Children and young people are re-assured by the consistency of care provided by the staff team. The sensitively delivered care children and young people receive ensures they are treated as individuals, and treated with dignity and respect at all times. Great care is taken to ensure that the mix of children and young people in each unit within the home is suitable to meet their individual needs. Good planning and assessment contributes to providing a harmonious, safe and comfortable environment for children and young people to live in.

Each living unit provides a family style home, adapted to meet the particular needs of those children and young people living therein. Units may contain soft play areas, sensory rooms, quiet rooms, full kitchens and specialist bathrooms. Each unit has a comfortable sitting room with dining area. Children and young people each have their own bedroom, decorated to their personal tastes by staff and sometimes also by their parents and carers. Their toys and personal belongings, photos and ornaments are evident throughout their unit; it is very much their home!

The home provides a communal art room, excellent outside play areas and a large, welcoming sitting room where children and young people can meet with their family, friends and visitors in private. Families are made very welcome at this home, and where appropriate, children and young people regularly spend time with their families.

Children and young people are being helped to become less anxious in particular areas of their lives. This increases their opportunities for inclusion and enjoyment and has a positive impact on their overall well-being. All children and young people living in this home attend local special education schools and have opportunity to go to clubs, make friendships with other young people, and participate in community leisure pursuits. During this inspection, one young person was very excited about the preparations being put in place by the home in conjunction with their family, for their 18th birthday party that was being held at the local leisure centre at the week-end. The home's catering manager was

baking a cake of their choice and they had invited their friends to the disco.

An outstanding level of support is provided to young people, in line with their abilities and needs, as they move towards adulthood, to help them to become more independent and ready for their move into adult services. The home is fully involved in transitional planning for young people and staff keep in contact with individuals once they have left. One young person said, 'I go to the shops to buy my food and then I follow a recipe and cook my dinner. I like going to school and working on the farm. I have met my support person who will help me when I leave here; they are visiting me again today.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
<p>The safety and protection of children and young people living in this home are the priority considerations within all aspects of the home's operation. Children and young people are kept safe by the staff team's outstanding understanding of their needs and abilities. The excellent placement plans drawn up for each child and young person manages and minimises risks to children and young people inside and outside of their home.</p> <p>Consistent care provides children and young people with clear boundaries and expectations of behaviour. The regular routine in place for individuals helps children and young people to understand the world around them and contributes to them feeling safe.</p> <p>Staff support children and young people to find innovative ways to more safely manage their own behaviour. Effective de-escalation techniques assist children and young people in reducing their anxieties and challenging behaviour, improving their well-being and safety.</p> <p>Challenging behaviour is well-managed, ensuring children and young people are kept safe when restrained, and their dignity is maintained. Staff implement the clear plans and guidance in place for each child or young person regarding the permissible restraint techniques that can be used to safeguard them and others. This ensures that only appropriate restraints are undertaken, and only when it is necessary to do so to keep people safe from harm. The Registered Manager is a 'Team Teach' trainer and staff receive regular and effective training in employing control and restraint techniques. All restraints undertaken are recorded in detail and rigorously monitored and reviewed by senior staff and the Registered Manager, ensuring children and young people are protected and their welfare is promoted at all times.</p> <p>Incidents of challenging behaviour, and patterns and trends for individual children and young people are closely scrutinised by the staff team. Staff work hard to make sense of the meaning of the child or young person's distress to identify if there are any specific</p>	

triggers for such behaviour, that can then be reduced to minimise such occurrences. Staff rigour has resulted in hypotheses being tested and sometimes proven, enabling staff to identify why children and young people may become upset. Staff then devise effective actions or arrange for additional services to be put in place for individuals to minimise any future episodes. The home challenges the local authority plans in place if there is any suspicion that children and young people are not being sufficiently safeguarded by current arrangements. This safeguards and promotes children and young peoples' well-being.

No children and young people have gone missing from this home over a considerable number of years. Close supervision and high staffing ratios ensure children and young people are kept safe at all times. However, should such an event arise, the home has clear protocols and processes in place to deal with such an issue.

Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of good safeguarding practice and complete regular training to update their knowledge. Established working practices within the home are regularly observed and monitored by senior staff and managers, to ensure that appropriate and safe care is provided to children and young people. Additional staffing is provided when required to keep individual children and young people safe from harm.

The home provides specialist equipment to make sure children and young people have the assistance they need to fully participate in their daily lives safely. Regular health and safety and utilities checks are undertaken to ensure the home provides a safe environment for them to live within.

Recruitment and selection processes carried out by the home's senior management team have improved. The home robustly implements the local authority's processes in place, ensuring all necessary vetting checks are completed in line with safer recruitment processes. This contributes to ensuring only suitable persons are employed to look after vulnerable children and young people.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
Leadership and management of the home are strong. The home is exceptionally well run by leaders and managers who are well qualified and very experienced. They have a clear vision for the development of this home and creative plans are in place to use the home's existing resources to bring about improvements in practice that are likely to improve outcomes for children and young people. The home is achieving its aims and objectives as described within its Statement of Purpose.	

The Registered Manager has led the staff team since November 1997. He is committed to providing an outstanding level of care to each child and young person and leads the team by example. His exceptional ability and knowledge of effectively working with and supporting children and young people with complex needs is recognised by the staff team who hold him in high regard. He has an excellent grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of this home and diligently keeps up-to-date with current practice developments and legislation to inform the home's practice and improve service delivery to children and young people. The Registered Manager is taking effective action to ensure the inclusion of children and young people.

Excellent management oversight and clear lines of delegated responsibility and accountability ensure that staff robustly implement children and young peoples' comprehensive placement plans. Placement plans reflect the objectives of local authority health, education and care plans. Plans are regularly updated and amended to ensure that they guide staff in how best to meet the individual's current needs and to support their development.

The home's reflective approach to its operation ensures learning from practice issues and from the gathered feedback from parents and professionals, leads to improving the experiences and care of children and young people. The one requirement made at the last inspection of the service to improve the quality of monitoring reports has been satisfactorily met.

Leaders and managers are clear about which children and young people the home is able to help. The home's well-considered and child-centred admission decisions ensure excellent placement stability. Admissions and discharges to and from the home are exceptionally well managed, resulting in reduced anxiety in children and young people during a change period. Parents and professionals applaud how well the home manages these processes, in the preparation of young people and by the support provided to their parents and carers during a difficult time of change. A parent said, 'it was one of the, if not the most difficult decision we as a family have made and staff at the home made the transition as smooth as possible.'

Excellent management oversight and clear lines of delegated responsibility and accountability ensure that staff robustly implement children and young peoples' comprehensive placement plans. Placement plans reflect the objectives of local authority health, education and care plans. Plans are regularly updated and amended to ensure that they guide staff in how best to meet the individual's current needs.

The Registered Manager rigorously scrutinises the home's care practices and robustly challenges other professionals and services, to make sure the most appropriate and effective help and support is provided to benefit each child and young person. Targets stretch individual children and young people to meet new challenges. A weekly analysis by keyworkers of their progress eliminates the possibility of drift in their development.

The regular monitoring and reporting of individual progress means that should a young

person's rate of progress decline, or new behavioural or physical difficulties emerge, prompt action is taken by the home to ensure a collaborative review is undertaken and new planning leads to the provision of effective support. Should this support not be readily available, leaders and managers seek to find solutions within the home's resources, or challenge other agencies to provide needed services to improve outcomes for that individual.

Over the past year, the home has established more effective partnership working arrangements with key agencies. In particular, working relationships with schools have improved significantly. Improved partnership working has resulted in raising staff awareness and learning in each setting, benefiting children and young people who now receive a higher level of consistent and more effective care across both settings.

Leaders and managers have also focused on improving the home's physical environment. It is now maintained to a high and safe standard and is far more homely in appearance. Effective action is taken to regularly review and act on any known risks to children and young people, taking advice and guidance from other professionals.

Staff benefit from good access to the local authority's induction and training programmes and the provision of specialist training to meet individual children and young people's specific needs. Supervision is reflective, regular and recorded, supporting staff to better undertake their roles to benefit the experiences and outcomes for children and young people. These processes support the development of the staff team which evidences high levels of competence and skill within its members. Their knowledge, experience and strong commitment support children and young people to make exceptional progress.

Case records are well kept and provide a detailed history of children and young people's progress and experience. However, there is one area of reporting which requires attention. When children and young people's health plans are updated by staff in response to changes made to children and young people's administered medication, staff do not sign and date this amendment. Consequently, there is no clearly written audit trail to follow when monitoring practice to ensure accuracy and to eliminate the possibility of error. To date, this shortfall in practice has had no adverse impact on individual welfare.

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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