

Children's homes – Interim inspection

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| Inspection date | 07/03/2017 |
| Unique reference number | SC069336 |
| Type of inspection | Interim |
| Provision subtype | Residential special school |
| Registered provider | Prior's Court Foundation |
| Responsible individual | Michael Robinson |
| Registered manager | Sarah Butcher |
| Inspector | Chris Peel |

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| Inspection date | 07/03/2017 |
| Previous inspection judgement | Outstanding |
| 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 outstanding at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.</p> <p>This is an exemplary 'learning' organisation. Leaders and managers examine events to identify lessons learned, which are disseminated to improve services for children and young people. A striking example is an investigation into a concern about the actions of a member of staff; despite concluding that the concern was unfounded, managers made recommendations and used the opportunity to reflect on how to further improve practice.</p> <p>The organisation has learned from a serious incident that occurred on a community trip. A thorough investigation into the circumstances has led to the implementation of new planning procedures, including individual risk assessments to consider individual children's and young people's needs in relation to the activity, and ensuring that rota changes are made to support the trip. Staff are therefore more aware of potential hazardous incidents and behaviour, and are better prepared for them.</p> <p>The quality assurance manager has robust systems in place to monitor the home's arrangements that safeguard and promote children's and young people's welfare. There is also good provision to monitor the health and safety arrangements, involving experienced consultants who advise leaders and managers. Recommendations are promptly followed up, which means that the environment is as safe as possible for staff, children and young people.</p> <p>The provider has incorporated lessons learned from the specifications of a recently refurbished house (and how they have withstood, or not, the testing behaviours of a young person) into the design of a new building. The manager has overseen this process with characteristic thoroughness. As a result, children and young people who move into the new houses are far more likely to live in a pleasant environment that is also able to withstand very challenging behaviour.</p> <p>The entire management team shares a drive to improve the experiences of children and young people through careful examination of practice, processes and outcomes. A recent restructuring has facilitated opportunities to review current procedures and led to the creation of several proposals to develop services. These include increasing the availability of psychiatric consultancy, providing bespoke training for staff on managing specific children's epilepsy and creating well-</p> | |

designed materials to provide sex education for young people who have learning disabilities.

Each of the houses now has a manager with responsibility for the running of their home. This means that there are clearer lines of responsibility and opportunities for those in these posts to influence the practice of staff who are accountable to them. Those managers spoken to are undertaking their new roles with enthusiasm, and have identified improvements that they want to make. These new responsibilities provide the potential for them to champion the care of children and young people in their houses.

The new structure has yet to 'bed in' and a few houses have significant weaknesses that managers have not addressed. These include the availability of records or fire precaution checks and the siting of firefighting equipment, deficits in case recording and lack of attention to provide a stimulating environment. These are exceptions to the otherwise outstanding standard of care, and inspectors were reassured that senior managers have, from their own observation and monitoring, identified where improvements are needed.

The provider has recently agreed to a substantial refurbishing programme in three houses to upgrade facilities. The refurbishment is overdue, and other houses have bathrooms and toilets that need considerable attention to make them pleasant rooms for children and young people to use. Staff in these houses were well aware of the deficiencies but had not been able to effect improvements.

Individual risk assessments include how staff should assist children and young people in the event of a fire. However, evacuation records do not comment on how children and young people react to drills, which means that important information could be lost, and not get used to update risk assessments.

The provider makes careful arrangements for the admission of new placements. Impact risk assessments identify behaviours and health conditions that need to be considered but do not address what impact these may have on existing residents, nor what measures should be put in place to ensure that issues are addressed.

Managers report that the home obtains consents at the start of placements, including those required for the administration of first aid and participation in activities. However, staff do not have ready access to the consents; they presume that someone with parental responsibility has given consent, or say that they would find out at the time, which could lead to delay in acting in an emergency.

Plans and assessments on case files were of an extremely good quality, giving staff up-to-date, child-focused, clear and accurate information on which to base their interactions with children and young people. Authors are named so that there is clear accountability, but other stakeholders such as parents and social workers do not routinely sign documentation to demonstrate that they have been shared, understood and agreed. There is no procedure in place for all staff working with individual children and young people to sign that they too have read and understood the documents.

Inspectors observed consistent practice with children and young people. Children and young people know what is expected of them in terms of routines and behaviours, and are supported to be as independent as possible. Staff consistently apply positive behaviour strategies to keep children and young people calm, and to avoid incidents. These strategies include diversionary activities that work for particular individuals, such as use of a trampoline or listening to music. Staff report that some children and young people have learned what works for them, and will take themselves away from stressful situations to undertake the activity.

Staff support children and young people to make choices in relation to food, clothing and activities by using bespoke communication methods.

Daily living assessments provide a baseline evaluation of children and young people's abilities. A three-month review has taken place, providing data on where each individual has made progress or perhaps regressed. Charts show significant improvement for some children and young people in areas such as managing travel, undertaking laundry tasks, meal times and hygiene.

Managers are now tasked with identifying specific targets to address any areas where competency has declined. Information from the assessments is being used to help make future placement decisions, such as one young person who is not doing as well as he was with toileting and bathing potentially moving to an en-suite room.

Staff support children and young people to meet their cultural and religious needs. For example, staff made determined efforts to find a place of worship for a young person that was able to accommodate the needs of his diagnosed condition. They also assist children and young people to access facilities in the community, such as a climbing club, a drama group and work experience placements.

The help and support given to young people and their families to make the move to adult provision is exemplary. Preparation is very detailed and includes the practical and emotional preparation of the young person and parents. Staff pass on knowledge, often built up over a period of years, to new providers, and remain in contact until it is clear that the new placement is working well. On one occasion it did not, and managers acted promptly to readmit the young person.

Leaders and managers use latest research and innovations to inform and enhance practice. This enthuses staff and creates new opportunities for children and young people. An example is a project to assess how robots can help with things such as interactions and learning. A specifically designed sailing boat enables more children and young people to participate in this activity and is available to others in the community to use, so widening the benefit beyond the home.

Managers, staff, children and young people have been involved with professional musicians in the composition of a song to promote the awareness of autism. It includes the line, 'All I need is for you to give me a chance.' It is evident that the 'chances' children and young people have in this home are extraordinarily rich and

life enhancing.

Information about this children's home

This school provides care and accommodation for up to 76 children and young people who have autistic spectrum disorder and/or learning disabilities, providing accommodation for a number of children and young people who receive up to 52-week placements. It is therefore registered as a children's home. It operates as an independent, co-educational residential special school with charitable status.

Children and young people are accommodated in nine on-site residential houses and one off-site house in a neighbouring village. The school is set around a restored country house, within acres of parkland.

The organisation also provides residential services for young adults, for which it is registered with the Care Quality Commission.

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 07/07/2016 | Full | Outstanding |
| 02/03/2016 | Interim | Improved effectiveness |
| 15/09/2015 | Full | Good |
| 23/03/2015 | Interim | Sustained effectiveness |

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 |
|---|------------|
| In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard the registered person is required to: ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (2)(c)(i)) | 28/04/2017 |
| After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children's home. (Regulation 25 (1)(a)) In particular, equipment must be sited so that it is immediately accessible in case of fire. | 28/04/2017 |

Recommendations

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

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans, and where 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 risk assessment should adequately record consideration of the potential impact of placing a child in a home on others already resident there and how this will be addressed.
- The responsible person must make and give effect to such arrangements as are appropriate for the effective monitoring and review of the preventive and protective measures. ('The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order', page 10, paragraph 11 (1).) In particular, to record how children respond to emergency evacuation drills and ensure that records of preventive and protective measures are available for scrutiny.

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 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 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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