

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	22/06/2015
Unique reference number	SC032838
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school
Registered person	Appletree Treatment Centre Limited
Registered person address	Meathop Park, Meathop, GRANGE-OVER-SANDS, Cumbria, LA11 6RF

Responsible individual	Clair Davies
Registered manager	Amanda Fishwick
Inspector	Charlie Bamber

Inspection date	22/06/2015
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	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC032838

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children who have previously struggled with attendance at education now have good attendance and make good progress.
- A high level of support is offered to children with very complex emotional needs. Children receive warmth and affection which helps them feel valued.
- Structure and routine help children to become stable and feel secure.
- Children's health needs are met to a high standard. Children are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle through a well-balanced diet and activity.
- Children take part in activities of their choice in the community.
- Children are helped to feel safe, they report feeling very safe in the home and the attached school.
- Staff advocate for children and work intensively to ensure that children's wishes are respected and acted upon.
- Contact with family members is promoted and moved forward at each child's individual pace.
- The home is decorated and furnished to a high standard. Bedrooms are personalised and the environment is homely and welcoming.
- The staff team are cohesive and feel well supported by the management team.
- Effective monitoring takes place and there are plans to address any weaknesses identified.
- Staff absence and sickness has had some impact on the children although this is minimal.
- Life story work, including information about children's cultural heritage could be improved upon to ensure that children have a full understanding of their history and are supported in developing their identity.

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
13: The leadership and management standard; Ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; specifically that there are enough staff to ensure that each child can attend clubs/groups of their choice on a regular basis. (13(2)(d))	22.10.15

Recommendations

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

- Understanding the importance of who we are and where we come from is recognised in good social work practice, for example through undertaking life story work or through other direct work. Staff in children's homes should play a full role in work of this kind. (The Guide to the Quality Standards paragraph 3.14 page 16)
- Full attention must be paid to individual children's ethnic origin and cultural and linguistic background. This must be central to and integrated into every aspect of care, support and daily life, so that children have the support they need to feel pride in their identity and heritage. (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes 2.35)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned residential special school, which is also registered as a children's home. It provides a service for up to eight children, between the ages of six and 12 years, who experience emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/02/2015	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
06/08/2014	CH - Full	Good
04/02/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
<p>Young people make remarkable progress in this home. At admission they are often showing signs of extreme trauma and through the provision of stable care, nurture, warmth and effective therapy they soon settle and start to progress. Over longer periods of time they become very settled and their difficult behaviours show a large reduction. They become more able to self-regulate and this allows them to make progress, particularly in respect of forming trusting relationships with adults and friendships with peers. One young person said of staff 'They've helped me a lot. They help with my behaviour and help me to ignore people who wind me up.'</p> <p>Staff really invest in the young people. They show great commitment and are not afraid to show warmth and affection which is given freely, spontaneously and genuinely. One young person said 'All the staff are nice, kind and caring.' Staff have high (although not unrealistic) expectations for young people and communicate these expectations in a positive way. There is a strong focus on rewarding positive behaviour with certificates, praise and some more tangible rewards. Sanctions are not frequently used and there is an emphasis on restorative practice as opposed to punitive measures, although it is acknowledged that there are times when these are needed. When young people's behaviour has fallen below expectation, staff take time to speak in depth to them about it and explain other ways they might have dealt with the situation or provide strategies for dealing with things in a more positive way.</p> <p>Staff have a very good understanding of each young person's needs. They show insight into the impact their past experiences are having on their current behaviour and deal with this in a sensitive way. Placement plans are individualised and are very detailed, with up to date information and photographs of the young person. Children do not always understand why they live away from their families and there are plans to introduce placement plans specifically for the children which amongst other things will help them to understand the reasons why they live at the home.</p> <p>Children's health needs are well looked after. The school nurse is a very regular visitor to the home and has a good grasp of the children's holistic health needs. A very healthy diet is provided with great care and attention to children's individual preferences. One child, for example, follows a specific diet and the school nurse and senior housekeeper have met to discuss this to ensure that a healthy balanced diet is provided and a recipe book has been sourced to cater for his needs.</p>	

Children fully engage in education which is a big step for some who have previously struggled to conform to expectations within a school. There is close liaison between the school and home to provide consistency and ensure that key information is shared. Children were observed to work hard in school and to be making good progress.

Children feel they are listened to and there are a number of forums for gathering their wishes, feelings and opinions. Regular community meetings are productive and cover a number of areas, young people are encouraged and supported to participate even when they find this difficult due to their behaviour and social/emotional development. Regular house tutor sessions are held and are meaningful in their content.

Therapy is provided to children that is tailored to their needs. Play therapy, music therapy, art and drama therapy are on offer and help children to make progress in dealing with their complex issues. Communication is good between the staff and therapists who assist staff to continue the therapeutic support in the home through regular consultation meetings.

Children are well prepared for transition into alternative provision. Two children have successfully made the transition into foster placements since the last inspection where they are thriving and attending mainstream school. A further two children have successfully moved to an older residential provision.

Children have diverse cultural backgrounds. Some work is done with them in regard to their identity and cultural heritage but more could be done in this area to promote their understanding of their individual cultural backgrounds.

Children are encouraged to develop their interests and take part in a wide range of activities. Some children choose to attend church, some street dance classes, scouts and fell running. One Independent Reviewing Officer commented that the staff 'Are good at picking up what the kids are interested in and running with it'.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
<p>Young people are kept safe through thorough risk assessments which highlight their specific areas of risk. There are actions and strategies detailed in the assessment to respond to or reduce risk.</p> <p>There is recognition that risk is inherent in growing up and that a level of risk taking is necessary for young people to develop. Young people are therefore</p>	

allowed to take part in some activities which could be considered risky but that are positive for their development. For example, one young person has been taken to the climbing wall and is involved in fell running. Younger children regularly ride bikes and scooters. Older children work towards having some independent time in the community.

Children do not go missing and are not at risk of sexual exploitation. They do not have unsupervised access to the internet and so cannot place themselves at risk in this respect.

Children display some very challenging behaviour at times and it is often necessary to manage this via physical interventions. Staff work hard to utilise strategies to reduce the necessity of holding children but there are months when the number of restrictive physical interventions are very high. Plans for behaviour management detail ways to calm children and to de-escalate without the need to hold them and this does minimize the number of interventions. For example some children have pop up tents in their bedrooms where they feel safe and are encouraged to use these when their behaviour is escalating. Following a month of extremely high physical interventions, analysis of the trends has taken place and specific action plans developed for some young people in an attempt to reduce their holds. To date this is showing signs of being effective.

There has been one serious allegation against a member of staff since the last inspection. The procedures were followed and swift action taken to ensure that the young person was safeguarded. However, this incident has had a knock on effect on the children's feeling of safety in the home and is linked to the rise in physical interventions in the weeks following the event.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
<p>The registered manager has been employed by the company for 2 years and has been in post as Registered manager for 18 months. She is suitably qualified and is continuing her professional development by undertaking a diploma which has a focus on reflective practice. The manager is well respected by the staff team and loved by the children which puts her in a very good position to promote positive change and move the home forward towards her goals. She has high expectations of her staff and children and frequently works care shifts which allows her to model good practice and keeps up the close and positive relationships she has developed with the children in her care.</p>	

The post of deputy manager is currently vacant and a team leader has been acting up to fill this vacancy although the company have not been able to backfill his team leader post. This, along with quite a high level of staff sickness has left the home short staffed on occasions. Regular bank staff are used who the children are familiar with to provide continuity of care and only occasionally are agency staff brought in as a last resort. The staffing issues have meant that on rare occasions young people have been unable to attend a sporting or leisure activity. The manager and Registered Individual are aware of the impact of the staffing shortage and have a recruitment process underway.

Staff report high levels of satisfaction with the support and supervision they receive. Regular formal and informal supervision takes place and staff appraisals are undertaken and are of a high standard. Staff feel the manager is approachable and open to listening to their views and any concerns they may wish to voice. Staff feel confident that the training and support they receive allows them to perform their job with competence and confidence.

The manager has developed strong relationships with partner agencies which ensure the children's needs are met in all areas. For example, the manager and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services worked together to challenge a Local Authority about the placement plans for one young person. All professionals spoken with during this inspection report being satisfied with the professional relationship they have with the home.

The home has a development plan in place which sets out aims for the coming year. The manager is full of ideas to progress the service and provide even better care to the children. She is keen to share her enthusiasm with staff, whilst being mindful of not over facing them by implementing too many new policies and procedures at once.

The home is decorated and furnished to a good standard. Bedrooms are personalised and despite young people sometimes damaging their room and possessions they are always repaired and replaced. Young people are reassured that they do deserve to have a nice room and nice things in their rooms. The children have lots of toys to play with, both outdoor and indoor and these are kept in good order so that they are safe to play with. Despite being quite a large home, there is a very 'homely' feel to it; it is welcoming, warm and bright. The pictures and photographs add personalisation and despite the risk of damage ornaments and free standing items have been gradually introduced with no adverse impact on safety or behaviour.

Internal and external monitoring is effective and a positive critical relationship has been developed with the independent visitor which the manager values. Internal monitoring is clear and concise and identifies patterns, trends and actions for improvement. The manager and staff have a good understanding of the homes

strengths and weaknesses which ensures a cohesive approach to driving change.

The two recommendations made at the previous inspection are met. Staff now fully understand their roles and responsibilities and the quality of external monitoring has improved. One requirement and two recommendations are made at this inspection.

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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