

Children's homes inspection – Full

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| Inspection date | 12 July 2016 |
| Unique reference number | SC032838 |
| Type of inspection | Full |
| Provision subtype | Residential special school |
| Registered provider | Appletree Treatment Centre Limited |
| Registered provider address | Meathop Park, Meathop, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria, LA11 6RF |

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| Responsible individual | Clair Davies |
| Registered manager | Amanda Fishwick |
| Inspector | Charlie Bamber |

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| Inspection date | 12 July 2016 |
| Previous inspection judgement | Improved effectiveness |
| Enforcement action since last inspection | None |
| This inspection | |
| The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are | Outstanding |
| The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care. | |
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | Good |
| The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers | Outstanding |

SC032838

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Children are kept at the centre of all aspects of care and planning, which ensures that their needs are always prioritised.
- The highly nurturing environment provided encourages close bonds to be developed between children and staff, and children thrive as they learn to have trust in those caring for them.
- Some extremely good transition work takes place to help children get ready to move on smoothly and successfully into foster placements or to return to their family. There is a fantastic level of support in place to achieve this.
- Children are constantly encouraged and helped to express their views about all aspects of their lives and their care. There are highly developed systems in place to ensure that the child's voice is heard.
- There is a good level of commitment to the therapeutic approach adopted by the home. Staff receive a high level of training and clinical support in order to be confident in delivering therapeutic care.
- Children are helped to understand why they are in care and what the plan is for their future in an age-appropriate way. There is also good emphasis on understanding cultural heritage, which develops children's sense of identity.
- Children's emotional presentation calms significantly in this home. They need fewer physical interventions and learn to identify and regulate their feelings in more positive ways.
- The home benefits from confident leadership, which is driven by high aspirations for children. Managers have very good oversight of the progress that children make and strive to ensure that progress is continuous.
- Children feel safe and are safe in the home. They know whom to tell if they have a problem and have adults in their lives they trust to keep them safe.

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 |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 17/02/2016 | Interim | Improved effectiveness |
| 22/06/2015 | Full | Good |
| 11/02/2015 | Interim | Improved effectiveness |
| 06/08/2014 | Full | Good |

Inspection judgements

| | Judgement grade |
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| The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are | Outstanding |
| <p>Children living in this home make exceptional progress in many areas. From their starting points, their very challenging behaviour reduces significantly due to consistency and a high level of nurturing care. One social worker commented about a child she had placed, 'I came to visit him a week after he had been placed and he already presented like a different child. They had done so well with him in such a short space of time...he looks happy, contented, settled.'</p> <p>The environment is therapeutic and centres around building trusting relationships. This helps children feel valued and improves their self-esteem. Staff are supported through training and clinical support to offer this specific type of care and are committed to embedding the principles into their work with children. The company has developed its own diploma, which covers 'Pillars of Parenting', trauma recovery, attachment, unconditional positive regard and reflective practice. This theory is well known by staff and consistently implemented in practice to extremely good effect.</p> <p>Some children have experienced very positive moves out of the home since the last inspection. These include children who were admitted with extreme emotional and behavioural problems who have been helped to address their problems and can now lead usual family lives. There have been successful transitions into foster care and returns to family care. One parent said 'They [the home] have been amazing since day one. I never thought he would be coming home. The time and patience they have shown him has been amazing, I really cannot tell you how much they have supported [child] and us.'</p> <p>Children's health needs are attended to promptly. For example, one child was admitted to the home needing glasses and with a mouth abscess, both of which were addressed almost immediately. Similarly, their educational needs are well met in the on-site school, where many children significantly exceed their expected progress levels. Children who have moved from the home received a high level of support to transition into their next school. The school is developing good links with the local primary school and some joint community ventures have been successful. One child will commence integration into mainstream school at the beginning of the next academic year.</p> <p>There are highly developed systems in place for ensuring that the children can express their views. This is achieved through a weekly community meeting, house tutor sessions, activity and house tutor feedback forms and children's</p> | |

questionnaires. Children are also helped to prepare their own report for their looked after child review. Children feel that their views are valued and they also learn to listen to others' views and consider their feelings through reflection sheets. Additionally, the children are encouraged to share their views on their placement with the responsible individual, who takes them out individually, usually for lunch, to give them the opportunity to comment on their care.

Children take part in a really wide variety of activities, many of which are active and healthy. They benefit from a staff team with differing skills and interests and are helped to take part in activities ranging from baking to ghyll scrambling.

Good attention is paid to children's own stories; they understand why they are in care, know what their longer term plans are and understand about where they come from and their culture. This helps their sense of identity and helps them feel less confused and uncertain about their placement, which consequently contributes to their sense of security.

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| | Judgement grade |
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | Good |
| <p>Children at this home live in a safe environment where staff are vigilant to risks that may affect them. They engage in numerous activities which have inherent risks, such as bike riding, going to the skate park and play parks. There are safety arrangements in place to mitigate the risks as far as possible.</p> <p>Children can identify trusted adults whom they would speak to should they be worried or concerned about anything. Children are routinely spoken to about their worries and concerns and are encouraged to share them so that staff can ensure that they feel safe.</p> <p>Due to the age of the children at this home, drug and alcohol misuse, going missing from home and criminality are not currently identified as risks. Many of the children's risks are around unsafe behaviours such as lack of danger awareness, anger and aggression. The home makes very good progress in addressing the children's risk areas and often by the time they move on, their risks are low in every area.</p> <p>Where any new risk is identified, there is a robust response which includes informing all relevant agencies. New risks are clearly recorded for children and there is a system in place to ensure that all staff are alerted to new risks. Where action is taken to reduce risk to a child (such as removing items from their rooms to prevent self-harm) this is communicated to the child in such a way that they</p> | |

understand that the measures are to keep them safe and not to punish them.

The home consistently promotes positive behaviour. There is no use of sanctions or punitive measures. Instead, children are helped to reflect and, where appropriate, restore and repair relationships. This gives them the skills to understand their emotional responses, learn different ways of responding and helps them resolve conflict in more acceptable ways.

Restrictive physical intervention is used only as a last resort and staff try all de-escalation techniques possible before they resort to using a physical intervention. Physical interventions reduce significantly over time and the comparative data for numbers of interventions evidences a significant reduction. Care and school staff work closely together to analyse physical interventions and look for triggers, patterns and trends. They then put action plans in place for some children to target reducing their interventions.

None of the children at this home have unsupervised access to the internet. Their use is closely monitored and they have all entered into internet use agreements.

The home has effective links with local safeguarding bodies. Where allegations against staff occur, the home report this to all relevant authorities. When there is ambiguity about referring to authorities, the staff at the home are able to accept advice and are willing to learn to improve future practice.

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| | Judgement grade |
| The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers | Outstanding |
| <p>The home's manager is confident and shows ambition for the children and the home. She has developed a culture of positivity and high aspiration, which is effectively communicated to the staff team. The manager of the home has suitable qualifications and experience for the role. She leads by example and is driven by a commitment to achieving the best for the children in her care. The manager's drive to improve outcomes encompasses a willingness to take on board advice and the courage to try different approaches to reach a solution.</p> <p>Although there has been some turnover in staff since the last full inspection, the home has greatly benefited from its newly recruited staff, who bring new skills to the team. They provide a balance of nurturing care alongside opportunities for different types of activity and active play. New staff benefit from the experience of those who have been working at the home for a longer period and where a need is identified there is a mentoring system in place.</p> | |

Staff benefit from good supervision and a package of training which includes a diploma course developed by and run for the company. This training course provides training to staff at a higher level in respect of the therapeutic approach that the home works within. Staff also benefit from twice-monthly clinical support to further assist them in their role.

The needs of children are fully prioritised in this home and anecdotal evidence suggests that managers and staff frequently go 'above and beyond' professional expectations in meeting the children's needs.

The home has clear systems in place for recording progress, which means that managers have a good understanding of the progress that children are making. There is a focus on continually driving progression and preparing children for moving on. The very positive outcomes for the three children who have successfully moved on are examples of this.

Regular internal and external monitoring activity takes place. There are further plans in place to improve the analytical aspect of external monitoring to ensure that the reports are increasingly helpful to the home and contribute towards further improvement. Managers are quick to identify any weaknesses and act swiftly to address any emerging areas for improvement. There is a clear development plan in place which is relevant, realistic and achievable.

The home receives a high level of positive feedback from placing authorities, has developed good community relationships and engages well with all external professional agencies.

The home is delivering care that is well in line with its statement of purpose.

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 that 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 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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