

Children's homes inspection – Full

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| Inspection date | 17/11/2016 |
| Unique reference number | SC457423 |
| Type of inspection | Full |
| Provision subtype | Children's home |
| Registered provider | MacIntyre Care |
| Registered provider address | MacIntyre Care, 602 South Seventh Street, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK9 2JA |

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| Responsible individual | Fiona Veitch |
| Registered manager | Jennifer Marshall |
| Inspector | Sonia Hay |

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| Inspection date | 17/11/2016 |
| Previous inspection judgement | Good |
| 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 |

SC457423

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The staff know the children extremely well and are attuned to their changing moods and needs.
- Children benefit from consistent targets and approaches that are jointly devised and used by the home and education staff.
- Children are making significant progress since living at the home.
- The manager and the staff team advocate positively for the children.
- The residential learning tasks that the children complete as part of their targets help to prepare them for adulthood by building their ability to complete life skills that will assist them in independent living and adult life.
- Staff employed at the home for some years have not completed the level 3 qualification.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

| Requirement | Due date |
|---|-------------------|
| <p>The registered person must ensure that an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification, the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ('the level 3 diploma'), or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the level 3 diploma, by the relevant date. (Regulation 32 (4)(5))</p> | <p>31/05/2017</p> |

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for five children who have learning disabilities. A charitable organisation owns and operates the home. The organisation provides a separately registered education facility, which is based locally.

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 14/09/2016 | Interim | Sustained effectiveness |
| 19/01/2016 | Full | Good |
| 23/07/2015 | Interim | Improved effectiveness |
| 06/01/2015 | Full | Adequate |

Inspection judgements

| | Judgement grade |
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| <p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p> | <p>Good</p> |
| <p>The children living at the home have very limited speech and some are non-verbal. Children convey their views and feelings in a variety of ways, including using signs and pictorial symbols. Key-work sessions and house meetings occur regularly. The minutes are in a pictorial form, and include pictures of the children during the meeting. Children verbalise or use symbols to select menu choices and activities, and to demonstrate how they are feeling. This enables the children to express themselves in a way that they feel comfortable. The menus and pictures of children on their chosen activities demonstrate that staff act upon the children’s views.</p> <p>Staff are familiar with each child’s individual method of communication, and they work with each child to further develop these skills. One staff member described a child preferring to communicate using gestures. They said, ‘We encourage him to use words.’ Encouraging the children to expand their use of words and the use of symbols helps the children to make their feelings and wishes known, and in turn builds their confidence.</p> <p>The interactions between the children and staff are warm and caring. It is evident from observations and through feedback from the children and their parents that the children enjoy being in the company of staff. The way that the staff speak to and engage with the children, and speak about them to others, makes it clear that this is reciprocal.</p> <p>The staff know the children well and are attuned to their changing moods and needs. The staff use the space available in the home effectively, to coordinate all the differing needs of the children. This gives each child the ability to have individual space or be part of the group.</p> <p>Children have personalised care plans, placement plans and targets that enable the staff to monitor their progress. This progress is particularly evident for the two children who are newest to the home. A parent said, ‘It is the perfect match for him; he is very happy and settled. The staff understand his needs.’</p> <p>All the children attend the organisation’s education provision. Each child achieves exceptionally high attendance levels, and the children are progressing well in line with their differing abilities. The staff work together with the school team to ensure that the identified targets for each child are the same at home and in school. The ongoing assessment of the targets set is helping the children to build their communication skills and all-round development.</p> | |

Children benefit from a 24-hour curriculum, with consistent expectations and goals. This effective co-working includes the staff going into school so that teaching staff can observe how the home's staff interact with the child. This enables the teaching staff to mirror these techniques in class. Children benefit from the consistent targets and behaviour-management approaches in both settings.

Each of the children has a health plan that includes both routine health checks and specialist appointments. The plans detail how staff should manage situations in a way that the child prefers and responds positively to. The organisation's medical professionals oversee the prescription and review of the children's medication in consultation with the children's doctors. A parent described being part of the medication review meetings. They said, 'We meet with the psychologist in the school. The staff recognise his cues and know when it is needed.'

Each child has a scrapbook that shows pictures of them on activities both in the home and in the community. Children take their scrapbook when they leave the home to provide them with a book of memories of their time living at the home. The scrapbooks also show that the children experience a wide range of activities. The pictures give the books a very personal feel, and the books also contain a lot of positive comments. Aspects of the books have textures, and offer children a visual and tactile experience.

Staff set the children household tasks designed to help prepare them for adulthood. Staff support the children to undertake the tasks, using visual and verbal prompts until the children can complete the tasks independently. Building the children's ability to complete these tasks assists them in developing the life skills they will require in independent living and adult life. This also helps children to develop skills from an early age rather than waiting until they form part of a preparation for independence plan. One child is due to move out next year, and work continues to prepare him for the move.

Each child's targets are recorded in their individual book, which details their progress, shows pictures of them undertaking each task and highlights their achievements. Staff also display these achievements on a board in the dining room. These personal and public displays of achievement help the children to build a sense of pride in themselves and others.

The house is well presented and has a very homely feel. The children have personalised their bedrooms. One child has recently changed bedrooms. During the inspection, the maintenance team were busy erecting shelving and hanging pictures in his room, which they have painted in his chosen colours. The bedrooms are cosy and reflect the children's personalities and preferences.

Children and their families can have introductory visits, before the child moves into the home, to minimise the levels of anxiety about the move. Describing how she felt after her initial introductory visit, one parent said, 'It is a home from home and

I could instantly see him there.'

Children have regular contact with their families. Staff facilitate contact visits both in the home and to the families' homes. This has led to increased levels of contact, and maintains the relationships between the children and their immediate and extended family.

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| | Judgement grade |
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | Good |
| <p>When considering a new child potentially moving into the home, the manager conducts a thorough impact assessment to identify whether there is likely to be a negative impact on either the children already living in the home or the potential new child. The managers ensure that placements will only be accepted if all the children can live in a safe and homely environment, and if any identified concerns can be managed safely.</p> <p>Children's risk assessments are robust. Staff modify them as new risks arise or known risks increase or reduce, to ensure that staff are working with current information and any revised strategies. Individual risk assessments assess the potential risks of having a young person over 18 living in a home for children. The manager assesses the risks from both the child and the young person's perspective. This ensures that both are able to be cared for safely.</p> <p>Children are encouraged to use the internet safely. Staff supervise the children, who have pictorial guidance on how to stay safe and what information to never share online.</p> <p>Some of the children suffer from anxiety issues, which can manifest in challenging behaviours. The staff benefit from physical intervention training, and focus on prevention rather than reaction. Staff are generally successful in their use of de-escalation and diversion techniques. There have been eight physical interventions in this inspection period. This is in keeping with previous levels. The records show that the use is appropriate, well documented, reviewed and signed off by the manager. The organisation's behaviour-management worker tracks the records and produces statistics and patterns that inform behaviour-management plan reviews. These may highlight that a time of day is particularly difficult for a child, such as transitions to and from the school. The findings are discussed at team meetings, and any learning or actions are shared with children, parents and professionals.</p> <p>There is a good recording system used for tracking the frequency and severity of any challenging behaviour. This involves staff using a scale of low, medium and</p> | |

high on a list of behaviours displayed by the individual child. These scores allow easy identification of patterns and triggers. Staff then use this information to revisit their approaches, and to liaise with the school to provide the children with a consistent approach.

The children have personal evacuation plans, which detail the last response time and in some instances what staff should say to the child. These personalised plans prepare children for the time when an evacuation is necessary, and cover both day and night scenarios.

The maintenance team addresses any maintenance issues quickly. The routine health and safety checks in the home ensure that children are living in a home that is free of hazards.

Staff supervision levels ensure that children do not have episodes of missing from care or unauthorised absence from the home. The staff are aware of the processes to follow should an incident occur. This preventative approach extends to matters such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Staff undergo the relevant training to maintain current knowledge of areas of potential risks.

The grandparent of a child who has recently moved in spoke of having a degree of anxiety about the child's move to the setting, as it is in the community rather than on the vast grounds of the school site. He was clear that he had no concern about staff or the care they offered.

Allegations made against staff have been appropriately referred to the local authority designated officer. These investigations are ongoing. Initial findings have highlighted that the child prefers female staff to care for him, and the manager has adjusted the rota accordingly to minimise the child's concern about male staff caring for him.

Staff say that they have no concerns about the practice of any of their colleagues. They are confident in the whistle-blowing process, and state that they would use it immediately should any concerns arise.

The children benefit from clear, structured routines which help them to feel safe. They are well cared for by a vigilant and caring staff team.

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| | Judgement grade |
| The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers | Good |
| <p>The manager holds a social work qualification, has several years' experience in residential child care and is currently undertaking the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare.</p> <p>The staff say that the manager is supportive and approachable. This is demonstrated in her interactions with children, staff and professionals. A social worker said, '[She is] very good and very efficient. She and her staff are very person-centred.'</p> <p>It is clear from the passionate way that the manager and her team speak about the children, and the way that they interact with each of them, that the children are core to all the plans within the home.</p> <p>Since the last full inspection, three members of staff have left the home and there have been five new starters. Staff are recruited using a thorough vetting and interview process and the provision of appropriate references. New staff undergo a full induction and probationary period. Once confirmed in post, staff are enrolled on the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare. However, some existing staff members have not completed the training. Although the impact of this on the children is minimal, the staff team must be appropriately qualified.</p> <p>Staff receive supervision which they say helps them to develop and set targets. Staff report that informal supervision sessions are also available. Depending on the topics discussed, the manager also writes up the informal sessions for reference so that there is a formal note of the conversation should it need to be revisited at a future date.</p> <p>One parent felt that communication with her needs to be improved. This was not indicative of other feedback received, and the manager is actively exploring ways to overcome this with the parent. This demonstrates an openness to revisit past approaches and a desire to find a solution.</p> <p>One complaint has been received, which was from a neighbour and related to noise levels in the garden. The complaint has been acknowledged and actioned appropriately. The staff have agreed that the swing will be used for a maximum of 30 minutes at a time, in a bid to maintain a good relationship with the neighbour.</p> <p>The manager is allocating designated areas of responsibility, such as communication and activities, to the staff. The lead staff member for each area of responsibility seeks feedback from the children and team members, and liaises with the school and the community, to identify ways to progress their allocated area of</p> | |

responsibility. This supports the staff to develop additional skills, and the children benefit from accessing additional activities and symbols as a result.

The ongoing assessment of the children's targets and behaviours, their decreasing levels of incidents, and the increase in their rewards and achievements, mean that it is easy to see the significant progress that each child has made from their starting point.

The manager uses her monthly audits to identify strengths and address any weaknesses in the home. The independent visitor provides a monthly report that details any shortfalls. The manager is quick to address any factors that the visitor identifies to ensure that there is no negative impact on the children.

The manager completes a six-monthly report that assesses the quality of care. These reports evaluate the progress that the children are making, and demonstrate that the manager has aspirations for the children and the service.

The statement of purpose is clear and concise, and accurately reflects the service offered and the home's ability to care for older children as they prepare for the transition to adult services.

Professionals spoken with are positive about the way that the manager and team work with them. A social worker said, 'It is rare to call a home and request a lot of information and get it straight away, but that happens here.' This stems from the fact that all members of the team are familiar with all the children, and are knowledgeable about their care, histories and future plans.

The manager advocates positively for the children. One example is the use of a specialist worker to assist a child in making an allegation. The additional support ensures that the child is able to communicate his concerns openly.

A social worker said, 'The home is a lovely place, flexible with visits and willing to let me come and see him at any time. That is important as it is not false or staged.'

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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