

## Children's homes inspection – full

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>26 April 2016</b>
<b>Unique reference number</b>	<b>SC033362</b>
<b>Type of inspection</b>	<b>Full</b>
<b>Provision subtype</b>	<b>Secure Unit</b>
<b>Registered person</b>	<b>Peterborough City Council</b>
<b>Registered person address</b>	<b>Peterborough City Council, Chief Executive, Town Hall, Bridge Street, Peterborough PE1 1PJ</b>

<b>Responsible individual</b>	<b>Wendi Ogle-Welbourn</b>
<b>Registered manager</b>	<b>Jeannette Winson</b>
<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Jo Stephenson</b>

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>26 April 2016</b>
<b>Previous inspection judgement</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>This inspection</b>	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Good</b>
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<b>Outcomes in education and related learning activities</b>	<b>Good</b>

## SC033362

### Summary of findings

#### **The children's home provision is good because:**

- Young people are safe in the home because risk assessments promote their welfare and well-being. These documents are detailed and consistently applied, and provide young people with bespoke support.
- Relationships between young people and staff are positive. This creates a caring and nurturing environment that ensures that they feel safe in the home. Internal care-planning processes ensure that young people recognise and celebrate their achievements.
- Young people re-engage in education and make good progress because they have personalised curriculums that balance academic study with vocational learning. Teaching staff know and understand young people's needs.
- Staff work in effective partnership with commissioned health services to support young people's emotional and psychological needs. This provides young people with easy access to the services that they need.
- Young people grow in self-esteem and self-confidence because they receive care and support that reflect their individual needs and personal circumstances. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and behaviours.
- Staff work in partnership with placing authorities and other professionals. The registered manager effectively challenges the response of other agencies when this is detrimental to young people's progress, development and welfare.
- Some areas for development have been identified. These include developing robust internal monitoring systems, reviewing physical restraint records, maintaining detailed records of all complaints and supporting young people to participate in leisure activities and hobbies.

## 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 persons meet 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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>9. The enjoyment and achievement standard</p> <p>In order to meet the enjoyment and achievement standard, the registered person must ensure that staff help each child to (2)(a)</p> <p>(ii) participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences.</p>	30 June 2016
<p>13. The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must</p> <p>(2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements to the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	30 June 2016
<p>The registered person must ensure that children are provided at all reasonable times with access to the following facilities which they may use without reference to persons working in the home: a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls in private (Regulation 22(3)(a)).</p>	30 June 2016
<p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 23(1)).</p>	30 June 2016
<p>The registered person must ensure that full and satisfactory information in respect of the individual has been obtained in relation to the matters in paragraphs 1 and 2 of schedule 2. This is with specific reference to ensuring that the home's recruitment checklist is complete and verifies that the registered person is satisfied that all relevant checks are complete (Regulation 32(7)(b)).</p>	30 June 2016
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees receive</p>	30 June 2016

practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience (Regulation 33(4)(b)).	
The registered person must ensure that records are kept of any allegation of abuse or neglect and the action taken in response. This is with specific reference to making sure that the central safeguarding record is frequently reviewed by managers to ensure that it is kept up to date and provides an accurate account of the actions taken by staff to ensure that external agencies and professionals are fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities (Regulation 34(2)(d)).	30 June 2016
The registered person must ensure that, following the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a full and complete record of the incident is made (Regulation 35(3)(a)(b)(c)).	30 June 2016
The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of any investigation (Regulation 39(3)).	30 June 2016

## Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- ensure that staff provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming. This specifically relates the decoration of communal lounge areas in the home ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7).
- ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. Specifically, the headteacher should continue to monitor the quality of teaching to ensure that all teaching is consistently good ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18).
- ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. Specifically, the headteacher and governing body should review the staffing structure and curriculum with a view to meeting better the needs of the changing school population ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18).
- ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. Specifically, centre managers, in conjunction with the headteacher, should review all attendance and punctuality practices to ensure that students benefit fully from the opportunities that school provides ('Guide to the children's homes

regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18).

- ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. Specifically, the headteacher should review and report to governors the effectiveness of current Information Learning Technology resources in supporting teaching and learning ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including 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. The children's home can accommodate up to 17 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
15 December 2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
9 June 2015	Full	Good
3 February 2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
14 May 2014	Full	Good

## Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
<p><b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b></p>	<p><b>Good</b></p>
<p>Young people receive personalised care and support from a nurturing staff team. The team’s approach is calm and composed. This helps to defuse many potential incidents. Young people benefit from working with staff who understand their complex and challenging needs, but who do not tolerate behaviours that place others at risk of harm or in uncomfortable situations. Young people speak positively about managers and staff. One young person said, ‘This place has been brilliant. Staff have helped me learn what I have been doing wrong and how to protect myself in the future. The staff are good and some are very good. Education has helped me as has the work on drug misuse.’</p> <p>Clear and consistent boundaries provide young people with a stable environment and enable them to make good progress during their placement. Staff are highly skilled and competent in identifying young people’s needs. Keyworkers, case managers, named teachers and allocated specialist health professionals work in partnership to support young people. This holistic team approach ensures that young people’s welfare, well-being and safety are promoted.</p> <p>Personalised and multi-disciplinary assessments are completed on all young people following their admission. These incorporate all aspects of their needs, including care approaches, behaviour management, primary health, mental health, emotional well-being and educational needs. The assessment provides the framework for care planning and interventions. A main area of focus is helping young people to develop their confidence, and to improve their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. This enables them to develop skills in emotional and behavioural regulation and resilience. Progress and achievements are recognised and celebrated, although staff understand that some young people struggle with praise and compliments, and therefore take a measured approach so as not to overwhelm them.</p> <p>Young people’s progress is reviewed during case management meetings that include feedback from care staff, health practitioners and education staff. These meetings are well managed and recorded. This means that young people’s progress is suitably tracked. One social worker said of the care provided to a young person, ‘They have done a very good job with her. For the first time in her life, people have listened to her. She eventually worked with the therapeutic aspects of what they do, because they persevered until she engaged in therapy.’</p> <p>The healthcare provision at the home is in a process of transformation due to</p>	



changes in central funding. Interim arrangements are in place to ensure a thorough handover between mental health professionals. This ensures that good quality services are maintained. Young people continue to access psychiatric, psychological and therapeutic services and support. Specialised drug abuse services are available, and young people receive nursing care as and when required. The new health provider is in the process of appointing to permanent positions, and additional resources mean that the health service will continue to develop.

Consultation with young people is a strength of the home. They are continually encouraged to express their thoughts in relation to the development of the service, their individual care and the day-to-day running of the home. The registered manager also seeks young people's views and wishes through school council meetings, and ensures that whenever possible these are taken into account and actioned. For example, young people are involved in the recruitment of staff. Their feedback is taken seriously as part of the decision-making process. As a result, young people feel valued and understand that their views are important. This enhances their confidence and self-esteem.

Young people are supported to have contact with their families. Families are encouraged to visit and say that staff welcome them into the home. Allocated staff remain in regular contact with parents and guardians, as appropriate, and support them to participate in care-planning decisions relating to their child. Young people receive telephone calls in private in their bedrooms. However, they are unable to access approved contacts, such as social workers, without reference to staff.

There has been a significant improvement in the quality and range of leisure and enrichment activities available to young people. Allocated staff take responsibility for planning and arranging activities during education holidays. These activities are stimulating, interesting and fun, and help young people to develop their social interaction skills. Feedback from young people is generally positive, although it is of concern that many arranged activities do not take place as planned. This is because care staff do not consistently follow the plans. Young people say that this is 'frustrating' and 'irritating'. In addition, there is a lack of cohesive planning between after-education clubs arranged by teaching staff and activities arranged by care staff. As a result, many arranged activities do not take place. This leaves young people feeling 'bored' on occasions.

Transitions to and from the home are well managed. Staff work closely with placing social workers to ensure that the most appropriate placement is identified for each young person. This can at times be a difficult process, but the home is diligent in its support and advice to local authorities. Young people are encouraged and supported to visit future placements, and staff seek to make the process of moving on as seamless as possible. One young person who is in a period of transition said, 'It has helped to have staff take me to the new placement, which is a long distance away. I am pleased my keyworker is able to take me on my last

day. It will be hard to say goodbye to staff.'

A refurbishment programme is underway in the home, which includes the deep cleaning and redecoration of some areas to improve the décor. However, the communal lounge areas are bare and lack a comfortable feel. Managers report that lounge areas recently exhibited individual themes that improved the aesthetics of the environment, but these were removed for redecoration. It is acknowledged that the risk of serious self-harm presented by some young people means that decisions are made to remove home comforts from communal areas. However, the general view of young people, and of the inspection team, is that the environment is sterile and that work is required to soften the living areas. Furthermore, the secure entrance to the home is not welcoming. It is stark and bland, and is not conducive to an appropriate induction to the home.

	Judgement grade
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p>Staff know young people well. They manage this highly complex and vulnerable group effectively, giving the young people's safety and security the highest priority. They have a good understanding of their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. This is because they have completed safeguarding training, as well as specific training in child sexual exploitation, self-harm and suicide and radicalisation. Consequently, staff are able to identify concerns and know what action to take to help keep young people safe.</p> <p>Care practice is underpinned by robust policies and procedures. Staff fully understand and implement these in their day-to-day practice. Links with external safeguarding agencies are well used for the purpose of consultation, advice about practice and the formal referral of safeguarding concerns and allegations. Feedback from the designated officer for the local authority was positive in this regard. They said, 'Overall they identify concerns, refer them appropriately, have the right discussions, and take the right action. They do a very good job with some very complex children and I have no concerns whatsoever.'</p> <p>Links with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) have been strengthened over the past 12 months. The manager is working with representatives of the LSCB to develop processes that will facilitate them fulfilling their statutory duty to report annually on the use of physical restraint in the secure setting. As part of this process, the manager is establishing a protocol, which will provide regular external scrutiny of restraint practice.</p> <p>Young people say that they feel safe and do not raise any concerns about bullying</p>	

or their safety. High levels of supervision ensure that the opportunity for bullying is minimised. Young people are confident that, when incidents do occur, staff address and challenge these and ensure that appropriate action is taken. For example, staff talk to them about their feelings, how their actions have an impact on others, and the importance of being respectful and considerate of each other.

Vulnerability and the risks of suicide and self-harm are robustly assessed at the point of admission. Staff use this information to develop detailed risk management plans, which are continuously reviewed in partnership with mental health professionals. Staff are diligent in their efforts to implement these strategies in order to help keep young people safe. They routinely share information to ensure that responses to risk-taking behaviour are current and consistently applied on a 24-hour basis. Staff work with young people in an effort to help them to understand their own vulnerabilities and behaviour. The young people are encouraged and supported to develop better ways of keeping themselves safe. Staff talk to them about the circumstances that have contributed to their being placed in secure accommodation, including the risks of sexual exploitation. These discussions are underpinned by warm and trusting relationships that enable young people to share their experiences candidly.

Staff are very good at sharing information with placing authorities and social workers when potential risks are identified, particularly in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse. Keyworkers take responsibility for following up such matters to ensure that responses to concerns are robust. There is an expectation that staff update the central safeguarding record. This allows managers to maintain oversight and ensure that external professionals are fulfilling their duties. However, this record was found to be of poor quality and does not demonstrate the good work undertaken by staff. Managers acknowledge the need to be more diligent in their oversight of ongoing concerns and that these records are fundamental to this process.

Mobility is used well to prepare young people for life outside of the secure setting. It is managed effectively to ensure that the risk of absconding is minimised when young people are out with staff or escorts on visits. Procedures are in place should young people abscond. There have been no incidents since the last inspection.

The home has policies relating to the searching of communal areas, bedrooms and individual young people. These promote young people's safety and well-being. Records are maintained of all searches and confirm that these only take place when potential risks have been identified, for example, when young people are at a heightened risk of self-harm or have been out of sight of staff when out on mobility. Young people do not like being searched, but recognise the importance of this as a means to helping them and others to stay safe.

Well-structured and sensitive support from staff enables young people to learn how to manage and control their behaviour better. Positive behaviour is reinforced

through clear and consistent boundaries, positive relationships and effective use of the home's rewards system. The majority of young people identify these factors as strong motivators for why their behaviour has improved as they aspire to reap the rewards associated with higher levels. Staff are good at recognising the factors that lead to a deterioration in behaviour, including the pressures of living in a secure setting. Negative behaviour is proportionately challenged, and young people are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and make amends when things go wrong. A number of young people say that this approach helps them to understand themselves better.

Staff are trained in the use of physical restraint. They use this training and knowledge to support young people effectively and sensitively when their behaviour is at its most challenging. A large majority of restraints are attributed to the need for staff to intervene in order to stop young people harming themselves. Young people say that they receive good support from staff following any incident of restraint. Managers use closed-circuit television (CCTV) to review incidents and to ensure that any learning points are identified and taken forward. All incidents of control, restraint and discipline are recorded in the home's log. Despite the manager's efforts to improve the process for ensuring that these records are fully complete, a number of records were found to be missing pertinent information. This included details of staff debriefs, young people's comments and the manager's evaluation of effectiveness.

Single separation is used to protect young people from harming themselves and/or others. Records clearly show the reasons why this is necessary and demonstrate that young people are closely monitored by staff to help keep them safe. Every effort is made to help young people to return to normal routines as soon as possible. In the majority of circumstances, this is after a relatively short period. There have been two periods of managing young people away from the group, used as a protective measure to help keep the young people and staff safe. All aspects of this practice were risk assessed and fully recorded, including detailed re-integration plans, which were developed and initiated in collaboration with mental health professionals.

A number of new staff have been recruited since the last inspection. All staff, including agency staff, are subject to relevant checks to ensure that they are safe to work with vulnerable young people. Detailed recruitment records are retained at the local authority head office, and basic information is kept in the home. However, a number of the home's records were found to be incomplete and did not provide sufficient evidence to confirm the integrity of the recruitment process without information from elsewhere. Inspectors verbally verified the suitability of employees, with the local authority, during this inspection.

Young people are protected by an extensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and routine checks, which are designed to keep them safe. Staff are quick to take action when shortfalls are noted and acutely aware of

how young people can use unattended items and objects to cause injury to themselves. The environment is well managed and maintained.

	Judgement grade
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<p>The current manager registered with Ofsted in July 2013 and has worked in this secure setting for over 20 years. She has considerable experience of working with and supporting extremely vulnerable and complex young people. She holds suitable and relevant social care and management qualifications. These include a degree in social work and a higher-level management diploma. The registered manager is extremely child-focused in her practice. She is committed to ensuring that young people receive good-quality care and that their educational experiences are positive. Meeting young people’s individual needs is central to the ethos and culture of the home. Staff embrace this philosophy and it is rooted in their practice.</p> <p>The registered manager continually reviews young people’s progress against their changing and evolving needs. This ensures that placements remain appropriate and meet strict secure accommodation criteria thresholds. Young people’s case files are subject to regular audits and ongoing scrutiny through internal case management meetings. The registered manager considers young people’s progress in line with their individual aims, targets, complex risk factors and vulnerabilities. When young people have achieved their identified goals, staff amend internal support plans, risk assessment and behaviour management plans. This process highlights young people’s achievements and encourages them to recognise and celebrate their successes.</p> <p>In April 2016, the registered manager applied to vary the conditions of registration temporarily, increasing the number of young people residing in the home to 17. The variation request was granted and remains in place until 30 June 2016. As part of this process, the home’s statement of purpose was reviewed and updated. This comprehensive document details the aims and objectives of the provision. It clearly defines the range of services available, including those accessible through the health and educational partnerships in place to support the setting. This ensures that placing authorities fully understand the function of the home. One social worker said, ‘You know what this secure placement provides because the guides are very clear and kept up to date. They helped me to decide if this was the right place for my young person.’</p> <p>A young person’s guide supports the statement of purpose. This document provides young people with an overview of the home, a breakdown of daily routines and a synopsis of the complaints procedure. Young people say that they</p>	

understand how to make a complaint. They are confident that concerns that they raise are taken seriously and are quickly addressed, particularly by the registered manager. This certainty is compromised because the registered manager does not ensure that verbal complaints are logged or recorded as required. Administration shortfalls mean that verbal complaints raised by young people, their families or others, are not tracked to their conclusion. Actions taken to resolve these, including any internal investigations, are not consistently recorded. This means that the registered manager is unable to identify adequately any patterns or trends, or to review the effectiveness of the actions in order to drive forward service improvements.

Young people benefit from working with a core of stable and experienced staff. There has been a successful campaign to recruit to vacancies within the service and to reduce the use of agency staff. When new staff join the service, they participate in a detailed and comprehensive induction programme. They complete mandatory basic training prior to working directly with young people and have the opportunity to review their progress with senior managers.

The registered manager reviews staffing levels and internal staffing structures to ensure that these reflect young people's individual support needs, vulnerabilities and risk-taking behaviours. There have been occasions when a shortage of experienced staff has led to senior staff directly supporting young people. Although this ensures that young people receive consistent care, it means that managers have been unable to complete allocated tasks. For example, internal records and documents are not adequately monitored. The one requirement made at the last inspection, relating to the completion of restraint records, remains outstanding. This is because actions necessary to secure improvements have not been fully implemented. The registered manager and senior leadership team acknowledge this shortfall.

Staff continually praise and commend the dedication of the registered manager. They value her commitment to the young people and to the ongoing development of the service. Staff say that they are supported in their role, and feel 'appreciated and respected as professionals'. However, not all staff receive regular practice-related formal supervision. There are significant gaps in the frequency of supervision for some staff. Records of these meetings are weak and do not enable the registered manager to appraise individual performance effectively or to identify areas of poor practice.

The majority of staff are suitably qualified. Following the completion of their induction, staff enrol on the level 3 diploma for residential childcare, if they have yet to attain this qualification. Staff confirm that mandatory courses are regularly refreshed, and say that these support their personal development. However, training records are poorly maintained and monitored. This shortfall is not detrimental to young people's progress at this time, but means that the registered manager is unable to evaluate the training needs of the service or to track staff

development adequately.

The registered manager is in the process of reviewing and revising a number of internal monitoring processes. This is because she recognises that current systems lack the appropriate scrutiny and detail needed to drive forward continual improvements. For example, medication audit tools have failed to identify minor errors in the administration of medication. There has also been one incident when poor monitoring means that a repeat prescription was not ordered from the pharmacy as required. The young person's health was not compromised on this occasion because this medication was not taken daily. However, it is indicative of wider concerns relating to the lack of rigorous monitoring deployed by the home's leadership and management team. The impact of shortfalls in current monitoring systems is somewhat reduced because the registered manager has recently completed a detailed review of the quality of care provided by the service. This evaluative assessment highlights patterns and trends, and considers operational challenges that may hinder the continual development of the home. This demonstrates the setting's capacity for improvement. Furthermore, critical scrutiny by the independent visitor enables the registered manager and leadership team to reflect on the positive impact that service improvements have on young people's individual progress.

Partnership working arrangements between managers, staff, placing authorities and specialist support services are robust and professional. This is a considerable strength of the service. For example, recently commissioned health services are being tailored to reflect and address young people's physical, psychological and emotional health needs. The registered manager effectively challenges other agencies and professionals when their actions or inactions compromise young people's progress and development. This dedicated advocacy and commitment to meeting young people's needs is recognised and praised by others. One social worker said, 'The manager always put young people first, and second, and third and fourth! She is focussed on the young people and what they need. That's why they make such good progress.'

	Judgement grade
<b>Outcomes in education and related learning activities</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p>Young people make good progress academically and in their personal and social development. They have access to a range of courses and vocational options generally sufficient to meet their needs. All leave with a qualification in English and mathematics, and all students gain a vocational award. Young people speak about putting their previous, often negative, experiences of school behind them. As a result of responsive teaching and support, many learn to conduct themselves in a</p>	

mature manner through listening, asking sensible questions and working cooperatively. They begin to learn to handle praise better, accept responsibility in class and manage day-to-day relationships with staff and peers.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers recognise that a significant minority of young people arrive at the home with a reasonable level of education but a lack of self-belief. Working patiently, and in tandem with classroom assistants, they demonstrate well-honed skills in behaviour management and in constructing effective lessons. In the best instances, they combine tasks such as reading aloud, writing and analysing text. They place emphasis on young people's communication and language development. Marking and written feedback are highly personalised and indicate how well teachers know young people. They clearly describe what young people need to do to improve their work. Teachers create a purposeful and relaxed dialogue, responsive to the interests of young people and in line with the aims of the lesson. Such examples were viewed in art, personal, social health and economic education (PSHE), mathematics, English and food technology. Those who attend physical education thoroughly enjoy themselves and benefit from being active.

In the few weaker lessons, teachers failed to develop young people's understanding, for instance by repeating topics which had been covered before, using worksheets which were too long and therefore not completed and failing to achieve a balance between lower-level warm-up activities and work with depth. Progress has been made on increasing the confidence and skills of staff to improve young people's standards in English and mathematics, although on occasions staff failed to explain simple mathematical procedures accurately to students.

The initial assessment of young people's educational needs is straightforward and effective. The process identifies their academic levels but also information about wider behavioural, social and health issues that impinge upon their readiness to learn. This information is used well by staff to set work and to differentiate their approaches in class. The monitoring of young people's progress in education is exemplary. Education and care staff work well together to reinforce the expectations that young people would encounter in mainstream schools, such as formal parents' evenings when they review academic and pastoral progress.

Erratic attendance and poor punctuality were identified as weaknesses at the previous inspection, and this remains the case for some young people. Over the last four terms, authorised absences have fluctuated between 7% and 16%. There are significant challenges in maintaining high levels of attendance. On occasion, the scheduling and late notification of meetings with external professionals such as social workers, hinder staff efforts to ensure young people always attend education. The challenging behaviours young people may present can detract from the pivotal role education plays in their well-being. When it is not appropriate or safe for young people to attend education, staff encourage them to complete



worksheets in the lounge areas. The success of this approach is variable and dependent up how well staff have supported young people to prepare for the school day. Additional management oversight is required to ensure consistency in this area.

Young people benefit from a responsive and continually evolving careers education, advice and information programme. The programme seeks to build their confidence, identify their attributes and provide up-to-date information about training or work options in their home areas. It encompasses training for care staff to increase their levels of knowledge. The active involvement of employers in careers days, workshops and mock interviews is well received by young people and strengthens the programme significantly. The mock interviews require young people to dress appropriately, a feature that they enjoy and rise to. As a matter of course, young people are considered for work experience externally or within the home. In a few instances, they have secured an apprenticeship on leaving, or used the CVs that they have produced to good effect in obtaining a sustained college place. The responsiveness of local authorities in supporting young people's transition to, for example, further education is too variable.

Information learning technology is not sufficiently well utilised in classrooms to support teaching and learning. This is principally due to the lack of responsiveness of electronic whiteboards and the limited exposure that young people have to learning technology. Education staff struggle to manage one-to-one interventions due to limited dedicated space.

The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. She is diligent in attending to the weaknesses identified in previous inspections. The education development plan is comprehensive and identifies with precision the actions needed to bring further improvement. There is a good and developmental approach to lesson observations. Networking opportunities are now in place for teachers through local schools and other secure children's homes, and the headteacher is part of the city council Improving Schools project. Teachers are positive about these links, which help to refresh their practice as well as to provide opportunities to moderate and standardise the quality of young people's work. Staff new to the education department are very well supported through a sensitive induction programme that includes team teaching, peer observations and mentoring.

Governance arrangements are good, with staff and young people benefiting from constructive links with the local authority and an active school improvement partner. Greater scope exists for the governing group to support the headteacher further, by identifying and tackling longer-term strategic issues, for example, the sufficiency of activities to meet the academic, vocational, physical and personal development needs of young people in a changing environment. A clear position in respect of young people's pupil premium entitlement from placing schools and authorities is needed.

The education unit has experienced staffing instability over some months, with a senior post vacant and the need to utilise agency staff. However, the instability has brought into relief questions about the mix of expertise needed within education to enable it to continue to meet young people's needs, now and in the future. Moreover, there are firm plans to build a new unit, which brings with it the potential to extend the range of vocational training. The headteacher has rightly identified that these staffing and curricular issues, along with the increasing prevalence of high-level mental health concerns among young people, point to the need for a review. The shortcomings identified from this inspection support this position as part of the education department's journey to outstanding.

## 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 children looked after 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 that 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 whom 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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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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