

# SC031490

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

#### Information about this children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict young people's liberty. As well as the living accommodation, there are facilities for administration and education provided on the site. The children's home can accommodate up to seven young people who are aged between 10 and 17 years and subject to Section 25 of The Children Act 1989. Admission of any young person under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

**Inspection dates:** 18 to 19 July 2017

Overall experiences and progress of good children and young people, taking into

account

How well children and young people are

helped and protected

good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

Outcomes in education and related learning outstanding

activities

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 21 February 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** Improved effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection** 

None.



## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because

- Managers and staff work hard to provide young people with a safe and secure environment in which they can find a sense of stability in their often chaotic lives. All young people are positive about the home and acknowledge the progress they are making, relative to their time in placement.
- Young people's views are integral to all aspects of their care. They are routinely involved in, and well supported to make, decisions about their lives and influence the day-to day-operation and future direction of the home.
- Care planning is based on the principles of thorough assessment, monitoring and review, and is underpinned by strong working partnerships with a range of professionals and agencies.
- Care practice is underpinned by strong and purposeful relationships that are based on mutual respect and trust. This creates a nurturing environment that ensures that young people, many of whom have been let down by adults, feel safe, secure and well cared-for.
- Staff understand each young person's behaviours, risks and vulnerabilities, and they are effective in the management and reduction of these. They take a risk-aware approach to mobility, which enables young people to prepare for their return to the community.
- Leadership and management arrangements have been strengthened and there is a clear focus on driving a well thought-out improvement agenda. The new manager provides good leadership for staff and has started to introduce a strong child-focused ethos, based on a trauma-informed approach, which is being fully embraced by the staff team.

The children's home's areas for development

- The long-term arrangements for the management of the home have yet to be confirmed.
- The recently introduced 'trauma-informed' approach is not yet fully embedded into practice.
- A number of actions arising from the young people's consultation meetings with the manager are still outstanding.
- Records relating to single separation do not evidence when one form of separation has ended and another has started.
- Records are not being kept of all types of searching.
- The protocol for police involvement does not make clear how the police will support staff when they are called to the home to assist in the management of behaviour and risk.



- Not all sanctions are relevant to the misdemeanour.
- Repairs to the young people's telephone system are still outstanding and have been for some considerable time.
- Challenges to placing authorities are not always escalated in a timely manner when they fail to meet their statutory duties in providing education information.
- Further improvements are required to the process for reporting educational progress to governors.

# **Recent inspection history**

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
12/07/2016	Full	Requires improvement
06/10/2015	Full	Good
20/05/2015	Full	Good



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

#### Recommendations

- Ensure children are able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. This is with particular regard to completing outstanding actions arising from the consultation with children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- Ensure children have access to a telephone that can be used privately. This is with particular regard to ensuring that the bedroom telephones are repaired in a timely manner. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.17)
- Ensure any sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. This is with particular regard to ensuring that the sanction relates specifically to the behaviour. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- Ensure that the records relating to single separation clearly indicate any change in the type of separation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 50, paragraph 9.65)
- Ensure records are kept of all searches when there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a risk to the child's or another person's safety or well-being. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 16, paragraph 3.20)
- Ensure that an agreement is in place with the local police force, including procedures and guidance to reduce unnecessary involvement in managing behaviour and criminalisation of behaviours. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 47, paragraph 9.40)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. This is with particular regard to ensuring that all staff complete training in self-harm, autistic spectrum disorder and the 'Prevent' duty. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- Ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn; this is with particular regard to ensuring that placing authorities meet their obligations to provide pupil records and pupil premium funding entitlement and that they are robustly challenged when they fail to do so. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)



■ Ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn; this is with particular regard to improving the reporting arrangement to governors in order that they have a more accurate overview of the progress made by all young people. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)

### **Inspection judgements**

#### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff provide child-focused support that enables young people to make good progress relative to their time at the home. Staff show a genuine interest in young people and encourage them to reflect on their past experiences and the reasons why they are in secure accommodation. Throughout their placement they are well supported to develop coping mechanisms and strategies in preparation for their release, and all young people leave in a better place than where they started.

Staff are skilled in forming meaningful and strong relationships with young people. They work in a dedicated and resilient manner to build relationships with young people who often have no desire to be at the home, and are often in a state of crisis when admitted.

With the support of the manager and clinical psychologist, staff are developing an insightful understanding of the barriers to making good attachments with traumatised young people. This, alongside a genuine desire to get the best outcomes for the young people, is having a positive impact on changing their attitudes and behaviour. During the inspection, young people were observed seeking the company of staff who provide them with consistent levels of nurturing care. Young people spoke about enjoying spending time with their key workers, feeling listened to and being proud when staff recognised their progress and achievements. A social worker said, '(Name) has formed good relationships with her key workers and this has meant that she feels she can now trust adults, including professionals.'

Consultation and participation has improved significantly. Young people have a range of opportunities, such as weekly group meetings, meaningful individual key-work sessions and everyday conversations that enable them to influence the day-to-day running of the home and the decisions relating to their care. The introduction of weekly meetings with the manager has been particularly beneficial in helping young people feel valued and listened to. They say that they can confidently raise issues and contribute to discussions, which has influenced changes in relation to their day-to-day care. However, there are a number of actions still outstanding from these meetings. For some young people the delay in implementing actions is causing some frustration. For example, the agreement to rewrite the clothing policy is yet to be completed.

Staff enjoy spending time with young people and successfully engage them in activities, such as gym, badminton, cooking, arts and crafts, acting out their own plays, spending time in the sensory room, board games and completing challenging jigsaws. This is



supplemented by external people coming into the home to introduce young people to new activities, such as taekwondo and boxing. These links have been used well for some young people who have attended such activities in the community, while on mobility, with many intending to continue to pursue these when they leave.

Each young person has a residential care plan that identifies their individual needs and areas for development. These records clearly outline the aims of the placement and provide staff with good guidance in terms of the strategies to support them to make progress in relation to their individual targets. Young people have a good understanding of their plans, and over time take ownership of their own progress. Staff encourage them to fully participate in the decisions relating to their care and provide good support to enable them to attend and express their views during meetings, such as children looked after reviews.

Young people's physical, mental and emotional health needs are well met. A healthy lifestyle is promoted and staff work in partnership with the children looked after nurse to promote young people's awareness of the importance of maintaining healthy lifestyles. Their needs are assessed at the point of admission and are routinely monitored throughout their time in placement. They are supported to access a range of health professionals, as per their individual needs and plans. This includes doctors, dentists and opticians, as well as more specialist support in relation to sexual health and substance misuse. Young people also have access to a range of mental health professionals, including a clinical psychologist who is actively involved in helping develop a therapeutic model of working in the home. This includes providing direct support for young people, developing behaviour management strategies and interventions and providing guidance and support for staff. As a result, young people's known and emerging health needs are holistically and consistently met.

Young people are well supported to maintain links with their families and other important people when safe to do so. Face-to-face contact is sensitively encouraged, supported and facilitated to ensure that it is a positive experience for those involved. Each young person has a telephone in their bedroom, which is pre-programmed with an approved list of contacts. However, at the time of the inspection this system had not been working for a significant period of time and was causing some level of frustration for the group. This is because they had to queue to use the phone in the communal area, which limited the amount of time they had to speak to those people important to them, and restricted their recreation time.

Transitions are well supported. Staff are aware of the challenges young people face and the time-limited opportunity they have to prepare them for moving back into the community. There is a focus on this from the start of the placement, with staff making good use of risk-assessed mobility, including going out without staff. Mobility has included attending activities and visiting future placements. The manager recognises the challenges faced in identifying placements in a timely manner and is proactive in ensuring that this remains a primary focus throughout the placement. When placing authorities struggle to identify suitable arrangements, the home advocates well on behalf of the young person. When appropriate, staff continue to support young people into



their new placement, often travelling significant distances to help them settle.

The physical environment is pleasant and homely and provides young people with a very good standard of accommodation. Communal areas are brightly decorated and furnished in a way that distracts from the fact that it is a secure unit. Young people and staff appeared relaxed and at ease throughout the inspection. A number of young people were keen show their personalised bedrooms to the inspectors. An external professional reported, 'During my visit, I was shown around the whole unit and again I am impressed with how well equipped and welcoming the centre is.'

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

Young people's safety and security are given a high priority and staff are effective in their efforts to manage the complex needs and challenges of this group. Young people say that they feel safe and raise no concerns about their safety, including bullying. One young person said, 'Sometimes it is hard because we fall out with each other and it can feel like bullying. It is part of being in a place like this. Staff are good and they deal with it when it happens.'

Young people's risks and vulnerabilities are assessed at the point of admission. Detailed risk assessments are developed quickly and shared with staff to help them support young people to stay safe. These plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that the risk management strategies staff use are current and up to date.

Staff know young people well and are able to recognise changes in behaviour that may be indicators of emerging risks, including the potential to self-harm. Protective factors, such as increased staff support and higher levels of supervision, are quickly introduced when this type of behaviour is seen. A number of staff have yet to complete specific training in self-harm, which during the inspection the manager has re-categorised as mandatory rather than needs-led. The impact of this lack of training is minimal because senior staff maintain good oversight of staff practice, which is proportionate and relevant to the level of risk posed.

All staff receive safeguarding training that is kept up-to-date and supports them to respond appropriately to any concerns that arise. There have been five incidents of a child protection nature since the last inspection. These were dealt with in a timely manner and in line with local authority policies and procedures, including referral and involvement to the relevant safeguarding agencies. Detailed records are kept of all such matters, clearly stating actions taken to ensure that young people are protected.

The designated officer confirmed good links with the home, and was able to cite instances of when managers had sought advice and support. For example, assisting the staff group in handling a young person with highly complex and challenging needs. The designated officer described communication with and from the home as good. Good links and liaison are also in place with the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Managers have a good understanding of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015



and the government's 'Prevent' duty guidance. Appropriate links are in place should this be an issue for the home. The majority of staff have undertaken basic training in this area and plans are in place for the remaining staff to complete this imminently.

Staff are taking an increasingly positive and supportive approach to helping young people manage their behaviour. The rewards and incentive scheme has recently been reviewed and revised to make it more purposeful and relevant to the individual and group. This was done in consultation with young people who talk positively about the changes made. When necessary, sanctions are used to address any negative behaviour. The majority of those used are of a restorative nature and focus on enabling the young person to reflect and put right what they have done wrong. However, this is not consistently the case, with a small number of sanctions lacking purpose in terms of learning and changing behaviour.

A significant amount of time and attention has been given in recent months to improving the centre's approach to behaviour management. The majority of young people placed in the home have experienced significant trauma and struggle with attachments. Work is under way, in consultation with the psychologist, to develop more effective ways of helping young people to regulate their behaviour through a trauma-informed approach. Managers have worked to empower staff to patiently engage with young people and use approaches that minimise the need for corrective measures or enforced behaviour management interventions. Staff are getting better at recognising changes in behaviour and are intervening early by supporting the young person to understand their own behaviour, consider their options and change their response. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in how staff have successfully reduced the need for control measures, such as restraint, enforced separation and sanctions.

Staff are trained in the use of physical restraint. If an incident of restraint occurs, an analysis is completed by the manager to ensure that the use was justified and practice is appropriate. A debriefing is also carried out with the young person and staff involved. Debriefs with some young people have led to a revision of their behaviour management plans. It is impressive that the use of restrictive physical intervention has reduced in recent months, with no such measures required in May or June this year.

Managers' oversight and monitoring of restraints, single separation and sanctions have improved significantly in recent months. They routinely scrutinise behaviour management records, and when necessary use CCTV to evaluate staff practice. This information is well used to improve behaviour management practice. For example, following the review of one incident, guidance around de-escalation and the use of proximity was amended and staff were given additional training.

Single separation and managing away are appropriately used when young people are presenting a risk to themselves or others. Detailed records are kept and confirm that staff maintain appropriate levels of supervision and make every effort to reintegrate the young person back into the group. In a small number of cases, records do not indicate when one type of separation has ended and another has started. For example, when a period of directed separation turns into the young person electing to remain in their



room by choice.

Young people are prepared for outings and mobility trips as they build up trust and show that they are ready for this step. Comprehensive risk assessments are done prior to mobility taking place ensuring that the right level of support is in place. Mobility is seen as a reward for improved behaviour and cooperation. Incidents of absconding are extremely rare, with only one recent incident, when a young person absconded from escorts while at court. Staff quickly reported this to the police and maintained links with relevant people until the young person was returned to the home. At the time of the inspection, managers were in the process of pursuing the local placing authority, who had not yet fulfilled their statutory obligation to provide the young person with an independent return interview. The manager has also been in contact with the escorts, has requested a report on the management of the incident, and is keen to avoid a repeat of the situation.

There are protocols in place with the police when dealing with a young person going missing from the home. However, there is no such agreement in place for when the police are called to assist staff in the management of challenging or risky behaviour. Although this is a rare occurrence, and there is a clear process for approval to contact the local police to seek their assistance, an agreement or protocol for how best to manage such situations is not in place.

Searching practice is underpinned by clear policies and procedures that advocate a risk-led approach to searching. Young people raised no concerns regarding searching and felt that when it is done it not intrusive. Some records are maintained. However, there is no process in place for recording the most commonly used search involving a 'pat down' and use of an 'electronic wand'.

Young people are protected by a good range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and routine checks, which are designed to keep them safe. There have been a number of improvements in recent months in relation to keys, locks and doors, communication and personal alarm systems. Staff are now familiar with the revised procedures in relation to these changes. A number of biometric readers have been installed in key locations throughout the building, to improve security systems even further. The environment is well managed and suitably maintained.

A number of new staff have been recruited since the last inspection. All staff, including relief and agency staff, are subject to relevant checks prior to commencing employment at the home. Detailed recruitment records are retained at the local authority head office. Managers keep a separate record that references these main files, showing that the checks required by regulations are completed prior to any individuals starting work at the home. This ensures, as far as possible, that the right people are employed to work with vulnerable children and young people.

#### The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is currently being run by an interim manager. These arrangements were made



to cover for the absence of the registered manager, who has now resigned from his post. The interim manager has significant experience of working with vulnerable and challenging young people and is adapting these skills effectively to working in a secure setting. She is qualified and is in the process of registering with Ofsted, having resigned her registration for the home that she was managing prior to coming into post in April 2017.

The manager is extremely child-focused and demonstrates a strong commitment to providing young people with the best care possible. She has made a conscious effort to change the overall ethos of the home and is in the process of successfully introducing a trauma-informed approach. Staff have embraced this concept and are using it well to care for and support the young people effectively, especially at times when they are at their most vulnerable and challenging. One member of staff said, 'This approach has really made me think about what I am doing. By looking beyond the behaviour and trying to understand the reasons for it, we can better deal with the cause rather than simply reacting. This is why incidents of physical intervention have reduced so much.'

The manager is well supported by the local authority and is aspirational in her vision for this service. She works closely with the head of education to promote an agenda of continuous improvement across the centre as a whole. Progress is regularly measured against the targets that are outlined in the comprehensively detailed 'service and improvement plan', and good progress is noted in relation to all areas of development.

Quality assurance is now an integral part of all aspects of the home's operation. While the manager maintains overall oversight, the three deputy managers have specific areas of responsibility, which they are expected to monitor and develop. This has led to continued improvements in the delivery of residential care, care planning and security.

Internal processes are strengthened further by the scrutiny provided by the independent visitor, who assesses staff practice and the overall performance of the home each month. The views and opinions of young people are integral to this process and are given the utmost importance in terms of whether they are safeguarded effectively and their well-being is promoted. Feedback from young people is generally positive, as is that gathered from parents and professionals. The manager is quick to take action to address any concerns raised or noted shortfalls, which tend to be relatively minor in nature.

The manager has taken action to address the requirements and recommendation from the interim inspection in February 2017. Oversight of behaviour management records has improved and full and complete records are now being maintained in relation to incidents of restraint and single separation. The opportunities for young people to express their views and opinions have significantly improved and young people talk positively about their views and opinions being heard.

A successful recruitment drive has led to a significant reduction in the use of agency staff, compared to that seen at the full inspection in July 2016. This, combined with the high ratio of staff to young people, means that each young person receives good levels of individual support on a daily basis. Staff talk proudly about their work and take a

10



great deal of pride in how they have contributed to each young person's progress. This was evident throughout the inspection, but particularly during an assembly that was held to celebrate the achievements of a young person that was leaving on that day. The young person was praised by staff and young people alike, and left the home with memorabilia that will serve as a reminder about the positive experiences that she has had.

Staff morale is high and the team is highly motivated in its work. Much of this is attributed to the new manager, who was described as inspirational and innovative by one member of staff. Staff confirm that they receive good-quality supervision and are appreciative of the management team's open-door policy. The large majority of staff are qualified, and good arrangements and support are in place for those who are not qualified to undertake a relevant qualification.

A good range of mandatory and needs-led training opportunities are available to staff as part of the local authority training programme. Responsibility for maintaining oversight of the training programme within the home has been recently allocated to one of the deputy managers who is in the process of auditing all staff training. According to her records, there are a number of staff who need to complete or refresh mandatory training in behaviour management, the 'Prevent' duty/radicalisation and self-harm, which is now categorised as mandatory as opposed to needs-led.

Young people benefit from a wealth of resources, which are routinely available. This is complemented by strong working partnerships with a range of care, health and safeguarding professionals and agencies. These have been used effectively to ensure that young people gain maximum benefit from their time spent in their home and that a collaborative approach is taken to planning and managing their care.

#### Outcomes in education and related learning activities: outstanding

Managers, teachers and teaching assistants have generated, in cooperation with the young people, a constructive and purposeful environment within education. Staff are optimistic for the young people and develop their potential extremely well. Young people engage fully in learning, and in the life of the school, and articulate well the benefits they derive. The vast majority have a wholehearted commitment to their education and enjoy participating in the variety of activities available to them. They develop a positive attitude towards their current and future learning. Behaviour is very good and movement around school is calm and ordered. Attendance is good.

Young people make rapid progress over a short period in their English, mathematical, reading and spelling skills. Teachers place significant emphasis on their emotional, personal and social development. As a consequence, young people's self-esteem is increased and they display confidence and maturity in their dealings with staff, visitors and peers.

In art, the well-planned sessions enable young people to improve their ability to concentrate and apply themselves. In physical education, they engage enthusiastically,



completing challenging fitness routines. Practical tasks undertaken in science were commented upon favourably by young people. Across all subjects seen, young people gain good and applicable information and communication technology (ICT) and research skills, which prepare them well for their future studies. They make very good progress in their reading and comprehension, are enthusiastic and willing to read aloud, and ask pertinent questions in class.

There are significant strengths in the quality of teaching. Teachers explain tasks clearly and ensure that they can be completed in the allocated time, meaning that young people have a sense of fulfilment. Teachers adapt lessons seamlessly to meet the educational needs of individual young people by, for example, checking their pronunciation or having them work out mental calculations. Effective teaching in English and in mathematics helps reduce young people's fear of undertaking assessment activities. Learning support assistants are highly effective in ensuring that young people understand concepts fully before recording them. All staff apply boundaries and expectations gently but firmly.

Young people produce work of a high standard with their portfolios demonstrating improvements over time in their knowledge, research skills and understanding of diversity.

Young people's progress is well tracked and monitored. Staff maintain comprehensive records demonstrating the progress young people make and take effective action should they fall behind. Young people benefit from clear and readily understood personal targets in literacy, numeracy and ICT, which are communicated well to teachers, who interpret and apply them effectively at subject level. The targets are reviewed termly with young people routinely adding personal and often insightful comments on their progress in their termly reports.

Behaviour is very good and staff apply effective behaviour management strategies. Resources are outstanding and classroom displays celebrate young people's work well. Young people take much pride in their work. All have laptop computers and access to pre-selected internet sites, which support their learning well. Teachers are confident in their use of interactive media in the classroom, which enlivens lessons.

Young people experience a curriculum that combines core provision of English and mathematics with a rich range of other relevant learning opportunities. An elective element enables young people to exercise personal choice and a personalised reading and spelling programme ensures that they accelerate these skills. Themed weeks and assembly topics are informed by young people's needs and interests. There is regular access to a vocational programme, including health and beauty and design technology. Celebration of young people's success is embedded into the life of the school. Overall, the curriculum supports young people's learning very well.

Education is managed very effectively. The head of education's self-assessment is accurate and the school improvement plan sets out in detail the steps managers have taken to address recommendations from the previous inspection, with timescales and supporting evidence. The head of education adopts effective strategies to enable young

12



people who are reluctant to attend education to receive support on the residential units, but also to coax them gently back to the classroom. Managers convey well to these young people the social and educational benefits of returning to education. More generally, managers ensure that young people's voices are heard and that they are able to influence, for example, the curriculum.

The head of education and registered centre manager cooperate well and to the benefit of young people and staff. They work in tandem to provide an expanding programme of learning outside of school activities and at holiday time. Education and care staff work jointly on projects such as the Rainbow Award, which raises awareness of equality issues. A homework club has been introduced recently, which some choose to attend.

The education department is supported well by the academy trust of which it is a part. Through the trust, the education department has good access to specialist teachers who are used effectively to provide a range of enrichment, holiday-time activities and GCSE examinations. The trust's governors receive periodic performance reports from the head of education. However, these do not include a clear summary and overview of young people's progress and achievement.

The head of education strives to ensure that there are effective links with referring local authorities in order that young people, most of whom are children looked after, settle well into education and move to a positive destination. Placing authorities are not all ensuring that personal education plans are provided in a timely manner in order that young people's education avoids further disruption. Although there is evidence that these are being chased by education managers, there is no process for formally challenging the placing authorities in respect of their failings.

### 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'.

13



### Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** SC031490

Provision sub-type: Secure unit

Registered provider address: County Hall, St. Anne's Crescent, LEWES, East Sussex

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Responsible individual: Elizabeth Rugg

Registered manager: Helen Simmons

# **Inspectors**

Paul Scott, social care inspector Tony Gallagher, social care inspector Natalie Burton, social care inspector Linda Christie, social care inspector



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