

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	06/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC046276
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Secure Unit
Registered person	Devon County Council
Registered person address	County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD

Responsible individual	Andrea Morris
Registered manager	Vacant
Inspector	Paul Taylor

Inspection date	06/10/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good.
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement.
outcomes in education and related learning activities	Good.

SC046276

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people develop warm and trusting relationships with the adults who care for them.
- Staff report good levels of support from their line managers.
- Staff received training which keeps them up to date with current practice and ensures they have the knowledge and skills to work in this home.
- Young people achieve good levels of attendance at education and make good progress.
- Young people feel safe living in this home.
- The managers ensure that any incidents of concerns, particularly those relating to safeguarding matters, are passed on promptly to the relevant agencies.
- Shortfalls are in relation to recording and do not have an impact on the young people's wellbeing.

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.

Requirement	Due date
<p>6.—(1) The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>(a) understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>(b) use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>(b) ensure that staff—</p> <p>(ii) protect and promote each child's welfare;</p> <p>(iii) treat each child with dignity and respect;</p> <p>Specifically, ensure records relating to individual level 4 searches of young people include the rationale for such a search and a senior managers authorisation (Regulation 6 (2)(b)(ii)(iii))</p>	30/11/2015
<p>13. The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that –</p> <p>(2) (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p> <p>Specifically ensure that all young people's records contain the information required and that they are monitored and kept up to date.</p>	30/11/2015
<p>Ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a sanction, a record is made which includes the effectiveness of the use of the measure (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii))</p>	30/11/2015
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for</p>	30/11/2015

<p>each child which –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; (b) are kept up to date; and (c) are signed and dated by the author of each entry. <p>(Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>Specifically ensure that care plans are kept up to date and contain all the information required.</p>	
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Recommendations

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

Ensure staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. This is in relation to ensuring that auditing and recording of medication is accurate and that care plans are kept up to date. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62 paragraph 14.4)

Ensure single separation records clearly include a written record of the observations of young people to the frequency set out in their risk assessment; ensure records show whether the criteria for single separation continues to be met during the period of separation and summarises why the period of separation has come to an end; ensure young people are offered the opportunity to read and add a comment to the record of their separation. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, Page 50, paragraph 9.65)

Ensure the ethos of the home supports each child to learn; specifically, ensure with urgency, the 'assessing pupil progress' system is fully implemented across the curriculum so that all young people make good progress and achieve appropriate qualifications and awards during their stay. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 29 Paragraph 5.18)

Ensure the ethos of the home supports each child to learn; specifically, re-introduce focused lesson observations for all teaching staff to further improve teaching and learning. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 29 Paragraph 5.18)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict young people's liberty. Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities. The children's home can accommodate up to 10 young people who are aged between 10 and 17 years and accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989. Admission of any young person under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/02/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
23/09/2014	CH - Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good.
<p>Young people who stay in this home have a range of highly complex and diverse needs. This means that staff tailor their delivery of care sensitively while maintaining boundaries and respect. Young people say they feel safe and that they see the home as a safe haven. Young people have formed warm and trusting relationships with the adults who care for them.</p> <p>Young people receive continuity of care from a consistent staff team, and staffing levels are good. On rare occasions, workers from the 'bank' team support shifts to cover sickness and unforeseen circumstances. In practice, care staff have a good understanding of young people and their individual needs. The care and support they give is good.</p> <p>Written care plans are under review by the newly appointed case managers. Currently documents lack some key information and others have not been reviewed and monitored for accuracy and whether they are up to date. The information in the plans is too generic and does not identify the presenting daily living needs of young people. Targets are not specific enough which makes progress identified within some individual records difficult to measure. While young people, social workers, members of staff and parents are positive about the progress that young people are making, recording of this success is not consistent. This makes monitoring of progress difficult.</p> <p>The physical and emotional health care needs of young people are promoted, monitored and reviewed to a good standard. Young people receive individualised and targeted support. They are registered with a general practitioner who attends the home two days a week. The in house specialist health services that include a psychiatrist, psychologist and therapist, work holistically with other stakeholders such as the management of the home, young people, staff and parents. This has significantly improved young people's progress and their helped their relationships with family members and significant others.</p> <p>Recent changes within the oversight and management of medication has resulted in the records of administration not being robustly maintained. Immediate action was taken to remedy the deficiencies identified. While these shortfalls had not had an impact on the young people, auditing and oversight of medication in store was not robust.</p> <p>A particular strength of this home is the management of young people's transitions</p>	

coming into and leaving this home. Good management oversight ensures that young people's needs are reviewed and transitions prepared which are in their best interest. The managers appropriately challenge placing authorities and offer alternative solutions if they feel that proposed plans are not in a young person's best interests. Plans are flexible and enable introductions for young people to visit their proposed placements, allowing them to become familiar with the change of environment and care staff. The manager and staff advocate strongly for young people and effectively work in partnership with supporting agencies to ensure positive and smooth transitions.

Attention to the environment has had significant improvements and young people live in a welcoming and comfortable home. Consultation with young people has enabled them to be actively involved in selecting colour schemes, replacement carpets and art work. In addition, funding has been secured for significant improvements to the home in areas such as an outside play area. The young people were actively consulted in the development of these plans. Building work is due to start in November 2015.

The manager and staff promote positive experiences, comfort and choice for young people who live in this home. Structured activities provide young people the opportunity to explore and developed new talents and skills. These include weekly sessions with the music man whereby young people are encouraged to write their own music, mix tunes and sing. Planned activities include smoothie making, listening to favourite music, playing electronic games machines, quiz nights, beauty sessions and a range of outdoor activities. Young people report that they have enough to do to keep them busy and entertained.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good.
<p>Young people feel safe. They raised no issues with inspectors about their safety. There are some incidents of bullying, though young people did not raise any concerns. Staff actively challenge any bullying and keep records of incidents along with the action taken, which includes risk management, individual work with young people and/or restorative practices to repair harm done.</p> <p>Risks of suicide and self-harm along with vulnerability are assessed on admission and carefully planned for. There has been low incidence of self-harm since the last inspection. Processes are in place to ensure young people are always closely supervised and monitored in line with their needs.</p> <p>There have been a number of child protection incidents since the last inspection.</p>	

All have been referred to the local authority and relevant professionals in a timely manner. Managers ensure that matters are followed up to minimise any delays. Records for the most part are well kept showing all relevant details and outcomes. Records could be clearer and better organised in some cases and the outcome definitively highlighted. Practices are in line with the home's procedures and this helps to keep young people safe.

There are good links with the local authority designated officer (LADO) and Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). At the time of inspection, managers were in the process of developing a report on safeguarding and physical restraint to provide to the LSCB so that the Board can monitor and provide independent oversight and scrutiny of the home's practices. The LADO visits the home very regularly and randomly looks at restraint incidents on closed-circuit television and examines all child protection matters. This provides a further layer of external scrutiny in support of safeguarding young people.

The home has arrangements for implementing the government's 'Prevent' agenda. Managers understand the duties set out in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Prevent Duty Guidance issued by government. There are links with relevant agencies and professionals to share information where appropriate. Some staff have completed awareness training and training is planned for others.

Positive behaviour is promoted and encouraged with staff presenting as good role models and having positive relationships with young people. The home has an incentive scheme. This helps young people to improve their social skills and behaviour through achieving agreed objectives and targets. Young people earn points for good behaviour and can progress through the scheme from bronze to gold levels with increased privileges and rewards. Individualised programmes can be developed for young people with specific needs.

Sanctions are imposed where young people's behaviour is inappropriate, though they are used rarely. This indicates a positive approach to managing young people's behaviour. Sanctions are relevant to the misdemeanour and young people are given the opportunity to make good what they have done wrong. They can sign or write comments on the records which means staff encourage young people to reflect on their behaviour. This also helps supports them to develop understanding and responsibility. There are occasions when the effectiveness of the measure is not recorded appropriately by staff to demonstrate the impact of the sanction imposed. Managers have close oversight of measures used and review effectiveness. Therefore this matter is a recording issue that has minimal impact.

Physical restraint is used in line with regulations. Appropriate records are kept of all incidents. Young people and staff are supported through debriefs carried out after any incident. Better use of debriefs to inform planning and behaviour management strategies could improve practices further. Managers examine all incidents using records and closed-circuit television to ensure practice is

appropriate. The home uses books with carbon leaves to record incidents. On occasions, this has led to 'over-writing' on previous incidents and making the document difficult to read. The manager is aware and is in the process of reviewing this.

Single separation is used appropriately and in line with government guidance. Records are in the main well kept. In some cases recording does not clearly show the level of observations undertaken and in one case whether the criteria for single separation continued to be met. One record stated observations were at five minute intervals but did not provide further detail due to the lack of space available in the log for staff to write into. The manager is aware of this issue and stated there are plans to address this. There is monitoring of any use of single separation to ensure it is justified and appropriate.

There have been two incidents of young people absconding since the last inspection while on planned and approved mobility. In both cases, relevant agencies were notified promptly and robust actions taken. Records are kept that show the home's procedures were followed and fully implemented in order to help keep young people safe.

The home has a policy and procedure for searching young people's rooms and communal areas. This is in line with balancing the needs of young people with the safety and security of the home. Searching of young people is underpinned by a risk-led process. The types of searches used range from, turning out pockets and taking shoes off, pat down with the use of an electronic wand up to a 'level 4' where young people remove clothing and put on a dressing gown. Full searches are the exception. This type of search must be authorised by a manager and is only carried out if there are significant concerns or risks. Staff and managers confirm this is the process. Searches are fully recorded; however, records of these searches do not clearly show the rationale for the search and the signature of the authorising manager.

Four staff have been recruited since the last inspection. A policy and procedure is in place for the recruitment of new staff. Records are kept by the local authority at their main offices and therefore managers at the home keep a record of the checks that have been undertaken and that are available on the main files. The records kept show the home follows a process to ensure they employ the right people to work with vulnerable children.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of	Requires improvement.

leaders and managers	
<p>The home is undergoing a period of transition within the management team. While managers are aware of areas which need improvement and have plans in place to address these, they have not had time to be wholly effective.</p> <p>An acting manager is in place while the Registered Manager is on secondment for two years. The acting manager is a suitably experienced and qualified individual who is applying to Ofsted to become the Registered Manager. This appointment gives the home stability in leadership and was only confirmed in September. As such, his influence and ideas for improvement have not had time to become embedded.</p> <p>Key records continue to contain shortfalls and the monitoring of them has not ensured improvement. While these shortfalls have not had an impact on young people's welfare they do not consistently meet the required standard.</p> <p>Staffing levels are maintained to a level where young people's safety can be ensured and that close support and supervision can be provided. There is no use of agency staff and staff shortages are covered by an established team of relief staff. This ensures consistency in practice and stability for the young people.</p> <p>All members of staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. The quality of supervision is subject to external review to ensure that it is effective and recorded appropriately. This ensures that supervising staff meet their supervisory tasks and that staff feel supported. 'Brilliant support, couldn't fault it' reports one member of staff.</p> <p>Staff at the home receive on-going varied training in key areas such as safeguarding, child sexual exploitation and awareness of radicalisation. This means that they have the knowledge and skills to carry out their roles effectively.</p> <p>There is external monitoring of the home by the responsible individual. This has led to a development plan being put in place which sets out actions to address areas in need of improvement. For example, a restructuring of the management team and a new case management team to oversee care planning and consistency in liaison and record keeping. As yet these plans have not had time to achieve consistent improvement.</p> <p>There is good liaison with external stakeholders such as placing authorities, parents, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service CAMHS and safeguarding teams. This ensures a cohesive approach and a sense of working together to improve young people's outcomes. There are clear recorded examples of the home advocating on young people's behalf in cases where they feel a local authority is not meeting their obligations. This ensures that complacency is challenged and that the home will advocate conscientiously on behalf of the young people.</p>	

All referrals to the home are assessed by the acting manager to ensure that they can meet each young person's individual needs and that new admissions will not pose a risk to young people already in the home. This ensures that the young people have a greater chance of success during their placement.

The home has a statement of purpose which clearly outlines the ethos and service which it provides. This means that placing authorities, parents and other agencies are fully informed about the home.

All significant events are passed on to the relevant agencies promptly. This ensures that issues can be correctly addressed and that practice is open and transparent.

	Judgement grade
Outcomes in education and related learning activities	Good.
<p>Most young people make good gains in learning, particularly given their often disrupted educational backgrounds. They settle quickly in to education having received an effective initial assessment soon after their arrival. Individuals who arrive during school holidays must wait until education resumes before they receive an assessment or formal education which disadvantages their progression to some degree.</p> <p>Information about young people's prior educational experiences and ability is often incomplete or not available. Diligent work by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) to chase local authorities for relevant educational information, including up-to-date personal education plans, is constant and not always successful.</p> <p>Additional learning needs and learning objectives are identified at the initial assessment stage so that individual plans clearly reflect the level of need from the point where young people start in education. Access to speech and language therapy remains a weakness although arrangements for assessing special educational needs are strong. This is as a result of good working relationships between the council's educational psychologist and the Special Education Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO.)</p> <p>Time in education is generally very positive for most young people and they do well in achieving their personal learning targets and some qualifications appropriate to their level of ability. They engage well and become noticeably more confident, self-assured and articulate. Good progress is often made in mathematics and, to a lesser degree, in English, which has improved since the last inspection. A</p>	

new English teacher has brought much needed rigour and structure to the curriculum and this is already showing improvements in young people's use of language and writing skills. Young people particularly enjoy and make steady progress in the more practical and vocational lessons, such as cooking, art, design technology and motor mechanics.

In all lessons young people are regularly encouraged to explain what they know and understand as they undertake both practical and academic tasks. Many occasions were observed across the school where young people were helping each other, for example, to grapple with replacing a tyre in motor mechanics or to complete a difficult question on a mathematics paper.

Cooking is popular and used very effectively to demonstrate the importance as a key life skill, as well as to promote catering as a serious career option. The 'forest school' is deemed by young people to be a place of calmness and sanctuary, and is a highly valued resource where they work cooperatively and chat freely while learning valuable practical and social skills.

Work experience and mobility continues to provide young people with good opportunities to extend their knowledge and interest about future career or training options; for example, in the catering industry or at a local zoo. Careers advice and guidance is delivered by an external provider on a regular basis and links well to the transition planning process.

Young people are not achieving sufficient qualifications even though they are making necessary and often significant progress in a broad range of subjects. Unsettled staffing arrangements, now resolved, and the slow implementation of the 'assessing pupil progress' (APP) system have impacted upon development in this area. Fortunately, work to implement this is close to completion across the relevant curriculum areas. Functional skills in English and mathematics and physical education are now tracked and mapped to the appropriate levels for each pupil. However, technical issues have prevented access to online functional skills practice papers and examinations and this further impedes progress.

Notwithstanding the serious accreditation issues, overall management of systems and processes within education have improved since the last inspection. Self-evaluation provides a helpful focus for senior managers on quality and improvement of provision. Reviews of young peoples' progress are now prioritised and discussed at weekly staff meetings, including behaviour and welfare issues. All data and relevant commentary are transferred to individual student learning journals, which have improved since the last inspection. This important document is now less cumbersome and includes stronger references to personal and social development. Young people's comments are also recorded.

A weekly tutorial session with each young person is used to discuss and update personal learning objectives and individual targets are re-negotiated. This whole

system approach is developing well and provides a rich source of information about each young person, including their progress, achievements, personal and social development, behaviour and barriers to their learning. The new administrator has greatly enhanced the team's ability to capture and record key information and data to ensure young people's efforts and participation are accurate and reflect the best possible outcomes during their stay at the home.

Teaching continues to be good overall. Teachers plan lessons well to ensure every young person has work that is pitched at an appropriate and challenging level. Individualised learning is emphasised and explained in work folders so that young people know every day what they are doing, and stay focused and on task for much of their time in lessons. Teachers consistently encourage young people to do well and complement them on effort and participation.

Marking in English and mathematics is used effectively to provide young people with clear and helpful guidance. A good balance is generally achieved between teacher-led activity and independent learning, although opportunities to encourage group discussion and debate are underused. In practical and vocational sessions observed, little or no time had been factored for young people to record the learning they had achieved. This is despite the fact it was clearly evident by their involvement that they were gaining considerable knowledge and skills through a range of activities.

Learning walks are regularly undertaken by senior staff and provide useful feedback about for example, how groups are managed, behaviour and levels of participation and engagement. However these are not sufficiently focused to help individual teachers to develop their teaching styles and skills, nor to identify their strengths and areas that need further improvement.

The team of teaching assistants (TAs) provide good support for individual learning and for more complex behavioural and welfare needs. Any low level disruption or attention seeking behaviour, which is not uncommon, is well managed in most instances and when this happens the rest of the group generally stay focused, and keep to task because they want to complete their work. Inappropriate language and behaviour was evident from a minority of individuals and good challenge from teachers was not sufficient to reduce the disruption. At these times TAs use the 'time out' system well to de-escalate situations and to provide the necessary individual support so that individuals can re-engage swiftly or be removed for a longer spell. When appropriate they will work with young people elsewhere to ensure minimum disruption to their own and to others' learning.

The curriculum works well and there is a good mix of class-room based learning, practical work and vocational taster sessions. Group sizes are manageable, sometimes one-to-one, and enable teachers to tailor lessons well to meet individual needs. Information and communication technology (ICT) is limited in its scope. Computers are used competently by young people though not always as

part of their learning activity, such as recording their work or completing tasks. Not all areas have ICT capacity. When used well, the electronic boards in classrooms provide a welcome additional stimulus for the teacher and young people, which they enjoy, but as previously observed this resource is underused.

Learning areas are arranged well and appropriately equipped. Use of young people's work as display is particularly strong in Art and design technology, and increasingly so in English and mathematics. More could be done in other areas to display work around subject topics and schemes. Corridors provide gallery space for an impressive range of young people's art work which has been professionally mounted and to very good effect. Health and safety is given high priority in the practical and vocational areas which is usefully linked by staff to employment and industrial standards. All young people wear appropriate head gear, goggles, clothing and footwear as each activity dictates. They understand the issues of safety and work sensibly with and around potentially dangerous or harmful equipment and resources.

Young people enjoy a good range of leisure and enrichment activities out of education, many of which take place in the education rooms, outdoor areas including the forest school, as well as in the home. Activity and themed events take place over weekends and during school holidays to which members of the education team often contribute. Music, dance and drama are popular activities often supported by external providers, alongside a range of physical education and sport programmes. Homework is set on a regular basis and care staff give good support to young people to complete tasks and to help with reading.

The educational monitoring board is well-established and continues to provide effective guidance, scrutiny and challenge to the head teacher and staff team. Reporting to board members has improved, becoming more strategic and outcome-focused. Data is analysed rigorously and challenged if concerns are exposed; attendance is a case-in-point. As a result of strong intervention from board members there has been a significant reduction in the percentage of authorised absences from lessons since the last inspection and attendance continues to be consistently high. The local authority provides good support and it is hoped a school improvement partner will be re-assigned imminently.

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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