

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	01/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC489212
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	MacIntyre Academies
Registered provider address	MacIntyre Care, 602 South Seventh Street, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK9 2JA

Responsible individual	Angela O'Rourke
Registered manager	Natalie Boothroyd
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	01/11/2016
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	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

SC489212

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The managers are determined to improve practice and conditions in the home further to enhance the experience of young people. The academy's principal has identified several areas in which she wants to see rapid progress. This might be overwhelming, were it not for her aspirations being matched by having clear strategies to make the required changes and a management team that is motivated to achieve them.
- Staff have systems in place to gather information on which to base decisions at an operational level, such as improving staff responses to aggressive behaviour and helping individual young people to make targeted progress.
- The whole staff team demonstrates a vigour in implementing changes to the way that services are provided and how young people are best supported.
- Permanent staff and agency workers employed on a regular basis know young people well and are adept at interpreting their mood and behaviours to make well-timed interventions, either to head off potential incidents or to capitalise on opportunities to introduce new experiences.
- Good relationships between young people and established members of staff are instrumental in helping children to feel secure, remain calm or reduce their anxiety.
- Young people benefit greatly from good links between the school and home. For example, transitions from one to the other are arranged so that young people arrive home over a period of time rather than all together, making this a less stressful process.
- Young people are making progress over a range of developmental areas. Collaborative work between staff at the home and the school, and those who work across both, is having a particularly valuable impact on improving independent living and self-care skills.
- Support from staff for young people moving to alternative services is exemplary, so that those transitioning are well prepared to take this important step and new providers have sufficient information to take on their care as smoothly as possible.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>35. Behaviour management policies and records</p> <p>(3) The registered person must ensure that— (a) a record is made within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control or discipline; (b) within 48 hours of the use of a measure, that the user has been spoken to about the measure; signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and (c) within 5 days of the use of a measure, an addition is made to the record to confirm that the child has been spoken to about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(a-c))</p> <p>In particular, records must show that these timescales have been adhered to.</p>	30/12/2016
<p>36. Children's case records</p> <p>The registered person must maintain case records for each child which are kept up to date. (Regulation 36(1)(b))</p>	30/12/2016
<p>39. Complaints and representations</p> <p>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))</p>	30/12/2016
<p>44. Independent person: visits and reports</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that the independent person carrying out visits to the home only inspects a child's case records if the child and the child's placing authority consent. (Regulation 44(2)(b))</p>	30/12/2016

Recommendations

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

- The registered person should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31 paragraph 6.5).

Written consent must be obtained, when necessary, from those with parental responsibility.

- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

This includes e-safety assessments that cover access to the internet.

- The registered person must specify the procedures to be followed when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission and how staff should support the child on return to the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28)

This includes requesting an independent return home interview from the responsible local authority.

- The registered person should make best use of information from internal monitoring to ensure continuous improvement. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

This is in particular regard to the recording of the time of fire safety drills.

- The registered person should only accept placements for children when they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

The impact risk assessment should be adequately recorded.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home is run by a private organisation in partnership with the local authority. It provides placements for up to six children and young people on long-term placements and a further six on short breaks. All are pupils at the school on the same site.

An after-school club is run at the school by the manager and staff of the home, and is not registered under the Children's Homes Regulations.

The home was previously registered as a residential special school, becoming a children's home in July 2015.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/04/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/12/2015	Full inspection	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>Managers and staff are making great efforts to create an environment that is conducive to the care of young people with autistic spectrum disorders. A balance is being forged between having no superfluous stimulation, which some are not able to tolerate, and a homely environment. A building that was constructed with less than satisfactory materials hampers this objective, but the principal has obtained commitment from those responsible to address the problems. She has also made changes to the process for arranging repairs to the fabric of the home, speeding up the time for damage to be rectified.</p> <p>Some measures will have long-term as well as short-term benefits. For example, the behaviour support manager is gathering data from improved incident recording that will inform practice, as it is analysed over time. However, the process has already picked up that staff were uncertain about how to release themselves when a young person grabbed their hair. The principal sought advice from an experienced practitioner and arranged specific training. Staff are now far more confident, leading to fewer incidents, for example, one young person who experienced five restraints in September last year has had only one this September.</p> <p>Staff are working to targets for young people that are set with the occupational therapist. Most young people learn to follow sequence charts for self-care activities and come to need fewer prompts, for example to wash their own hair. Regular assessments chart the progress that they make over time and achievement folders record each young person's wider attainments. This is not sufficient to fulfil the aim of the home's statement of purpose, to 'be fun and give pleasure in the recognition of achievement', as there is little evidence of this being celebrated with young people.</p> <p>Professionals described improvements that young people have made, such as communication, ability to wait and increasing independence. One commented that a particular young person has 'done amazingly' as a result of the school and home working together. The young person needed three-to-one supervision in the community when she first came to the home, and this has reduced to one-to-one.</p> <p>Some staff of the home work in the school and vice versa, enabling each to have a wider appreciation of the needs of young people which they bring back to their own setting. Liaison between the teams and the work of specialist staff (such as the occupational therapist and behaviour support manager) help young people benefit from the 'whole-day curriculum' and reduce anxiety. For example, the</p>	

decision to stagger handover times from school to home has helped young people to make transitions in a calmer atmosphere.

Young people are able to experience a wider variety of activities in the community because of the work that staff do with them. This includes one young person going to the cinema for the first time and arrangements for two others to attend a youth club. In addition, young people have invited friends from the school to attend a recent party, helping them to develop relationships and social skills.

The home communicates effectively with young people in a variety of ways. Good examples include social stories that explain how to keep safe online and 'children's voice meetings' that encourage young people to contribute ideas on the running of the home. A recent meeting produced rules for behaviour in the home.

Staff are alert to the potential meaning of behaviour, particularly for those young people who do not verbalise. A particularly helpful document in case files describes a young person's 'critical communication' that details what they may do or say, what it might mean and how staff could respond. This helps to ensure that staff are well attuned to young people's wishes and feelings.

Young people are very well prepared for moving on to alternative provision when they leave the home. Staff address the practical and emotional issues through social stories that describe the process for the young person. Relevant information such as risk assessments and behaviour management plans are shared with new providers to ensure that experience and knowledge is passed on.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>All professionals and family members who were spoken to regard young people as being safely cared for. One parent expressed a high degree confidence in staff's ability to safeguard her son and said that he really enjoyed his short breaks, commenting, 'we can just tell by the fact that he is happy to go and when he comes back.'</p> <p>All young people admitted to the home, whether long-term or short-break placements, are students of the school. The manager and many staff therefore know them well prior to admission. They are subject to a referral process and consideration at a meeting that decides the appropriateness of admission. Managers have devised a risk assessment to record the potential impact on existing residents, but it is not routinely completed. This misses the opportunity to plan for any potential difficulties before admission.</p> <p>The home's behaviour management policy states that it is not appropriate to</p>	

impose sanctions. Staff understand this and act accordingly. There is, though, uncertainty about what the independent person refers to as 'natural consequences', and the difference between these and sanctions. There is insufficient guidance on this and, subsequently, on what staff should record. There is no inference, though, that any response made has been either unfair or disproportionate.

Health and safety matters are being effectively assessed and monitored. Managers have identified outstanding issues and are addressing them. The provider has responded well to incidents in which mistakes have been made (such as a single error in the administration of medication) and practice that could be improved (for example, responding to a young person's aggressive behaviour) by identifying learning points and instigating new processes to avoid any repetition. These have been effective.

Staff carry out fire checks, assessments and emergency evacuation drills regularly. These are all recorded well, other than the times of drills. These are needed to ensure that drills occur at different times of the day to test responses in varying circumstances. Personal emergency evacuation plans do not include which bedrooms young people are in, which could hamper their implementation if unknown to staff.

Staff spoken to are aware of how to respond to safeguarding matters, including how to talk to young people about disclosures, and the recording and reporting of concerns. The designated officer of the local authority reports that the manager involves her appropriately, having invited her into the academy and liaised effectively over 'low-level' issues.

A high turnover of staff and a reliance on agency workers have continued since the last full inspection. One professional commented that she really likes the home and the staff whom she has dealings with, 'but there are lots of them – maybe too many'. This leads to issues of continuity and communication. Managers have developed a recruitment strategy to address the issue and, currently, deploy agency staff who already know the children, whenever possible. One agency worker said, 'all the staff have good relationships with us', which means that a good team approach prevails.

Safer recruitment protocols are followed when selecting staff to work in the home.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

The management of home has undergone a series of changes since the last inspection, with a new responsible individual (also principal of the school) and a newly appointed head of care, who has yet to take up the position. The principal

has recruited staff to recently created posts, including a development manager and someone to oversee behaviour support, whose remits are across both school and home.

The priority has been to address long-standing problems, such as deficiencies in the construction of the building, and strategic issues, including better integration of services in the home and school. Staff are undertaking these tasks with vigour and highly commendable thoroughness. Each person is focused on their area of responsibility and is enthusiastic about making changes to improve the running of the home and of the services offered to young people. It is an attitude shared by the wider team. One new member of staff said that she was 'excited by the prospect' of working for the provider and keen to implement her ideas.

The concentration on improving strategic matters has led to managers addressing some operational concerns less resolutely. These include recommendations made at the last inspection. Not all case records are up to date, nor are all entries signed and dated, and not all files have consent for off-site activities or for taking photographs. In addition, consent has not been sought for the independent person conducting visits under regulation 44 to view files.

Managers have done much to scrutinise incidents of physical intervention, particularly to gather data to identify patterns or areas for learning. This has borne results. However, the format chosen to log restraints does not provide enough guidance for recording debriefings for staff, speaking to children and young people about them or prompts to date these actions. There is therefore insufficient information to demonstrate that regulatory requirements are complied with.

The home encourages children and parents to make complaints and a helpful leaflet is available for children and young people on how to go about this. However, the policy reads as guidance for adults who wish to complain, and does not address complaints made by children or how staff should respond to either adults or children. The progress of responses to adult complaints is tracked until they are resolved. There is also a format to record young people's complaints that details the issue raised, the response and actions taken, but not whether the complainant was satisfied. Staff have recorded some complaints on blank sheets, and there is no evidence that these have been addressed at all.

Some professionals and family members comment that communication with staff has been problematic. They report that emails are not always responded to and not all messages passed on. Social workers said that monthly summaries are often late. Some identified that the situation has improved, though, particularly since the appointment of the designated lead for this. One parent described the assistant head of care as 'brilliant', due to the efforts made in overcoming a specific difficulty.

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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