

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	09/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC489212
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	MacIntyre Academies
Registered person address	MacIntyre Care, 602 South Seventh Street, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK9 2JA

Responsible individual	Nicola Wills
Registered manager	Natalie Boothroyd
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	09/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
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	Requires improvement
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC489212

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The manager has done much to bring the home into line with Children's Homes regulations and raise professional standards since coming into post. Over that time the staff team has become more cohesive, and turnover begun to be less of a problem. She is quick to put ideas and suggestions in place and has led a culture in which everyone wants to improve their practice and, more importantly, the lives of children and young people.
- The confidence staff have in their manager and the growing belief the team have in themselves means that they are able to meet challenges and develop skills that is bearing fruit in the progress young people are making.
- Progress is evident in a variety of areas, some to a degree not envisaged when first referred. They include communication, the ability to wait, self-care and independence skills. One professional remarked on seeing a young person after 6 months, 'can that really be him!' adding 'it was so hard to get him to accept his nails and hair being cut and there he was looking very neat and tidy.'
- Those who have short breaks at the home benefit from having the opportunity to accept care from people other than family members and different social experiences.
- Many parents and professionals have a good deal of praise for the staff team and the work they do. A social worker said she 'could wax lyrical' and spoke about the about the home being 'such a positive place'. A mother said 'I just love it, all the staff are really good.'
- Young people benefit greatly from the links between the school and home. Transitions from one to the other are carefully managed, minimising the number of incidents arising from the distress this often creates. In addition collaboration between the two groups of staff maximises the benefit to young people, a successful 'living skills group' being a prime example.
- Good relationships between young people and established members of staff are instrumental in helping children feel secure and to them remaining calm or coming down from an anxious state.
- The induction process ensures staff are confident and prepared for starting to work with young people and continuing training provides them with the knowledge and understanding to make a positive difference to children's lives. Their aptitude for the work was commented on by professionals and family members alike; a team leader was described as 'unbelievable, a natural and so professional'.

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
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a restraint a record is made of the measure, and that within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so has spoken to the user about the measure and signed the record to confirm it is accurate, and within 5 days adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(a)-(c))	30/01/2016

Recommendations

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

- children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations, in particular in regard to the adequate recording of fire drills under The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. (Guide to Children's Homes Regulations 3.9, page 15)
- the behaviour management strategy should be understood and applied at all times by staff; this relates specifically to implementing the policy about and the recording of sanctions. (Guide to Children's Homes Regulations 9.34, page 46)
- the registered person should only accept placements where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. These assessments should be recorded. (Guide to Children's Homes Regulations 11.4, page 56)
- the registered person must ensure that recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. (Guide to Children's Homes Regulations 13.1, page 61)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home is run by a private organisation in partnership with the local authority. It provides placements for up to 6 children on long term placements and a further 6 on short breaks. All children are pupils at the school on the same site.

An after school club is run by the manager and staff of the home but at the school and is not registered under the Children's Homes Regulations.

The home was previously registered as a residential special school, becoming a children's home in July 2015.

Recent inspection history

This is the first inspection of this children's home.

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>good</p>
<p>Good interactions were observed between young people and staff members, with genuine pleasure being shown on greeting. Once young people have got to know the adults working with them this forms the basis of relationships in which anxieties can be lowered and difficult situations managed. Generally staff interpret behaviour and read young people’s reactions well to ensure responses are attuned to their wishes and feelings.</p> <p>Family members and professionals expressed concern about staff turnover, especially key workers, and the impact on children and young people. There are indications that this is improving but needs to be sustained for there to be a lasting effect. Nonetheless, social workers were impressed with the level of knowledge staff have of young people. One described observing a new staff member with a young person who knew the symbols he used to communicate and had carefully considered how to transition him from school.</p> <p>Parents and social workers comment on the progress young people are making, including a reduction in self-harming, increasing independence skills, calming quicker and improving levels of communication. Parents of one young person commented ‘we didn’t expect anything education wise but over the last couple of months our son has come on leaps and bounds.’ They and others were impressed with the individual nature of the care given, such as communication symbols specific to each child’s likes and interests, increasing their ability to indicate exactly what they want and reducing frustration.</p> <p>Ways of setting specific targets for young people in addition to those of individual education plans are being explored. Currently areas of progress are not well documented in files, although many photographs are taken of new activities being done. The manager and staff are considering how best to evidence this in a way that is helpful to them, young people and their families as well as placing authorities and regulators.</p> <p>The home is well laid out for the purpose of providing both short break and long-term placements. There are separate wings for each with some shared space, including the garden. Largely this avoids the difficulty of young people for whom this is their permanent home being unsettled by others staying only briefly. Currently there are problems with short break children occasionally getting access to the long stay side as doors to the garden are open on both wings. It is planned to introduce key fobs for young people to use that open some doors and not others to avoid this.</p>	

Unfortunately the materials used in the construction of the home are not robust enough to withstand the challenges some young people present. Plasterboard, for example, does not deaden sound and is easily damaged leading to some young people being disturbed by the noise of others and the need for constant repairs. Maintenance is generally swift but currently organised through the school, so if it is shut action can be delayed. The manager is to be given direct responsibility to resolve the issue.

The home's statement of purpose is being worked to well and staff are achieving the aims of improving the lives of young people and of their parents in a very conducive environment. The word 'positive' came up several times in relation to the home when family members and professionals were spoken to: the experience of children and young people is well summed up by a social worker who said 'this is just such a positive place'.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
<p>Good relationships between staff and young people maximises the potential for children to take the opportunities open to them and to keep safe. One professional spoke of seeing how a situation in which a young person had got out of the grounds was managed: 'there were a lot of people to support but out of his line of vision, then they just peeled away as things settled. I was very impressed; there was a nice resolution and he calmed well'.</p> <p>The home is carrying some vacancies and relies on agency staff to cover some shifts. The manager has the same high expectation of them, but they do not know the young people as well and this can lead to difficult situations. In one that occurred during the inspection an agency worker failed to maintain a young person's privacy; this was dealt with most appropriately by colleagues and managers.</p> <p>Vacancies are being filled but records of the recruitment process do not sufficiently evidence that all the safeguards required have been conducted. This does not mean staff have been inappropriately appointed but that managers need to be thorough in checking procedures are seen to be followed. This is the subject of a recommendation.</p> <p>Recording is an issue in conducting fire evacuation drills with the time taken to get everyone out of the building missing from some entries and the actual time of the drill taking place not provided for any. This has also resulted in a recommendation.</p> <p>A requirement to improve the monitoring of physical interventions has been</p>	

imposed as although the detail in these is good, a date of the record being made is not given and the recording format does not give sufficient space for the manager to comment on its appropriateness. Some entries for monitoring are outside of regulatory timescales and the manager needs to ensure an appropriate person is authorised to undertake this role in her absence.

The storage, administration and recording of medication ensures that this is done safely. Their health is a high priority and a professional commented on how well a case of shingles was dealt with. Health and safety assessments and routine monitoring of such things as food temperature are conducted thoroughly.

All young people admitted to the home, whether long term or short break placements, are students of the academy on the same campus. They are therefore known to the manager and many staff. They are subject to a referral process and consideration at a meeting that decides the appropriateness of admission. However, records of these are not retained on the home's files and so staff do not have access to pre-admission assessments that would inform their work from the outset. Impact risk assessments that demonstrate, among other things, how it was decided which days a short-break placement should attend are also not retained. This is made a recommendation.

Assessments undertaken after young people are admitted are detailed and kept up dated. These feed into behaviour support plans, 'hospital passports' specific risk assessments and missing child information sheets. A particularly helpful document describes a young person's 'critical communication'. These detail what they may do or say, what it might mean, what others need to do in response.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
<p>The registered manager is a qualified nurse and is working towards her level 5 award in residential child care. She has done leadership training in the NHS. She ensures staff have appropriate training opportunities from induction onwards to work with the young people placed in the home and provides effective supervision. The regularity of the latter has improved and staff talked about benefitting from sessions to reflect, manage their workload and deal with stress.</p> <p>The manager takes opportunities to learn and raise the bar of her own practice and that of staff. The temporary engagement of a consultant has assisted this process and managers are rising to the challenge of meeting recommendations, such as exploring ways to evidence choices young people are given.</p> <p>An ethos has developed in which the whole team is as keen to hone their practice</p>	

as much as their manager and have the secure base of clear procedures and professional support to do so. As a result the experiences of children and young people are enhanced.

An exception to this rule is the implementation of the 'no sanctions' policy; there were differences of opinion among staff about what constituted a sanction and therefore what should be recorded. This has resulted in a recommendation.

The manager and staff are pleased, but not satisfied, with the strengths of the home (listening to and knowing the young people, offering realistic choices, supporting one another to manage difficult situations, offering experiences young people might otherwise not have and the progress of particular children among them). They are also aware of areas needing to improve and how to tackle them. These include the setting of individual targets and the evidencing of progress.

Care planning is good and files are generally in good order. Other professionals are challenged about provision for children, such as the timely production of relevant plans and a deprivation of liberty order application, although this has not resulted in quicker responses.

Close links with the school are inherent in how the home is set up and does have considerable benefits. One social worker commented, 'I'm really happy with the way the school and the home flow together', noting how this assists smoother transitions and working on educational targets.

Social workers are provided with monthly reports and details of any incidents that occur. Some lapses have been reported but the consensus is that this is much improved.

The legal status of one young person is unclear and this is having an impact on how the placement is reviewed with the local authority and parents. It is, however, regarded as a positive placement for her.

A workforce plan needs to be pulled together to comply with statutory guidance, although the necessary policies and information are already held by the manager.

Despite omissions in the recording of significant monitoring information (identified under 'how well children and young people are helped and protected') the home is led well and the necessary structures are in place to ensure children benefit from living in the home, whether permanently placed or on short breaks.

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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