

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	09/02/2016
Unique reference number	SC036304
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	People Directorate, 9th Floor, Merton House, Stanley, BOOTLE, Merseyside, L20 3JA

Responsible individual	Dwayne Johnson
Registered manager	Sally-Ann Edwards
Inspector	Nick Veysey

Inspection date	09/02/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
<p>The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection</p> <p>This home was judged Good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has improved effectiveness.</p> <p>Children have made sustained and significant progress since the last inspection. The manager and staff provide them with stability in a friendly and supportive home. The warm and encouraging atmosphere helps them feel safer, loved and better about themselves. As they become more settled their emotional well-being has improved. They are building positive relationships with other children, staff and their families. They are learning to deal with feelings of anger and frustration constructively and as a result incidents of aggressive behaviour have notably reduced. They are benefiting from a consistently good standard of personalised care tailored to meet their individual needs. They are getting the right help at the right time to prepare them to live within a family. Since the last inspection, four children have successfully moved in a planned way to live with foster carers and are doing exceptionally well. While others are, now ready to live with foster carers and are waiting for a suitable family.</p> <p>Children enjoy strong and trusting relationships with staff. They are treated with respect and dignity. They actively take part in the running of the home and the decisions affecting their lives, including choosing what they have to eat, how the house is decorated and what they do in their spare time. They feel that the staff always listen to them, take their complaints seriously and try hard to sort things out. They are fully involved in planning for their care and support and are in agreement with the plans for their futures. They are involved in writing their placement plans and choosing their goals. Detailed plans, which staff consistently followed, set out all of the children's individual needs and the support to promote and safeguard their welfare. The plans are written from the young person's perspective and use language that they find easy to understand. The plans clearly show what they want to achieve, what they need to do and what support they need to help them. Staff regularly spend time with them reviewing plans so that they have an opportunity to talk about what is going well, to celebrate their achievements and to think about what they want to tackle next. It gives them a sense of achievement and builds confidence in their skills.</p> <p>The manager and staff have strong working relationships with children's families,</p>	

social workers, schools, therapists, foster carers, and health services. They work collaboratively to understand children's personal needs and ensure that they get the best possible support. They work closely with schools to tackle any barriers to children's participation in education, and with health services to monitor and promote good physical and emotional health. Importantly, they have developed open and supportive relationships with children's parents. They make sure children see their families regularly and this is a safe and rewarding experience that promotes and builds children's relationships with important people in their lives.

These strong partnerships also ensure children's care is effectively planned to meet their needs. Usually, children move into the home in a planned way providing sufficient time for staff to understand the child's needs and experiences, and work out the support they need, and the ability of the staff to meet those needs effectively. The manager and staff make sure that social workers have up-to-date information about children's progress to assist them to find and match them to suitable foster carers. They also take decisive action to prevent unnecessary delays when children are ready to move on.

The quality of the accommodation has improved. Children are now living in a comfortable and relaxing home. The house is decorated and furnished to a good standard. It is clean and tidy and repairs are carried out promptly.

Children feel safe and are safer. They know they have trusted adults they can talk to when they are worried. Risks associated with going missing from care, sexual exploitation, bullying and self-harm have significantly reduced.

Staff have a clear understanding of the risks to individual young people's safety and work effectively and reduce these risks. However, the written risk reduction and behaviour management plans do not set out clearly the specific strategies that staff should follow to help deal with the risks. For example, a plan asks staff to use 'diversion techniques' to deal with a child's aggressive behaviour, but does not explain what these techniques are and what staff should actually do. This lack of clarity may impede the consistent use of effective protective measures to help children by different members of staff.

Children often move into the home at upsetting times of their lives. They may often feel confused, anxious and angry and express these feeling through aggressive behaviour. The staff understand how difficult it can be for children when they first move in. They are resilient and show a strong commitment to supporting the children, regardless of the challenges they face. They encourage and support to have positive relationships and behaviour. Their excellent communication and personal skills help children understand about acceptable behaviour and respect, and to manage their feelings. They find creative ways to help children deal with strong emotions safely; for example using pillows, games and art to help a child find healthy outlets to release her feelings and build emotional literacy. She said: 'It helps me when I'm starting to feel angry and means I'm not losing it as much.' The staff also know how individual children's

level of understanding impacts on their ability to make changes. Therefore, they adapt their approaches depending on the child; for example they know that for a particular child issues need to be dealt with immediately because he operates in the 'here and now', but another child needs to be given time and space to feel calm before talking to her.

Overtime children have made significant progress in managing their feelings. Staff help children to resolve their difficulties and learn skills to manage conflict in ways that does not lead to aggression. Some children now manage their disagreements with emotional maturity and resilience. They fall out, talk through the problem, accept their part in the dispute and their differences, and are soon friends again. Staff use reflective practice to review children's behaviour and identify what is working to help calm situations down. Consequently, they are managing aggressive behaviour through effective communication and positive interactions with the children involved without the need to use restraint.

Strong and effective leadership and management ensure that the home is run in children's best interests. Good monitoring systems provide managers with a clear picture of its strengths and areas for development. They are actively trying to improve the quality of care by making sure that staff have the relevant expertise and skills to meet the specific needs of each child, including training around social pedagogy, communicating effectively with children and emotional and mental health. They have changed the staffing arrangements to ensure that children get the right level of support. They are making changes to improve further communication and consistency between staff, including more structured planning of each day, activities and direct work with the children. They are planning to have more time available more time for handover meetings and holding team meetings more frequently to ensure everyone is fully informed about children's support plans, understand behaviour management strategies, and have up to date information about children's progress. Also, they have revised the reward system, in consultation with the children, to place more emphasis on enabling children to achieve more and build their self-esteem.

A new system of independent monitoring has been introduced and is improving the level of scrutiny of the home. An independent person has visited every month, provided detailed reports of their findings with recommendations for action. The improved quality of monitoring is assisting the leaders and managers to understand the effectiveness of the home's approaches or to secure improvements and better outcomes for children. However, the independent visitor's report are not always been sent to Ofsted. In addition, the manager routinely carries out a thorough review of the quality of care children received and their progress. The review does not include children's views about the support they receive or observations of how they experience the quality of care provided.

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children and young people who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The primary task of the home is to provide short- to medium-term care to prepare children and young people to live in a foster family.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/05/2015	Full	Good
04/02/2015	Interim	sustained effectiveness
14/07/2014	Full	Adequate
03/03/2014	Interim	Satisfactory Progress

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 the independent person must provide a copy of independent person's report to HMCI. (Regulation 44(7)(a))	29/02/2016
The registered person must ensure that the quality of care review monitors, reviews and evaluates the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it. In particular that children's views are included in the quality of care report. (Regulation 45(2)(b))	29/02/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that children's risk reduction and behaviour management plans include clear and comprehensive details of the specific steps the staff will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 42, paragraph 9.6)

What the inspection judgements mean

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

Information about this inspection

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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