

1183494

Registered provider: Slough Children's Services Trust Limited (09487106)

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It may be aged between 11 and 17 years on admission. It is a purpose-built local authority children's home that opened in 2005 but transferred to a trust established in October 2015.

Inspection dates: 16 to 17 May 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 11 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Declined in effectiveness

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because

- The physical environment is in a poor state.
- Despite some skilled intervention by staff and the involvement of other agencies, not all young people are kept safe.
- The manager and staff restrict access to areas of the home. Preventing young people from exiting the home is sometimes undertaken to safeguard young people, but individual risk assessments do not refer to this as a measure of control for any young person. In addition, not all incidents are logged with sufficient information to demonstrate that the use of these restrictive measures is proportionate.
- Monitoring of the care of young people, including of sanctions and physical interventions, and through regulatory reviews has lapsed.

The children's home's strengths

- Admission and leaving processes have led to smooth transitions. The manager and staff have prepared young people well, practically and emotionally, for moves.
- Staff support education so that some young people attend and achieve more following admission than they did before.
- Staff support for young people's health and well-being is effective.
- Staff assess risks very well, identifying potential difficulties and strategies staff should use to address them.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/01/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
11/05/2016	Full	Good
09/11/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard the registered person is required to:</p> <p>ensure that staff make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice (Regulation 6(20(b)(ix)). In particular, ensure that any decision to temporarily limit a child's access to any area of the home or to be able to leave the home should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review.</p>	30/06/2017
<p>In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard the registered person is required to:</p> <p>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)) In particular, to undertake repairs, regular maintenance and improvements to the garden, kitchen and shower rooms as a matter of priority.</p>	30/06/2017
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI of any revisions (to the Statement of Purpose) and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(b))</p>	30/06/2017
<p>The registered person must ensure that</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child a record is made (including all details set out in the Regulation)</p> <p>and within 48 hours of the use of the measure the registered person or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so</p> <p>has been spoken to the user about the measure; and signed the</p>	30/06/2017

<p>record to confirm it is accurate;</p> <p>and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so, adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a-c))</p> <p>In particular records must show that these timescales have been adhered to.</p>	
<p>The independent person must produce a report about a visit which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (3)(a) and (b))</p>	30/06/2017
<p>The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months and supply to HMCI a copy of the report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1) and (4)(a))</p>	30/06/2017

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and the general principles for behaviour management in children's homes are respected. (Guide to Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards, page 46 paragraph 9.36)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which details the process for managing and improving poor performance; and the process and timescales for supervision of practice and keep appropriate records for staff in the home. (Guide to Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards, page 53 paragraph 10.8)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Young people benefit from a staff team that has many years of experience, alongside newer staff who bring enthusiasm to the role. It is a combination that works well, with professionals commenting favourably on the way staff quickly notice signs that young people may be having problems, as well as developing relationships with them that can bring about change.

For some young people this level of engagement helps them to participate more in their care planning and start to achieve their goals. One young person commented that it was the first time he had stayed throughout a statutory review because, for the first time, he believed that people were listening to him. A professional commented on how another young person who had previously shouted and sworn in meetings now joined in constructively.

All young people have made progress, although for some it has stalled or dropped back. The manager and staff continue to work on the positives, are resilient in their approach and demonstrate that they continue to care despite setbacks. Young people, therefore, know that fresh starts are always possible and staff will provide support, 'come what may'. The state of the garden and one of the showers was commented on at the last full inspection, and concern about the state of the kitchen was added at the interim. Young people complain about the size of their bedrooms too. As a result, a review of the building has been undertaken and ideas have been generated to refit the entire premises. This has yet to impact on the experience of young people as the garden is so overgrown it cannot be used for recreation, the kitchen has missing kickboards and cupboard doors, and a shower smells so strongly it is unpleasant even to open the door.

Some of these longstanding problems require action in advance of any more general refit but, despite the urgent requests of managers, these have been postponed. The environment therefore does not reflect the standard of care and sense of feeling valued that the manager and staff are keen to bestow upon young people.

It is no longer normal practice routinely to lock internal and external doors as a measure of control. However, there is confusion among staff about the circumstances in which they might legitimately prevent access and how they can show it to be proportionate.

Young people understand why staff might prevent them from entering rooms if they are likely to cause damage or stop them from leaving the building if they are threatening someone. However, risk assessments do not refer to such situations being prevented by locking doors and the log of incidents only records those when staff disable the front door exit button. It is not always possible to determine from this log why staff have taken the action, and there is no cross-referencing to other documents to gain further information. The last report made a requirement about this matter; it has been reworded following this inspection to be clear about what the manager and staff need to do to comply.

The music/education room remains cluttered and includes musical instruments which are unplayable, for example guitars with broken strings.

Fold-down desks have been put in bedrooms, a useful facility to promote private study. However, in some rooms it has not been possible for staff or young people to practically rearrange the rest of the furniture to accommodate them. Layouts are awkward, with access to storage in one room restricted. Poor décor, and a duvet without covers, adds to a sense of disarray.

Young people have many opportunities to share their wishes and feelings, including via a new suggestions/complaints box if they want to make these anonymously. Key-work session recordings show that pertinent issues are addressed and views are sought, often in creative and 'young-person-friendly' ways.

Key-workers record young people's contributions to their placement plans, which are taken into account in decisions made.

The home has excellent links with the school that all current young people in the home attend. Attendance has been an issue for the majority of young people and the problem has persisted despite numerous attempts to encourage them to go. However, in collaboration with the teaching staff and by involving a specialist service there are promising signs that this is improving.

Staff work hard at maintaining children's engagement in education once they are in school; one young person was encouraged by his key worker to persevere with a subject that was not turning out as he thought. During the inspection, the young person phoned the staff member to say he was really pleased that he had gone as he was now doing the practical work he liked.

Another young person who struggled greatly with education was supported to undertake a course with the Prince's Trust, and gained his first ever qualification as a result.

Admissions and leaving processes are good. One young person has been admitted despite significant behavioural issues, assisted by preparatory visits by the manager to the previous placement, the young person having an overnight stay and careful assessments. The move proved to be smooth and positive as a result. Two young people have moved in to more independent living accommodation, having been prepared practically and emotionally over some months to take this step.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Those young people spoken to who currently live in the home say they feel safe and that, although they fall out with each other, there is no bullying. However, a serious assault involving a young person took place outside the home and recently young people have displayed threatening behaviour towards staff. Nonetheless, young people say that staff maintain control and keep them from getting into deeper trouble.

One young person did not think sanctions given by staff were fair but another observed with some insight that, 'No one likes a sanction at first, but when I've thought about it and had it explained, I realise why.'

Staff write up incident sheets on most occasions sanctions are given, for all incidents of physical interventions and other significant events, such as accidents. Young people are encouraged to read and comment on these. The sheets are generally well written, with clear descriptions of events and explanations of actions taken.

Staff meet the health needs of young people extremely well, supporting them to attend appointments and obtain necessary treatment. Staff have slept in hospital with one young person who needed an overnight admission; this provided re-assurance and support at a worrying time. A professional commented, 'Kudos for the staff here for going above and beyond when he was in hospital, sleeping on the floor there with him.' Advice about health and well-being is regularly given in key-worker sessions, in the independent living programme and through informal discussion. There are well-founded suspicions of child sexual exploitation and concerns regarding young people's use of alcohol and illegal substances, and frequent absent or missing episodes. Staff have worked hard to address these issues with evident concern for young people's well-being and future aspirations. Although they and other professionals think that the advice and guidance given is having some effect, it has not been sufficient to reduce the risks for all young people to an acceptable level.

Professionals believe staff are 'tuned into the culture of the area' and address issues such as gang culture and drug misuse with young people. Staff are well versed at following procedures to report concerns and to follow missing from care protocols. Independent return to care interviews are always requested and now take place promptly. Professionals say that staff are quick to share information that indicates a potential problem as much as known concerns, so that a joint approach can be taken.

A parent said, 'I expect staff to try to stop my child running away and they are doing what they can, but X [the child] is making the decisions.' It is evident that not all young people are keeping themselves safe and the concerted efforts of staff and other professionals are not reducing risks to an acceptable level. This is the subject of discussion with senior managers in the placing authority and with commissioners.

Examination of shift records shows that there are sufficient staff on duty. Managers are in the process of appointing two new permanent staff members and the majority of agency staff employed have worked full-time at the home for some considerable time, establishing very positive relationships with young people. Vacancies still exist and overtime is needed to fill rotas – although staff spoken to do not feel pressurised to undertake it. Some staff feel overstretched in their roles.

Staff demonstrate a commitment to those in their care and some young people are able to recognise this, even if they do not always like the decisions made for them. Mutual respect has led to developing trust and, for individual young people, taking steps to reach goals knowing they have this support. One young person who has now left commented in the home's records that staff had 'helped me through tough times'. Others may acknowledge staff provide for them, but this has not translated into fully accepting the emotional support to make significant or lasting change.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home's registered manager left in December 2016 and an interim appointment has been made to replace her. There has been some uncertainty about the permanency of

these arrangements but they have now been resolved.

A review of the quality of care provided for young people has not been produced since September 2016 and a development plan was not available to read during the inspection. The last independent person's report to be received by Ofsted was for February 2017; recent reports have not included a clear statement of the author's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded or if their well-being is promoted. There is, therefore, a lack of formal monitoring of the home's performance and managers have not set out their plans to develop the home's strengths or to address its weaknesses.

Nevertheless, the home has not stood still; staff credit the interim manager with developing a more cohesive and collaborative approach by the team. He makes observations about practice that are fed back constructively, as was observed during the inspection. A member of staff described him as 'a great mentor' and 'giving consistency' to the team.

The manager has addressed the requirements and recommendations of the last inspection, and this has had a beneficial impact. For example, a long-standing problem of poor internet connectivity has been resolved, and staff are now receiving monthly supervision. The manager has also identified areas which he thinks could be improved and intends to promote this among his senior staff.

New strategies have been introduced to address issues, such as engagement with education, which are showing signs of having a positive impact.

There is a consensus that communication between the home and other agencies is good; one professional commented that, 'You just need to pick up the phone and there are people who know the children.' There is excellent co-working with some agencies, for example an education professional said, 'The home supported us brilliantly.' However, there are examples of occasionally working at cross-purposes with others and the manager is engaging with other agencies to improve joint working. This is showing signs of progress; one professional commented that, 'Staff are always bending over backwards to be helpful and always respond. If I make a suggestion – bam: it happens.' The concept of building a 'team around the child' is being developed as a multi-agency model to ensure a unified approach.

Managers revised the home's statement of purpose in January 2017 but did not forward it to Ofsted, as regulation requires. In addition, it contained out-of-date and inaccurate information, such as the home having bedroom door alarms. This was corrected during the inspection.

Sanction and physical intervention logs are not well completed. Those sanctions which do not have a corresponding incident sheet lack the most information, including details required by regulation regarding debriefs with staff and young people being absent. Although managers read the incident sheets, evidence of logs being monitored is limited. For example, managers' sections in two of the four entries regarding physical

intervention since the last inspection have not been completed. This means that overall patterns or trends are not being examined to see what lessons might be learned.

The home's workforce plan does not cover all the areas recommended by statutory guidance, specifically frequency of supervision and performance management.

Individual risk assessments are very helpful, identifying potential difficulties and strategies staff should use to address them, with the exception of restricting access when necessary to safeguarding young people. Placement plans incorporate actions identified at statutory reviews and incorporate young people's views. It is not always possible to identify the author of plans or entries on files as signatures are not decipherable. Files are otherwise in good order.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1183494

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Slough Children's Services Trust Limited (09487106)

Registered provider address: Ground Floor West, St Martin's Place, 51 Bath Road,
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Responsible individual: Jackie Pape

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Chris Peel, social care inspector

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