

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	05/01/2017
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	05/01/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Inadequate
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	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC489640

Summary of findings

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

- Since the full inspection in November 2016, when a judgement of inadequate was made, there has been good progress made at the home.
- One young person, whose needs could not be met, has moved to a different provision. The remaining two young people feel more settled and are doing well in many areas of their lives. Young people are receiving highly personalised care that supports their individual needs.
- The registered manager, responsible individual and staff are working together effectively to make improvements to benefit young people in their care. They feel well supported by the senior leadership in the school, with whom closer links have been forged since the inspection in November.
- The placing authorities of both young people feel very satisfied with how well things are progressing. They feel that communication has improved recently and that their young people are safe and making good progress.
- The registered manager and responsible individual have made a positive and thorough response to the shortfalls identified at the full inspection in November. They have reflected well and taken steps to ensure that lessons have been learned and improvements put into place. They are aware of the importance of providing consistently good care to all young people, and of consistently effective decision-making. While there has not been time to embed or test out some of this learning, there is sufficient evidence of improvement for the home to be judged good. There are still some further improvements needed to demonstrate consistently good practice in the management of more challenging behaviour and the subsequent management oversight of these incidents. This was discussed during this inspection, and as a result two requirements and two good practice recommendations are made.

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>11: The positive relationships standard</p> <p>In order to meet the positive relationship standard, the registered person must ensure that staff;</p> <p>(2)(a)(ix) understand how children's feelings and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children.</p> <p>In particular, when challenging situations arise, staff must demonstrate the nurturing skills of a good parent.</p>	12/02/2017
<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 in the quality of care provided in the home.</p> <p>In particular, the registered manager's oversight of incident records should evidence a review of the quality of practice and record with clear details any lessons learned to improve practices to benefit young people in the future.</p>	12/02/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that the local authority provides opportunity for children and young people to have an independent return home interview when they have been missing. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. If such independent return home interviews are not provided, the registered person should escalate their concerns to the Local Safeguarding Children Board. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraphs 9.23-9.30)

- Ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, staff caring for them and the wider community. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)

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
08/11/2016	Full	Inadequate
07/01/2016	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
<p>The two young people who live in this children's home are making good progress. Staff know them well and ensure that their needs are addressed appropriately. Young people benefit from a wide range of positive experiences that support their personal growth and emotional well-being.</p> <p>Good emphasis is placed on young people being supported to build trusted and secure relationships. Staff encourage young people to have an open dialogue with them, as well as being proactive in helping young people to maintain healthy relationships with family and friends.</p> <p>Both young people attend the nearby school, which is run by the same charity. Over recent months, there have been considerable efforts made to improve the communication between home and school. It is known that this is important in helping young people to be safe as well as supporting their educational achievement. Attendance at school is excellent. There, young people are very much part of a supportive community and have a peer group with which they can communicate effectively.</p> <p>Staff ensure that young people have access to a good range of social and recreational opportunities in and outside of the home. They participate in local community activities and are supported to pursue hobbies and known interests, as well as having opportunities to have new experiences. When appropriate, young people are helped to develop their confidence and practical skills in a variety of areas, so that they can successfully make the transition to young adulthood.</p> <p>Young people benefit from a stable staff team which is becoming more confident, experienced and suitably trained. Across the team, there is a sense that staff are aspiring to provide young people with the best residential care experience they can. Increasingly, support from senior staff, who are becoming more confident themselves, means that when difficulties arise, lessons are learned and improvements are made to benefit young people.</p> <p>The physical environment of the home continues to improve. It provides a child-friendly and attractive home, which reflects the personalities of the young people who live there.</p>	

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
<p>At the full inspection in November 2016, a number of serious shortfalls were identified in this area. Since then, action has been taken to address these. Time has also been taken to reflect on how to ensure consistently good decision-making that more effectively helps and protects young people. While there has not been enough time or actual challenge to managers or staff to embed or test out their learning, they feel more confident and clear about their safeguarding role and responsibilities.</p> <p>An area of practice requiring further improvement is in the management of young people's more challenging behaviour. Records sometimes fail to demonstrate that staff have responded to young people in a nurturing way. It is important that the manager fully explores to what extent this is a practice or recording issue, and to demonstrate how this oversight has led to improvements in these areas. While serious incidents are regularly and promptly monitored by senior staff, their records sometimes fail to evidence their challenge of shortfalls, and what their input has done to improve standards to benefit young people. For example, what support have staff had to ensure that they fully understand the young people's behaviour in the context of their past experiences and present emotional well-being? Another area that can be improved is the use of sanctions. While some restorative measures are used, this approach could be explored more fully to replace some of the less meaningful sanctions used. A management review should aim to seek the best possible ways to help young people understand why their behaviour is unacceptable and what the natural consequence of it might be.</p> <p>Young people rarely go missing from this home. There have been a couple of incidents when young people have evaded staff supervision. Staff are clear about the procedures to follow when this occurs. Since the last inspection, the registered manager has ensured that the placing authorities are aware of their responsibilities to carry out an independent return home interview once a young person returns home. A written procedure has been created and shared with the placing authority. The registered manager is fully aware that in the event of an independent return home interview not being provided to a young person, then this concern should be escalated to the Local Safeguarding Children Board.</p> <p>Important lessons have been learned about risk assessing young people's behaviour and taking effective action to reduce such risks in a timely way. The home and school team are establishing a better working partnership to ensure that in future a more effective response is made when risks are identified. Work has been commissioned to make some physical modifications to the external physical environment, where particular risks to young people have been identified.</p>	

Communication between the school and the home is improving. Verbal handovers are supported by two-way electronic communication. The responsible individual, who is based at the school, now accesses all safeguarding information relating to the young people who occupy the children's home. These combined measures mean that there are fewer opportunities for important information not to be passed on and for correct child protection procedures to be followed in a timely way.

Since the full inspection in November, two shortfalls have been addressed in respect of the registered manager receiving training in safer recruitment and staff supervision. In addition, the registered manager has had mentoring support in management and safeguarding. As a relatively new registered manager, this support has been welcomed by the manager who is keen to achieve consistently high standards of care and protection for young people under his care.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>The registered manager and responsible individual have a close working relationship. Together they have sought to address shortfalls and are committed to providing a good quality children's home. They have been joined by a deputy manager, whose skills and experience they feel complements the team. They have also welcomed the additional support provided by the senior leadership in the school and the increased opportunities to meet to resolve issues quickly.</p> <p>A fundamental shortfall identified at the inspection in November was the failure of leaders and managers to escalate serious concerns effectively to a young person's placing authority with sufficient tenacity to achieve a timely resolution. As a result, one young person continued to be at risk of serious harm, before eventually leaving the provision just after the inspection in November. The senior leadership team has reflected on this a great deal. They have created a detailed escalation procedure, which clearly sets out the action to take within specific timescales. The leaders and managers feel they have learned lessons from this experience and are aware of the importance of demonstrating strong leadership skills to act in the best interests of young people.</p> <p>The use of agency staff in the home has ceased. There is a full complement of staff, supported by bank staff who are suitably trained and supervised. All staff either have suitable qualifications or are part way through a level 3 diploma for residential childcare, while the newly appointed deputy manager is due to commence a level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare.</p>	

Quality monitoring processes are being reviewed and improved to ensure that they provide an effective management tool in developing and improving the quality of the service to benefit young people. Internal processes are being developed to ensure that information is appropriately shared and timely action is taken. The home provides social workers with a copy of specific incident records, rather than a summary. Social workers have welcomed this development, as it provides them with an improved opportunity to monitor all incidents that happen in the home. Following the full inspection, the independent visitor's reports include an evaluation of whether young people are safeguarded and the conduct in the home promotes their well-being.

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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