

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	08/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC489640
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Exeter Royal Academy For Deaf Education
Registered provider address	50 Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon EX2 4NF

Responsible individual	Lorraine Fox
Registered manager	James Heaver
Inspector	Norma Welsby

Inspection date	08/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	A monitoring visit to review the safeguarding arrangements in the home was completed on 17 and 18 August 2016. Due to weaknesses identified, a compliance notice was served. A further monitoring visit was completed on 30 August 2016 and satisfactory action had been taken to address the weaknesses.
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC489640

Summary of findings

The children's home's provision is inadequate because:

- There has been a lack of strong and effective leadership to achieve a timely placement move for one child whose specific needs and behaviour cannot be met by the current staff team. Leaders and managers have not effectively escalated serious concerns within the child's placing authority or established a clear plan of action for his safe discharge. As a result, one child has remained at serious risk of harm due to challenging and high-risk behaviour.
- Risk assessments are inadequate. Insufficient action has been taken to reduce the risk posed by one child. Senior leaders in the school have failed to support the registered manager to identify strategies to protect one child and to reduce the risk of harm. As a result, risk-taking incidents for one child continue.
- The use of an unregistered building to accommodate one child continued for six weeks after a decision was made by leaders and managers that his needs could not be met in the children's home. This arrangement, initially made as a short-term emergency option, lasted too long. As a result, unsuitable premises were used to accommodate one child.
- Safeguarding decisions made by leaders and managers are inconsistent and are not always compliant with child protection procedures. Some child protection concerns have been managed well and others less so. This includes a lack of timely action taken by leaders and managers to refer two safeguarding concerns to external agencies as required. This weakness was also identified at the monitoring visit in August 2016 and was the subject of the compliance notice.
- The frequent use of agency staff who lack the appropriate communication skills for caring for and supporting children who are deaf puts children at potential risk of harm.
- Actions to remedy all of the weaknesses and requirements made at previous inspections have not been completed. The registered manager has not completed safer recruitment training or ensured that a system is in place to provide children with an independent return home interview after they have been missing.

The children's home's strengths

- Staff have received a wide range of training to support their work with the children, including safeguarding and supporting young people's emerging sexuality. This training has raised the staff team's awareness and is helping to build team members' confidence.
- Two young people have made good progress and their individual needs are being well met by staff.

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>5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met</p> <p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff:</p> <p>(a) seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care</p> <p>(c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans.</p>	01/12/2016
<p>6: The quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, the registered person must:</p> <p>(2)(b) protect and promote each child's welfare and treat each child with dignity and respect</p> <p>(c) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child.</p>	01/12/2016
<p>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must:</p> <p>(2)(a)(i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm and make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child</p> <p>(vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child</p> <p>(vii) be familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies</p> <p>(b) ensure that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm</p> <p>(d) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health</p> <p>(e) ensure that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly.</p>	01/12/2016

<p>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that:</p> <p>(1)(a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential, and</p> <p>(b) promotes their welfare</p> <p>(2) In particular, the registered person is required to:</p> <p>(a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose</p> <p>(c) ensures that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.</p>	01/12/2016
<p>14: The care planning standard</p> <p>In order to meet the care planning standard, the registered person must:</p> <p>(1)(a) ensure that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.</p>	01/12/2016
<p>29: Continuing professional development: registered person and responsible individual</p> <p>In order to meet this regulation, the registered manager must undertake such continuing professional development as is necessary to ensure that the registered manager has the skills needed for managing the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 29 (4))</p>	01/01/2017
<p>34: Policies for the protection of children</p> <p>In order to meet this regulation the registered manager must: prepare and implement a policy which (a) is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect and (b) sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>(Regulation 34 (1)(a)(b))</p>	01/12/2016

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a charity that specialises in the education and care of children and young people who are deaf. The home is located adjacent to the school and college. The home was registered in July 2015 and is able to provide care and accommodation for up to three children and young people with sensory impairment, a learning disability and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
7 January 2016	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
<p>Children and young people have very different experiences living in this home. Although the providers identified that they could not keep one child safe, they failed to effectively escalate their concerns to the placing authority so that the child could be moved to a more suitable and safer home, better able to meet his needs.</p> <p>The day-to-day care and care planning arrangements provided for one highly vulnerable child have been inadequate. During this inspection, there was a distinct difference in the quality of care and experience of one child compared to that of other children living in the home. Leaders and managers have not ensured that enough care and attention has been given to make the temporary accommodation used by one child comfortable and homely. In addition, staff did not ensure that the child's photograph and activity journal went with him to the temporary accommodation. These approaches fail to support the child's psychological well-being.</p> <p>On the whole, relationships between staff and children are very positive. Staff know the children really well and have high aspirations for them. Care planning for two of the young people is thorough. There is good evidence that the manager and staff help the children to have positive experiences and opportunities. For example, one child is supported to enjoy sea cadets, which he told the inspector he 'loves'.</p> <p>Staff demonstrate a sensitive insight into the diverse needs of two of the children living in the home and are providing good emotional support to young people who are developing into young adults.</p> <p>Since a requirement was made at the last full inspection in January 2016, the physical environment of the home has improved significantly. Staff have worked with children and young people to create a lounge and dining room that is full of character and which young people are proud of. Two young people have personalised their bedrooms, which now reflect their personality and interests. The kitchen has been refitted and the final stages of redecoration are in hand. There are plans to complete the decoration of the hallway, stairs and landing and some young people were being consulted on how to do this.</p>	

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
<p>Senior leaders have failed to assess and manage all known risks effectively. While some of the risks have been assessed, the risk assessment process has not been sufficiently thorough. The written risk assessments completed by senior leaders identify that one child is at serious risk of harm from climbing on school buildings. Insufficient action has been taken by senior leaders to eliminate these risks. The possibility of erecting physical barriers to prevent access to the climbing points was proposed by the manager but not fully considered or acted upon. As a result, incidents placing the child at risk continue.</p> <p>Following two monitoring visits in August 2016, leaders and managers were required to ensure that all child protection concerns were managed in line with statutory guidance and safeguarding policies. Since the monitoring visit, decision-making regarding child protection concerns has remained an area of weakness. This inconsistent approach has continued to put vulnerable children at risk of harm. For example, safeguarding concerns about an agency member of staff were not reported to the designated officer for 25 days. In a separate incident, there was a breakdown in communication between the school and the home. As a result, a child protection concern involving two young people was not reported to the local authority for nine days.</p> <p>Weak management oversight of child protection concerns and poor communication between the home and the school were also evident at the monitoring visit in August 2016. Initial improvements to strengthen the management of these weaknesses were made. For example, procedures were revised, staff training was provided and communication systems were improved. However, these developments have not been integrated into normal practice and have not yet led to sustained improvements.</p> <p>Weaknesses identified at previous inspections have not been robustly acted upon in a timely way. While missing from home incidents are minimal, formal arrangements have not been put in place to ensure that children receive independent return home interviews. One missing from home incident has occurred, but the child did not receive an independent return home interview. This shortfall fails to protect children. It does not allow for an independent discussion with the child to explore their reasons for going missing. The lack of return home interviews following a missing incident means that senior managers are unable to identify and respond to any patterns and trends emerging that lead to children going missing.</p> <p>As part of the manager's assessment of suitability in April 2016, Ofsted also identified that the manager would need to undertake safer recruitment training.</p>	

This training has not yet been provided and remains an area of weakness.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
<p>Leaders and managers have not yet demonstrated the strength of leadership necessary to have resolved a serious situation relating to the safety and well-being of one child. These concerns were not escalated to the child's placing authority with sufficient tenacity to achieve a timely resolution. Decisive action and multi-agency working have not been strong or effective. As a result, one child has continued to be at risk of serious harm.</p> <p>Considerable work has been undertaken by the manager and the responsible individual since the monitoring visits in August 2016. They are committed to making improvements to benefit children and young people in their care. For example, they have revised the safeguarding procedure and provided all staff with safeguarding training and training in sexually harmful behaviours. The manager and the responsible individual have completed extra training to support them when making decisions about child protection concerns. In addition, the manager has received safeguarding mentoring from an independent company and there has been an audit of child protection and safeguarding incidents. This training and support have led to a greater sense of confidence in addressing child protection concerns by the staff team. However, there is still some variation in the quality of the decision-making about child protection concerns. For example, one young person's complaint about the conduct of an agency member of staff was not considered to be a child protection concern. Although staff have sought to improve the effectiveness of links between themselves and staff in the school, communication between them is still not reliable enough. Staff in the home relied on the school staff to take action in response to a child protection concern involving a child living in the home, and did not act swiftly enough to make their own referrals. As a result, there was a delay in the child protection concern being reported to external agencies as required.</p> <p>Agency staff have been used to provide additional cover when it has not been possible to use staff who usually work in the home. Agency staff cannot communicate effectively with the children as they are not trained to communicate with children who are deaf, nor have they been trained in the behaviour management and restraint approaches used in the home. Although most shifts have been covered by permanent staff, on one occasion a vulnerable child was cared for by a bank and agency member of staff. These arrangements have, at times, compromised the safety of the children and staff.</p>	

Since the previous full inspection, a new independent visitor has been appointed. Visits by this person take place regularly and include better consultation with children. Written reports of the visits are completed. However, reports do not always include an evaluation as to whether young people are safeguarded and that conduct in the home promotes their well-being.

Leaders and managers have taken action to provide placing authorities with more detailed information about incidents that occur. This area was previously identified at the monitoring visit in August 2016 as a significant weakness. Leaders and managers now provide placing authorities with a copy of the specific incident record, rather than a summary. As a result, external agencies are provided with an improved opportunity to monitor the incidents that happen in the home.

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 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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