

1236832

Registered provider: Benjamin UK Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This private children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children aged between 11 and 18 years. The home looks after children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 December 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

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

Date of last inspection: 12 December 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The children are positive about their experience of living at the home. They feel listened to and well supported.

- The children all speak positively about the staff team. The children feel cared for and say that the staff spend good-quality time with them.
- The children make good progress in all areas of their development from their starting points because they live at this home.
- The children are supported well in regard to family contact. The staff have an acute awareness of the children's emotional needs during these times.
- The staff have created an exceptionally positive home environment.
- The registered manager provides strong and effective leadership.
- The manager and staff have a clear understanding of the home's ethos; they work well together to meet the needs of the children.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The staff do not all receive regular supervision in line with the organisation's policy.
- When the children go missing from the home, return interviews are not consistently offered.
- The manager has not informed Ofsted of the changes made to the statement of purpose.
- The home accepts emergency admissions, although the staff have not received training and skills to care for children whose full background history is not known.
- The routines in the home do not fully support all of the children to attend to educational provision.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/12/2016	Full	Good
05/09/2016	Full	Inadequate

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) 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(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(b))	31/01/2018
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(b))	31/01/2018

Recommendations

- When children placed at the home are not participating in education because they have been excluded or are not on a school roll for some other reason, the registered person and staff must work closely with the placing authority so that the child is supported and enabled to resume full-time education as soon as possible. In particular, in the interim, the child should be supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the children's regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- Ensure that staffing structures promote continuity of care from the children's perspective. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.15)

In particular, provide a stable staff team to promote continuity of care.
- Homes set up for emergency placements as indicated and detailed in their statement of purpose will require sufficient staff trained and skilled in the admission and care of children, where they full background may not be known. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.6)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

All of the children are making good progress from their starting points since moving to the home. This is because staff spend quality time with them. They build effective relationships with the children quickly and fully support the children's individual needs. The staff fully meet and embrace the children's cultural, religious and personal identity needs. The children make progress in education, engagement with professionals and independence skills. Risk-taking behaviours, such as the missing-from-home incidents that were prevalent before admission, significantly reduce. The children recognise the progress that they make because they receive verbal praise. In addition, the implementation of the home's effective diversion programme rewards the children's progress and achievements.

The children all say that they have good relationships with the staff. While not all of the children want to be in residential care, one child said that if she is in care then this is the best place to be. The children speak positively about the staff and enjoy spending time with them. They feel that the staff genuinely care about them and that they help and support them. The staff provide the children with a warm, caring and nurturing environment. A social worker said, 'Overall, she [child] has been doing really well there. She is settled, stable and has built good relationships there [at the home] that are vital. She is so positive and happy, and she wants to mark her six months [living there] with a party.'

The staff invest time in seeking the children's views. The children attend weekly community meetings during which they discuss any issues and activities that they would like to attend, complete their weekly planners and voice their menu choices. The children engage well in these meetings. Their views are taken on board. For example, a member of staff did not move to an alternative home within the organisation due to the children's request for the staff member to stay. The children engage in key-work sessions, receive support and advice and reflect on their behaviour and contact arrangements. The children are routinely consulted about their care and the running of the home. At their own request, the children are arranging a Christmas party. They have designed their own invitations, decided who they would like to attend, and planned the food and activities that will be put on. This demonstrates that the children's views are listened to. The children know how to make a complaint, and these are resolved quickly and effectively.

The children make progress in their emotional and physical health. All of the children are engaging with the organisation's therapist, who spends weekly, quality time at the home building relationships with the children. Some of the children identify the therapist as a professional with whom they would talk about a concern. The children begin to see the therapist as part of the staff team providing their care. She engages with all of the children, completing an initial assessment over a specific period of time. This evolves to undertaking individual and group-structured therapy sessions. The therapist meets with

the staff team monthly to discuss the presenting needs of the children and helps the staff to identify alternative strategies and specific individual targets. The staff undertake therapeutic key-work sessions with the children, to complement the work being undertaken by the therapist or to discuss specific areas of need. This engagement improves the children's emotional resilience. The staff promote healthier lifestyles. The majority of the children do not smoke and those who do are encouraged to stop. The children eat healthy, home-cooked food and engage in physical activities. This supports the children's good health.

The children are supported to attend education. Some children who have not attended education prior to coming to the home now engage. When required, they are able to attend the organisation's registered education provision. Other children attend college. However, although children are engaged during the day, for those children who do not have a college placement organised due to their recent admission or change in need, the staff do not ensure that this time is structured. As a result, the children may find the transition back to an education timetable more challenging.

The staff actively support and encourage the children to take part in a wide range of activities. These activities are a significant part of the ethos of the home. The activities include group or individual trips to the cinema, dancing to music, bowling, visiting local places of interest, trips to London and physical activities. The staff are motivated and join in with the children. The children engage in opportunities based on their personal interests such as horse-riding and playing in a female football team. These activities enhance the children's personal and social development.

The children's families and significant others are encouraged to visit the home and are made welcome when they come. The staff are acutely aware of the emotional needs of the children during this time and support them well when contact ends. The staff help through talking to the children about how they feel, providing transport, supervising contact when required and arranging activities for the children and their families to engage in together. This helps the children to maintain their identity and to feel valued while sustaining relationships.

The children make progress in developing their independence skills in line with their age and abilities. Some of the children enjoy cooking evening meals for everyone, with the help and support of the staff if needed. The children develop budgeting skills through shopping with the staff for food, clothes and essentials. The children develop domestic and self-care skills that they are very proud of. These skills will continue to develop and carry them into adulthood and increase their confidence.

The children's home is an extremely welcoming environment, with exquisite decor and furnishings. The children's bedrooms are thoughtfully personalised and provide a relaxing and individual private space for each child. The communal areas are equally inviting. The children see this house as their home; they are comfortable and at ease, and use all of the communal rooms to spend time with each other and the staff. The external gardens are generous, providing the children with space to play and an area to de-escalate their frustrations. The children at this home benefit from an exceptional

living environment.

There have been 12 admissions and eight discharges from the home since the last inspection in December 2016. The discharges include planned moves to other homes within the organisation, children moving to semi-independent living placements and family reunification. However, there are also unplanned placement endings due to incidents at the home. The home have accepted emergency placements without a full background history for the children being provided by the placing authorities. The staff do not have the training or skills to meet the needs of emergency placements when the children's background is unknown. Recent admissions to the home have been well planned. This is because the manager and the therapist have discussed the child's history, identified the child's needs and agreed strategies. One child visited the home prior to admission. This enabled the other children and the staff to meet the child and start building a relationship before admission. The child was able to ask questions before the admission and valued this opportunity. This approach helps to support the child's smooth transition into the home.

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

The children say that they feel safe at the home and can identify individual staff with whom they can talk if they have a concern. The staff receive safeguarding training, and a detailed policy informs the staff of the action to take if a safeguarding concern arises. The staff implement these actions effectively to ensure that external agencies are aware of concerns and apply the identified strategies to safeguard the children.

The manager has updated the location assessment with risks in the immediate location of the home. The staff implement the strategies identified, such as ensuring that the electronic gate is closed, to reduce the risks to the children. In addition, the manager updates additional information from external agencies provided, and following incidents with children. This practice reduces potential known risks to the children.

There have been incidents of bullying resulting in children being moved from the home. Although the management team and staff implemented the bullying policy and took action following a significant incident, the placements were unable to continue. The children feel that the staff could not have done more to protect them, and felt fully supported. Since this incident, there have been no further bullying incidents at the home.

Planned admissions to the home are considered very carefully. The matching process includes consultation with the home's therapist by the manager to gain more information regarding placements. This approach has resulted in effective matching of placements, and children who are comfortable and happy living together.

No children currently go missing. This is because the children are settled, spend quality time with the staff and are kept active at the home. This is significant progress for some children and reduces the risks to themselves. However, some children who were previously placed at the home did, on occasions, go missing. The staff implemented the

missing-from-home policies and searched for the children, which generally resulted in the children returning to the home swiftly. However, not all of the children received an independent return interview to enable them to speak with a professional from outside the home about their reasons for going missing.

Some of the children placed at the home are assessed as being at risk of child sexual exploitation. The staff receive training and implement effective strategies and guidance, which has resulted in no current concerns of the children being exploited. In addition, the staff and therapist undertake work with the children regarding child sexual exploitation and healthy relationships. This awareness helps the children to develop a better understanding of the risks.

The staff implement the home's behaviour management policy and the organisation's diversion programme, which promotes positive behaviour. Child-focused meetings with the staff and organisation's therapist assist staff in understanding the impact of behaviour on the children and ways in which they can support them. The staff have a good knowledge of the home's diversion programme, and the children are engaging with this well. Physical intervention is rarely used. For most children, challenging behaviour, aggression and verbal abuse incidents decrease. This supports the children to develop self-esteem and respect for others.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has been in post since May 2017. She has over 28 years of experience of working with children, and is enrolled on a level 5 diploma in leadership and management.

The manager has made significant changes to the day-to-day experiences of the children. As a result, there have been a number of changes in the staff team, with staff leaving the service or moving to other homes within the organisation. At times, this has been due to some challenging behaviours from children, or other homes within the organisation requiring that particular staff member's skills. For other staff, the role was not for them. Therefore, the children have not received care from a consistent, stable staff team, although the children now receive care and support from a newly formed, experienced and diverse staff team. These staff are committed, dedicated and motivated in their work.

The manager works hard to support the staff and children. The staff speak positively about the manager and the level of support that they receive. A member of staff described the manager as the 'strength of the home'. Another staff member said, 'The manager holds the house together, and makes it work like no one else has before.'

The staff access a range of training opportunities, which they report are beneficial for their roles. Newly appointed staff confirm that they are currently completing their induction and have found this to be very useful, well planned and supportive. They always work with an experienced member of staff who enables them to develop their knowledge and skills. This practice ensures that the children are cared for by competent

staff. A number of staff are working towards their diploma level 3 qualification, and are in line to complete within timescales. The staff who have been working for the organisation for more than two years have completed their diploma level 3 qualification or have an equivalent.

The staff attend team meetings to communicate information and reinforce expectations of the team to support the children to succeed. Staff receive supervisions, which they report to be useful and reflective. However, not all of the staff, including the manager, receive these supervisions monthly in line with the organisation's policies. This fails to ensure that managers provide the staff with regular formal opportunities to discuss concerns, reflect on individual practice and discuss their own personal development.

The manager has met two of the three requirements made at the last inspection. The staff motivate and support the children to engage in their hobbies and interests. The manager has implemented an agreement that the staff sign to demonstrate that they understand the importance of keeping the keys to the home and their personal mobile phones safe. This practice reduces the risk of potential incidents. The children are actively encouraged to develop their independence skills, to support their emotional and mental resilience in preparation for their move to independent living. The staff keep memorabilia, such as photographs of days out and special events, and other items to build positive memories. A recommendation regarding staff supervision has not been met and, therefore, is now a requirement.

The managerial internal monitoring is sufficient. External monthly visits highlight shortfalls and act as a strong mechanism to identify actions to improve the services in the interests of the children. The manager has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the home. Therefore, she is able to demonstrate the impact that living at the home is having on the children, with improvements being continually driven forward.

The staff and managers have a sound understanding of the concept of the home. They can demonstrate how they implement this with the children and the effectiveness of the approach. The manager has recently updated the home's statement of purpose, to include the recent staff changes. However, the manager failed to send the document to Ofsted. Although this is a breach of regulation, there is minimal impact on the children.

The relationships that the manager and staff have with external professionals are positive. A social worker said, 'The communication is good; always open about what is happening. They are always able to answer my queries.'

The manager informs Ofsted and other relevant agencies of significant events that occur at the home. This enables Ofsted to monitor the events and ensure that the manager takes the action required.

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 differences 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 whom 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: 1236832

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Benjamin UK Ltd

Registered provider address: Church Farm House, Station Road, Aldbury, Tring HP23 5RS

Responsible individual: Claudette Deysel

Registered manager: Karen McNeil

Inspector

Natalie Burton, social care inspector

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