

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	20/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC423453
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Wood Grove (Childcare) Ltd
Registered provider address	C/O Kedleston Group Limited, Office Suite No. 1, Ansell Gardens, Holloway Lane, Harmondsworth, Middlesex UB7 0AE

Responsible individual	Paul Brosnan
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Joanna Heller

Inspection date	20/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Requires improvement
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
<p>The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection</p> <p>This home was judged as requires improvement at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness.</p> <p>The home has been without a registered manager for some months. However, an interim acting manager has provided effective management oversight while a new manager was recruited. The acting manager has been in post since December. They have submitted an application to Ofsted for registration and their suitability has yet to be established. The staff have worked together to introduce a number of service improvements within a relatively short period of time. All of the five requirements set at the last inspection have been met. The six recommendations either have been met or there are clear plans in place for these to be completed.</p> <p>Since the last inspection the organisation has overhauled the fire prevention arrangements. This ensures that the children are effectively safeguarded. For example, all bedroom doors are now fire doors and have suitable closures installed. All of the children receive guidance on what to do should a fire occur. However, there are no personal emergency evacuation plans in place for those children who have autism. This may impact on their ability to understand and act swiftly in the event of an emergency. It is essential that staff have clear guidance on how to support each child to evacuate the home effectively in the event of an emergency.</p> <p>The lighting in the building has improved. Locks are no longer fitted to the lounge or other communal areas, providing a brighter and more homely environment. There are plans in place for a substantial refurbishment in the next two months. This will further enhance the quality of accommodation available to the children. Food hygiene arrangements have improved. There is a new fridge. However, a few of the staff have yet to complete the food hygiene training.</p> <p>Vetting procedures for new staff have improved. No staff are employed until all checks on their suitability have been established. Staff supervision arrangements are more regular and effective. The vast majority have benefited from at least two individual, reflective supervision sessions in the past two months. This means that the staff feel better supported, and, in conjunction with new monthly child-focused team meetings, the staff are better able to reflect on the particular needs of the children and how they can best be supported. While the areas highlighted as gaps in training at the last inspection have yet to be delivered, there are arrangements and suitable plans in place to deliver these. The manager has scheduled relevant practice-related training over the next two months, which will enhance staff's</p>	

understanding of key issues such as autism, drug and alcohol issues, the management and prevention of self-harm and child sexual expectation.

Good placement planning and appropriate supervision levels mean that there have been no placement breakdowns. The children benefit from child-focused and individualised care and support. Parents are positive about the care and the support that their child receives, and the levels of partnership working that staff promote ensure that they continue to feel central to the child's life. One parent said, 'I can't fault the home, they are brilliant at everything.' Another said, 'The staff are really flexible and supportive. We are really pleased with [it], it's the best placement he's had.'

The majority of the children have made and continue to make progress from their particular starting points. One child has successfully returned to the care of their family, as a result of the effective support provided by the staff. The children enjoy the variety of male role models and develop mutually respectful relationships with the staff. They consistently say that the staff are the best things about the home. One said, 'I love the staff, they are all amazing.' Another referred to staff as being 'Sweet!' One child said that the staff are nice because [they] have a really good sense of humour. They're very funny people.' These positive relationships underpin the calm atmosphere in the home, where antisocial behaviour is rare and conflict is well managed. As a consequence, the children feel safe and there are no issues of bullying.

The staff implement effective de-escalation methods, and use of physical restraint is rare. Only those staff trained in the safe application of physical restraint and breakaway techniques use these approaches to keep the children or others safe. The staff successfully implement systems for promoting positive behaviour. As a result, the children present as calmer and have improved self-regulation. Records of restraint, however, do not evidence that there is suitable management overview of the restraints ensuring that their application was warranted and just. Furthermore, sanctions applied are not always clearly recorded. For example, on one occasion a child was required to pay half the cost of a damaged fire extinguisher, but there were no details of the amount of reparation due or how this would be repaid. On another two occasions, children were sanctioned with loss of free time for an unspecified period. This lack of clarity resulted in the staff, while out on activity, telephoning the home to ask details of whether the child could have free time with their friend. This means that the response to this request would potentially have been different depending on the senior staff on duty in the home, therefore undermining consistency of approach.

Financial records are not maintained in an accessible way for the children, demonstrating their income and expenditure and, where relevant, how much money the staff are safekeeping for them. As a result, there is a lack of information on how financial reparations are applied and information to assist the children in budgeting their money. Furthermore, this lack of clarity may serve as a potential source of conflict.

Some of the children at the time of their placement were considered at high risk of

going missing, with associated risks of offending and taking drugs. There have been, until recently, few missing-from-home incidents, and staff have helped the children to make significant progress in this area. The improved recording of incidents when children have gone missing shows that the staff follow local protocols to try to ensure the child's safe return. The staff have been tenacious in using social media, identifying potentially risky friends and environments, and alerting the police to their concerns. The manager has built successful partnerships with the local police missing from care liaison officer and, as a result, the children are better safeguarded. Some of the children, however, are experiencing a recent decline in their ability to keep themselves safe despite the good support provided by staff. The staff continue to maintain a strong support structure and work effectively in partnership with other agencies, to try to address the child's risky behaviour and support a planned move to an environment in which they can be more effectively kept safe.

There are effective partnerships with parents, school, the police and social workers who hold the service in high esteem, rating it as 'good' or 'good to outstanding'. One professional said, 'The staff have been brilliant. Their commitment to him is beyond question. He has been happy here.' Another said, 'It's the place he has felt most secure and safe. They've done an awful lot of positive work with him.'

The children are supported to live healthy lifestyles and receive good information and support from the staff and partner agencies. Despite this, some of the children continue to make poor choices, such as smoking cannabis. All of the children have educational placements. The staff continue to be proactive in encouraging the children to attend and engage in their education, with varying levels of success.

Since the last inspection, the manager has ensured that there are suitable notifications of significant events. The independent person appointed by the organisation visits the home each month. Reports are completed, but these are not forwarded to Ofsted. While this has no impact on the children, it does mean that Ofsted does not have current and accurate information regarding the operation of the home. The manager's recent review of the quality of care provides an overview of the strengths and areas for improvement in the home. It does not include the views of the children, their families or partner agencies. This means that opportunities to recognise success and drive improvement are not fully utilised.

While some requirements and recommendations have been set at this inspection and one remains from the last inspection, this does not impact on the outcomes and experiences of the children. The improvements in the service demonstrate a shared sense of commitment and teamwork. As a result, the service delivers improved care and support, which makes a positive difference for the children. One child said that they would grade the home as 'one million out of ten' because 'it's amazing'. They said, 'It's the best place I've ever been. I love it. I want to stay forever.'

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to accommodate four children of either gender. The home offers emergency, short- and long-term placements for children who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/11/2016	Full	Requires improvement
10/12/2015	Full	Good
24/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
22/01/2015	Full	Outstanding

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) meet(s) the Care Standards Act 2000, the 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>The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(c))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that a suitably senior authorised person reviews all incidents of physical restraint in a timely manner. Furthermore, ensure that records of any sanctions are clear as to how the sanction is to be applied, such as the length of time for the enforcement of loss of activity or the arrangements for financial reparation.</p>	31/03/2017
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ('the independent person's report') and the registered person must ensure that a copy of the monthly independent person's report is provided to Ofsted. (Regulation 44(1)(7)(a))</p>	31/03/2017

Recommendations

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

- Comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene, etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than an 'institutional' impression. 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- In particular, ensure that each child has an individual personal emergency evacuation plan.
- Ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality

standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

In particular, ensure that all staff receive suitable training in food hygiene, and in preventing and responding to self-harm and child sexual exploitation.

- Ensure that staff understand the importance of careful objective and clear recording ensuring that information regarding the child is recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

In particular, ensure that children's financial records clearly detail income, expenditure and cash balances held.

- Undertake a review under regulation 45 that focuses on the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact that the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. The review should be underpinned by the quality standards as described in regulations 5 to 14. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)

In particular, ensure that the system considers the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff.

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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