

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	15/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC069336
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school
Registered person	Prior's Court Foundation
Responsible individual	Robert Beckley
Registered manager	Sarah Butcher
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	15/09/2015
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	Outstanding

SC069336

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Care Plans are detailed, comprehensive and clear. The personalised nature of these is excellent, and details are thought about and acted on. This individual approach to care comes from the leaders and permeates all levels of the organisation.
- Managers use research to inform practice and an increasing emphasis is given to collating information about what works within the home and using this to continually improve.
- There is considerable investment in improving facilities, including an all-weather track, new play equipment and multi-sensory room, and in developing evidence-based interventions to assist children and young people.
- Members of staff develop especially good relationships with children. They have a detailed knowledge of those they care for; of what triggers problematic behaviours, the specific interventions that help them to engage and the progress they are making. Staff demonstrate incredible patience.
- Provision maps pull together input from different therapies that give detailed strategies and tasks for staff to do, ensuring all those working with individual children and young people have common aims and a consistent approach.
- Activities, particularly physical exercise, contribute significantly to the life experiences of children and young people. For some it has had a dramatic impact on lowering incidents of challenging behaviour of self-harming.
- Attendance and participation in education are at a high level with consequent impact on achievement.
- Children and young people have lots of opportunities to communicate; all the houses have various communication aids available. Their use is encouraged to increase the expression of feelings and making choices.
- Many families praise the school highly; one commented, 'There is a piece of heaven here! I never worry about my son when he is there, they go beyond what we would expect.'

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
In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered person must: ensure the home is maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards, including prioritising repairs where safety is an issue and the siting of fire extinguishers. (Regulation 12 (2)(d))	30 October 2015
Keep the statement of purpose under review and revise it, in particular to include the (deep pressure) therapeutic approaches used (Regulation 16 (3)(a))	30 October 2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure records of restraint are kept to enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations paragraph 9.59, p 49)
- ensure the review of the location and premises of the home includes the identification of any opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations paragraph 15.1, p 64)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This school provides care and accommodation for up to 76 young people with autistic spectrum disorder and learning disabilities, providing accommodation for a number of young people receiving up to 52 weeks placements. It is therefore registered as a children's home. It operates as an independent co-educational residential special school with charitable status.

Young people are accommodated in nine on-site residential houses and one off-site house in a neighbouring village. The school is set around a restored country house, within acres of parkland.

The organisation also provides residential services for young adults for which it is registered with the Care Quality Commission.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/03/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
28/10/2014	CH - Full	Good
13/03/2014	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
09/10/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
<p>There are many examples of children and young people benefiting from care offered by the home, including drama, music and animal assisted therapy. The individualised approach to the provision of these is based on careful assessment and observation and results in clear improvements. There has been reduction in self-harming (which used to be daily at home but is now occasional), an ability to accept change (for example, the colour of shirts), a significant reduction in anxiety levels and improved diet.</p> <p>Such case examples offer compelling evidence of the effectiveness of approaches taken although physical intervention statistics, do not show an overall improvement across the home.</p> <p>'Waking day learning objectives' integrate school and residential input so that everyone is focused on the same goals. Plans are also shared and reviewed with night staff and multi-disciplinary teams as well as parents. Home staff know about the educational progress of each child or young person and what they are currently working on. Lots of encouragement is given to those reluctant to go to school so that attendance is excellent for all.</p> <p>Children and young people's experiences and overall development is widened through the activities they are offered. These are central to provision, rather than 'add-ons'. Physical exercise is a means of developing a sense of achievement and alternative coping mechanisms to the obsessive and repetitive behaviours children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders often display.</p> <p>The home is very good at helping children participate in activities in the community as far as is possible; climbing, horse riding and swimming are all undertaken off-site. Trips are arranged for small groups that may live in different houses, promoting friendships that the young people enjoy. There is a reliance on the home's minibuses to get places, occasionally frustrated by a technical failure such as a malfunctioning seatbelt; however, for the great majority the alternative of public transport is not a realistic option.</p> <p>Staff celebrate the progress young people make through praise, displays on achievement boards and also in books, shared with parents.</p> <p>A good deal of effort is made to maintain high levels of contact between children and their families (including calls via web cams) and between staff and families (often daily). Parents report that the relationship their children have been enhanced since admission; one said 'When I see my daughter I get the reaction I</p>	

dreamed of... she has said "mummy" and "I love you".' She continued, 'staff listen to me and take my opinion – I still feel I am her mother'. There are exceptions that 'prove' this rule with a few parents saying they need to chase information or to ensure agreed strategies are implemented, but the majority feel they are 'kept in the loop'.

Those parents with criticisms thought changes of staff had a detrimental effect on their children's progress. Managers have implemented measures at the recruitment stage that have reduced staff turnover, although it still has an impact of the continuity of care for some children.

Observations of interactions demonstrated the dignity and respect afforded each child and young person by staff and managers. They are encouraged to make choices, such as activities they want to do, attaining as much autonomy as possible.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
<p>Children and young people were seen to have very good relationships with staff. They appeared confident in their care, accepting guidance and support. Staff were observed to be extraordinarily patient and attentive; one parent said that 'people here are the unsung heroes of the world'.</p> <p>The high level of staffing, mostly 1:1 and some 2:1, keeps children safe and they very seldom go missing. Managers go to considerable lengths to maintain these ratios but on rare occasions cover cannot be found for late absences of staff.</p> <p>The integrated approach, including education, therapeutic input and residential care is enabling most children to make significant progress, particularly when compared to how they were at admission. A mother recounted how her daughter was 'out of nappies within a few weeks and soon off medication. On my first visit she was sitting doing an activity with a worker – I'd never seen that before.'</p> <p>Staff and managers were also able to give examples of how children and young people's experience of life had improved through careful and gradual introduction to, for example, new foods or being in groups. Some are now able to enjoy a meal at a restaurant when it would have previously been impossible.</p> <p>A limited number of parents have reservations about the level of awareness staff have of the needs of their own child and there are occasional lapses. A serious incident has occurred requiring a young person to be hospitalised. This has been honestly acknowledged by staff involved and the organisation. All proper</p>	

notifications were made and a plan to avoid such events through training and guidance is in place. Observation of the houses demonstrated that protocols brought in are being closely followed.

The nature of the work of the home is such that damage to the fabric of the houses is inevitable and there is a continuous programme of maintenance and improvement. Some oversights in repairs to rectify hazards, including the siting of a fire extinguisher, were noted but overall the home provides a safe environment.

The current system of recording physical interventions is cumbersome and there were a few occasions where not all required information could be found in the appropriate logs. This has consequences for monitoring rather than safety, though, and a computer-based process being introduced has features that prevent such oversights.

Safer recruitment practices are followed when appointing new staff.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
<p>The home has a strong ethos of providing individualised care. The management team leads a culture in which staff strive to understand every child and young person and develop the best means of providing for their needs. Each resident therefore benefits from a personal package of care and many make significant progress as a result. An excellent example of this philosophy is a children's guide produced for each child or young person that is tailored to their particular proposed experience of living in the home and communication needs.</p> <p>Managers are continually looking to improve, whether this is of practice or of developing services. Examples of the former are new systems for recording the administration of medication, designed to make this an easier and more accurate process, and the introduction of a new pupil support plan (for behaviour management) that identifies which young people require a restriction of liberty to keep them safe.</p> <p>Examples of service development include a well-equipped new multi-sensory room and plans to increase single occupancy accommodation for young people unable to live with others. The location risk assessment details the environmental risks to be considered in running a home in this area but does not evaluate the opportunities available that could be exploited for the benefit of young people.</p> <p>Analysis of data captures a wealth of information about the progress of individuals. This is used to study the impact of interventions so that children and young people</p>	

receive those most helpful to them.

Managers and support staff learn about new methods or techniques, introducing those to the home that are likely to be beneficial. An example is 'deep pressure therapy', a means of providing stimulation of the skin through brushing and hand massage. This service is overseen by the home's occupational therapists. Their own research indicates many children and young people benefit with a reduction in anti-social behaviour and greater ability to engage in activities and education. Some will request a session as a means of regulating their emotions when stressed. The provision needs to be included in the home's Statement of Purpose.

Care planning is thorough and detailed. Risk assessments are clear about potential dangers and the means of avoiding them. Recently introduced 'provision maps' pull together the delivery of psychological, OT, and other services. These set out the aims of the work and what staff need to do to achieve them. The targets given in placement plans are often less specific; they tend to be written as broad objectives with no actions or timescales. Attempts to help key workers set 'SMART' targets have not been successful across all the houses.

Induction and training for staff is comprehensive, including mandatory courses and those that address the needs of children at the home. Formal supervision is only quarterly, however staff feel well supported by managers.

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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