

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	29/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC032058
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Buckinghamshire County Council
Registered person address	Chief Officer, County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP20 1UA
Registered manager	David Knowles
Inspector	Trish Palmer

Inspection date	29/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection	
<p>This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has declined in effectiveness.</p> <p>The children have continued to make progress in the home since the last inspection. They participate in activities in the community and are supported to build and maintain friendships that are important to them.</p> <p>The children have built positive relationships with staff, who know and understand them. A child commented, 'The staff are great and they respect and listen to me.'</p> <p>The manager has been in post since February 2016 and is registered with Ofsted. He has the experience to manage the home and is in the process of completing his level 5 qualification.</p> <p>There were two requirements set at the last inspection, one of which has been met, and two recommendations, of which one has been met.</p> <p>The staff have completed their mandatory training and have attained or are registered on the level 3 national vocation qualification award.</p> <p>The staff understand the importance of education and actively support children to attend. All children are receiving full-time education and staff support them in completing homework. There is good evidence of the staff working with education provisions and challenging plans that they believe are not in the best interest of the child.</p> <p>The staff understand that transitions both into and out of the home can be difficult. The manager tries to ensure that placements are as planned as possible due to some emergency placements having had a negative impact on the group. A child who recently moved into the home commented 'I came to visit with my social worker before I moved in; the staff were really welcoming.'</p> <p>There are regular children's meetings at which children are encouraged and supported to chair and take minutes. These give children the opportunity to discuss their wishes and feelings and also to advise on any purchases for the house. They also use these meetings to challenge each other's behaviours in a safe</p>	

environment. This shows that staff understand the importance of children being consulted about home life.

There have been no complaints regarding the home since the last inspection. A child, with the support of staff and his advocate, has put in a complaint regarding his social worker. This shows that staff support children to complain when they are unhappy with the service they are receiving.

There have been incidents of children going missing since the last inspection. However, these have decreased in number since December. A child commented 'I used to go missing, but I don't anymore; when I came home the staff would tell me how worried they had been.' This shows that staff use the positive relationships they have with the children and this them feel cared for. Children receive return to home interviews.

The staff understand the importance of children developing their independence skills in line with their age, understanding and ability. One child is on a full independence programme and staff commented that his confidence has grown. Staff support the children in using the internet and public transport. This shows that staff are not risk averse and understand that children need to learn and manage some risks.

Risk assessments are reviewed and updated. These are clear and informative and support the staff in working with the children and keeping the children safe. However, impact risk assessments are not completed before a child moves to the home, which results in a missed opportunity to look at risks for the child and the current group and how these risks can be reduced or managed.

The staff have completed their safeguarding training. However, the manager needs to complete a higher level to ensure that he has the required knowledge, as the designated safeguarding officer for the home.

There are good, clear and detailed placement plans in place to support the staff's work with the children. However, children do not have the opportunity to sign or comment to say that they understand or agree with the plans.

The staff understand the importance of recognising and celebrating children's achievements and make individual certificates for them. Children can earn individualised activities. One child went to see the X Factor on tour and another went to a Marvel fair in London. This shows the children that staff have recognised their achievements and have put thought into how these can be celebrated.

The children have all completed a framed picture that represents them. These are on the hall wall and are from past and present children. This shows the children that staff will still be reminded of them when they have left. Staff commented that children who come back for a visit are always pleased to see their pictures still on the wall.

There have been 46 sanctions since the last inspection, which were fair, proportionate, and evaluated by the manager. Children were signing and commenting on these until a few months ago, but there is no evidence that they still have the opportunity to comment on and sign these.

There is no clear evidence that children receive regular key-working sessions; when asked, children commented that they didn't think they have these. Key-work sessions need to be meaningful and children should have the opportunity to comment on and sign these to say that they understand the session or the actions that have been agreed.

There is still no robust monitoring in place to ensure that the care practice and the progression and outcomes for children are evaluated by the manager. The development plan still needs to be completed. The independent visitor's reports assist the manager with some monitoring, but there has been no consent from social workers or children for the visitor to read children's files.

The house has gone through a redecoration programme. It is clean, bright and welcoming. A new modern kitchen has been installed and the downstairs area has been repainted and has had new flooring. The bathrooms have been redecorated and some of the children's rooms have been newly redecorated. A child was very proud of her room and the wallpaper that she had chosen. The garden is also having some work done in the next few weeks. A new shed has been purchased and some decking is due to be put in the garden, which will make it more inviting for children.

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by Buckinghamshire County Council and provides residential care for up to six young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/09/2016	Full	Good
25/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/08/2015	Full	Good
09/02/2015	Interim	Improved 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) meet(s) 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
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44(2)(b))	01/06/17
The registered person must ensure that within five working days of the use of a measure of control discipline or restraint, the registered person or authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure used. (Regulation 35(3)(c))	01/06/17
14. In order to meet the care planning standard the registered person must ensure: (f) that staff help each child to access and contribute to the records kept by the registered person in relation to the child.	01/06/17
13. In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to having a development plan in place for the home, the registered person should: (2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	01/06/17

Recommendations

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

- The registered person should ensure that skills in safeguarding are gained, refreshed and recorded in the home's workforce plan. This is in relation to the manager having the relevant safeguarding training. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.12)

- 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)

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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