

# SC046276

Registered provider: Devon 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. The Department for Education approves it to restrict young people's liberty. Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities. The children's home can accommodate up to 12 young people who are aged between 10 and 17 years and accommodated under 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:** 21 to 22 November 2017 and 23 to 24 January 2018

**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**

Outcomes in education and related learning activities **good**

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

**Date of last inspection:** 28 February 2017

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

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- A cohesive and motivated leadership team manages the home effectively. Leaders work hard to provide children with good-quality of care.
- Leaders and managers prioritise the young people's needs, safety and well-being. Leaders, managers and staff advocate well for the young people. Staff have received training that provides them with the skills to enable them to develop strong and trusting relationships with the young people. This enables the young people to reflect on their past, which in turn has helped them to make positive changes in their lives.
- Young people benefit from their time in the home. Leaders and managers are ambitious for young people. They want them to do well and they help them to develop individual skills, talents and interests. As a result, young people's self-esteem and confidence develop positively.
- Young people receive excellent support when they move in and when they leave the home. Support continues when young people have moved on from the home, increasing their chances of success in their next home.
- Staff carefully assess young people's needs and review their progress. Staff devise good-quality care plans and risk management plans.
- Feedback from young people is consistently positive. Parents and carers, relatives and professionals recognise and value the level of care and support provided by staff. Leaders, managers and staff maintain strong and effective partnerships with families, professionals and other agencies.
- The design and implementation of the education curriculum is a strength. This supports learners to engage in lessons well.
- Teachers build a good rapport with young people and, in the main, attendance is good. Progress and achievements in core subjects continue to be good, in addition to the development of young people's personal and social skills.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Not all records are comprehensively detailed or always well maintained. This relates specifically to records of single separation, searches and the administration of medication.
- Leaders and managers have not escalated a concern to senior leaders in a placing authority when a return home interview was not carried out.
- The planning, tracking and measuring of the development of personal and social skills during work placements are not sufficiently effective. The development of personal and social skills is not well planned or captured in learning plans.

- Some parts of the living areas are not as warm, welcoming and homely as others.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
27/09/2016	Full	Good
12/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
06/10/2015	Full	Good

# 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 ensure a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child (Regulation 23(2)(c)). In particular, ensure that each child's record is kept up to date and is in line with the organisation's policy.	13/03/2018

## Recommendations

- A record should be made and kept of all uses of single separation in secure children's homes (Regulation 17 of The Children (Secure Accommodation) Regulations 1991) ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.64). This is with particular reference to ensuring that single separation records include a comprehensive record of staff observations during the period during which the young person is separated.
- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30). This is with specific reference to ensuring that managers escalate their concerns when a placing authority does not carry out the return home interview.
- Searching may be necessary where 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 17, paragraph 3.20). This is with specific reference to ensuring that search records include the reason for the search and whether anything was found as a result of the search.
- Ensure that the young people are provided with a nurturing environment that is welcoming ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7). This specifically relates to the decoration of the communal areas in the home.
- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 9.60).

- Ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18). In particular, teachers should agree and plan with the young person the personal and social skills they need to develop during their work placements, ensuring that young people have the opportunity to improve these while at the placement. The development of these agreed personal and social skills should be measured by teachers to ensure that young people make good gains in these areas.

## Inspection judgements

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

Young people make good progress in all aspects of their development. The staff recognise and celebrate progress and achievements, with an awareness of the need for a measured approach with some young people. The staff team is motivated and provides young people with individualised care and support. The quality of care significantly contributes towards young people's positive experiences in this home and the good progress that they make. Young people recognise the positive effect that living here has on them. They spoke favourably about the staff, and with great enthusiasm regarding their key workers. Young people value the quality time the staff team spends with them.

Trusting relationships have developed between staff and young people. The staff team's approach is nurturing, calm and focused, providing positive role models and clear consistent boundaries. The management team matches the young people on the two separate units effectively. If concerns do arise between young people, staff swiftly resolve them using a restorative approach. This approach enables the young people to develop strategies and build positive relationships together.

Young people's self-confidence and ability to express their views increases due to plenty of opportunities to have their voices heard. Recent consultation meetings include the young people's involvement in developing a new young person's guide. In addition, young people are actively involved in the recruitment of staff to the home. Consequently, they can influence the running of the home in a meaningful way.

Care planning systems are effective and detailed. Regular multi-disciplinary meetings ensure that the young people's needs are addressed. Young people are fully aware of their care plans and risk assessments, and their comments and personal objectives are incorporated into these documents. The multi-disciplinary team meets weekly to review the progress that young people are making. A change from paper to electronic recording has helped this review process and enables patterns to be identified and additional support to young people to be provided when required.

Young people receive good healthcare, provided by a multi-agency team. This includes care staff, teachers, a nurse and general practitioners. In addition, young people have

access to on-site child and adolescent mental health services, a clinical psychologist, a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist and a family therapist. Young people engage well with mental health practitioners, who adapt their intervention levels and methods to meet the individual needs. The mental health team works with the staff team to complete the assessments of young people. These assessments help the staff to understand the behaviours presented and provide them with individualised programmes of care and intervention.

Not all medication records are well maintained. The audit undertaken of medication records had not identified the errors or discrepancies noted at this inspection.

All multi-disciplinary professionals work together to implement the therapeutic model of the home. A member of staff said, 'It has helped. We have a better understanding as a whole. We have a better dialogue with the young people and are able to de-escalate situations.' This practice promotes the young people's confidence, builds resilience and self-esteem, and enables them to develop strategies to manage their emotions and feelings. As a result, high-risk behaviours reduce.

Young people enjoy nutritious food and a healthy diet is promoted. The home caters for individual dietary needs and preferences. All young people said that the food is good. Health promotion is strong, with a range of services provided to encourage the young people to change to a healthier lifestyle. For example, they receive advice and guidance on fitness, sexual health and substance and alcohol misuse. As a result, the young people's physical, emotional and psychological well-being improves significantly during their time at the home.

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

Young people said that they feel safe and that they are comfortable talking to staff about any worries or concerns that they may have. They did not raise any concerns with the inspectors about their safety and confirmed that bullying is not an issue for them.

The records pertaining to bullying and discriminatory behaviour have been improved and now provide a detailed account of how staff have managed these types of incident. Staff help young people to develop an understanding of how their behaviour affects others. Great importance is placed on repairing relationships and promoting a culture of consideration, tolerance and respect. This approach has been used effectively to address a number of challenges brought about by group dynamics and communal living, and has contributed to what is currently a very settled unit.

Vulnerability and the risk of suicide and self-harm are comprehensively assessed when young people come to live at the home. This information is used to develop individual risk management plans. These plans are continuously reviewed in partnership with mental health professionals. Information is shared routinely between staff who consistently implement good strategies designed to keep young people safe. Over time, young people's risk-taking behaviour reduces because they have been supported to

develop safer ways of managing their emotions. This has, on occasions, included the use of the high-dependency facility, which has now been running for over 12 months. This is an excellent resource that has been used well to provide intense one-to-one support, away from the communal accommodation, for those young people who are not ready for group living.

Young people are encouraged to develop an understanding of the reason that they are in secure accommodation. Staff take every opportunity to engage them in reflective conversations about high-risk behaviours when in the community, including the risks of sexual exploitation. These discussions are underpinned by warm and trusting relationships that enable the young people to share their experiences openly. Care staff help young people to develop strategies to keep them safe. Consequently, young people are developing a better understanding of their own risks and vulnerabilities, the aim of which is to help them to make better choices when they leave.

Staff realise the importance of testing each young person's learning in preparation for life outside of the centre and ensure that they are provided with risk-assessed opportunities to facilitate this. Young people are exceedingly positive about the opportunities for having independent time outside of the home (mobility). Given the number of independent mobility sessions that are taking place, it is testament to staff and a positive endorsement of the home that 100% of them have been successful.

Security arrangements are generally good within the centre. Staff practice is underpinned by a range of standard operating procedures, which are designed to maintain the integrity of the secure environment. Breaches to security are rare, and there has been only one since the last inspection. Staff were quick to respond to a young person who went missing from within the secure perimeter. An immediate search of the area was completed and the police were notified immediately, in line with the agreed reporting protocols. This resulted in the young person's safe return after a brief period of being missing. Staff ensured that the placing authority was kept informed, and requests for them to fulfil their statutory duty to offer an independent return interview were made. However, at the time of the inspection, this had not taken place, and managers had not escalated this to senior leaders in the placing authority. The manager has since undertaken an assessment of the area and has taken action to minimise the risk of reoccurrence.

All searches are risk led, ensuring that young people are not subjected to unnecessary searching. Records of each type of search are maintained, and the majority are 'pat down' and/or the use of 'wand', usually following independence sessions when the young person has been out of sight of staff. However, some records were not sufficiently detailed and did not include information such as the rationale for searching or the outcome of the search.

Staff are good at recognising the factors that lead to a deterioration in young people's behaviour. They work hard to manage these effectively and take a restorative approach when addressing negative behaviour. For example, they take time to understand each young person's perspective while encouraging them to reflect on their behaviour and

consider how it affects others. This approach has been highly effective in promoting a culture of mutual respect and has contributed significantly to reducing the need for enforced consequences such as sanctions, single separation and restraint. Positive behaviour is reinforced through clear expectations, positive relationships and the use of rewards.

All staff are trained in the use of physical restraint, which is only used when all other measures have been exhausted. Staff make good use of positive relationships and de-escalation techniques when managing conflict and challenging behaviour. Records indicate a significant reduction in the use of physical restraint with 42 incidents of full restraint in the last 12 months, compared with 74 during the previous year. All incidents of restraint are reviewed using closed-circuit television (CCTV), and findings are discussed as part of the weekly senior management meeting. This meeting is highly challenging of staff practice with a keen focus on improving and developing skills, minimising restraint and embedding a culture of care and respect.

Single separation and managing away from the group are only used when necessary to ensure the safety of young people and staff. Determined efforts are made to re-integrate young people into the group as quickly as possible, with all periods away being for relatively short periods of time. Records show clearly that the threshold for separation and managing away has been met. However, since transferring to electronic recording there are some recording shortfalls. For example, a record of staff observations should be uploaded to the system, but in many instances this had not taken place. Managers are aware of this shortfall and were in the process of addressing this with the staff team before the inspection commenced.

The home's 'Safeguarding and safer recruitment policy, procedures and guidelines' has been revised since the last inspection. This is a comprehensive document, which clearly outlines the safeguarding roles and responsibilities of managers and staff. It includes the criteria for referral, as determined by the local authority safeguarding board, and routes to external agencies such as the local authority designated officer. Since the last full inspection, there have been nine allegations and 55 child protection referrals. The latter reflects the matters of concern that, no matter how small, are managed effectively and in the best interests of the young people. Staff ensure that young people are kept informed of matters relating to them, although the otherwise detailed safeguarding records do not always reflect that they have been informed of the outcome.

A number of staff have been recruited since the last inspection. Prospective staff undergo a rigorous process which includes thorough vetting and a face-to-face interview with young people. Some of the young people were involved in the recruitment of staff during the inspection. One said, 'It is a good thing that we are involved because we should have a say in who gets to know about our lives. We are the ones who have to spend time with them.'

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

Since the previous inspection in February 2017, the centre has undergone extensive building works. This includes a new front of house, admissions entry, staff offices and storage facilities. The management of this redevelopment has been exceptional, with disruption to young people and staff kept to a minimum. Some parts of the living areas used by young people look tired and worn and are not as homely as the refurbished areas. However, young people's bedrooms are personalised and provide them with a pleasant individual space. Young people are involved in the proposed refurbishment of the living areas.

A unified and motivated leadership and management team manages this home effectively. The team is enthusiastic and child centred, and leads by example. Leaders and managers are ambitious and determined to improve the experiences and opportunities for young people. As a result, all young people make good progress from their starting points during the time that they spend in the home.

Leaders and managers have taken suitable actions to address the one requirement and three recommendations raised at the previous inspection in February 2017. The safeguarding policy now sets out clear procedures for referring child protection concerns. New staff have started work, thereby significantly reducing the need to commission agency and bank staff.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas that can be improved. Leaders and managers complete a wide range of monitoring activities that gives them a comprehensive overview of the quality of care provided. The independent visitor visits regularly and produces a thorough and evaluative report of the performance of the home. The manager completes a bi-annual assessment of the home. The reports completed following the manager's assessment are detailed and document emerging themes, patterns and trends. The manager's evaluation clearly sets out the strengths of the service and areas for development. The manager has recognised weaknesses in some records and is taking action to improve them.

Since the previous inspection, the manager has reviewed the recruitment and selection procedure. Seventeen new staff members have been selected and appointed after being assessed as having the required skills, experience and resilience to provide safe, good-quality care. Staff spoke positively about managers. They said that they are supportive and available and always lead by example. Staff said that they are empowered to take ownership of their work and that their views are listened to and considered.

All staff, including the registered manager, now receive regular reflective supervision, when their practice is assessed and reviewed. When practice concerns are identified, action plans are implemented that help members of staff to improve and develop their skills and practice. This is an area of improvement since the previous inspection. Staff said that the training opportunities are excellent. All members of staff have received training in safeguarding and key areas such as understanding sexual abuse, identifying

radicalisation, first aid and understanding attachment. Leaders and managers review the training programme regularly to provide staff with up-to-date information that enhances their knowledge and understanding. This then enables staff to provide effective care and support to the young people.

Communication and joint working with healthcare professionals and supporting agencies is a strength of this leadership and management team. Good use is made of daily handovers and team meetings that focus on the needs of the young people. This means that staff are up to date and can respond effectively to the current needs, behaviours and risks of each young person. In addition, it helps staff to provide families and social workers with accurate information about the progress and achievements of their child.

### **Outcomes in education and related learning activities: good**

The education management team has been strengthened by the introduction of a new headteacher, who contributes a great deal of experience and knowledge of school settings. Leaders and managers have used the identified actions for improvement at the previous inspection to inform the education development plan, and much improvement has taken place since then. For example, the analysis of data to monitor and manage the progress that young people make has greatly improved and, as a consequence, the progress made in mathematics has risen since last year.

Leaders and managers have an ambitious and determined vision for what every young person attending education at the home can achieve. This is translated in the good managerial decisions they have taken with regards to curriculum planning. Managers have introduced entry-level qualifications and small award qualifications as a way of ensuring that young people progress well and leave the home with a qualification in English and mathematics.

The way in which the curriculum is delivered is a strength of the education provision. Managers and teachers adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of young people very well. There is good balance between the core subjects such as English and mathematics and the vocational subjects. Lessons are often changed in order to help young people to engage, which is particularly helpful to those who have not had good prior attendance at school. In one case, managers coordinated exceptionally good support for a young person who undertook law lessons with a private tutor, helping him to develop his further education and career aspirations. Young people continue to have access to a very good range of enrichment activities where they develop personal skills such as resilience and tolerance.

Managers conduct an appropriate range of observations of teaching and learning, which allows them to know any strengths and weaknesses in teaching practice. The focus of these observations has improved since the previous inspection, and there is now a greater emphasis on measuring the progress that young people make in lessons. However, in a very few instances, these observations do not centre sufficiently on measuring the young people's development of English and mathematics skills across all

subjects in the curriculum.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to be good. Teachers are experienced and resourceful, and this enables them to change activities seamlessly during lessons to secure the engagement and attention of young people. The most skilful teachers engage young people in productive learning activities even when they do not want to take part.

When young people start in education, an extensive and useful initial assessment of their needs is undertaken. This includes their own self-assessment, across a wide range of elements, from attendance and prior achievement to vocational interests and personal strengths. This initial assessment informs individual planning of learning well. Individual learning plans contain very clear, specific, short-term and long-term targets centred on developing the course subjects. For example, in mathematics, young people have particularly clear and helpful learning objectives. Furthermore, plans include the appropriate teaching strategies to support teachers to help all young people to learn.

Teachers regularly review and assess the learning plans. This helps leaders and managers to obtain an accurate picture of attendance and achievement. However, the development of personal and social skills is not well planned or captured in these plans.

Support assistants contribute well towards ensuring that young people complete tasks successfully. As a result, many young people gain the confidence to work well independently and they make good knowledge gains in class. They apply themselves to tasks very well and most are keen to progress.

Teachers build good rapport with young people very quickly, which helps them to feel settled in the learning environment very quickly. In a very small minority of lessons, the embedding and further development of English and mathematics skills require further improvement. Spelling errors made by young people are not always corrected by teachers and they do not reinforce the importance of developing the necessary written language skills to support young people to use less colloquial terminology. In the better cases, young people receive good written feedback which gives them ideas on how to improve.

Teachers establish clear ground rules on behaviour and attitudes to learning and, since the previous inspection, they have improved their consistency in applying these. Young people are clear about how the reward points system works and how this links to good behaviour and attitude to learning. The vast majority of young people display good behaviour while taking part in education activities. They cope well with the occasional instances when other young people behave less well, and they remain calm and productive.

The home maximises the available opportunities to involve the young people in decision-making, and during the inspection young people were very well engaged in interviewing prospective education staff. During these interviews, they developed their empathy and social skills and began thinking about how to plan their own job

interviews in the future.

The range of work placements is particularly good and well planned to meet the needs and interests of young people. As a consequence, the vast majority of young people have access to a good variety of placements, which they enjoy greatly. Young people receive frequent feedback from their placement supervisors highlighting the progress they are making. Those in work placements, in addition, receive a useful reference from the employer, which details some of the skills developed at the placement. However, the planning, tracking and measuring of the development of personal and social skills during work placements are not sufficiently effective.

Teachers pay very good attention to health and safety aspects during learning, including the completion of risk assessments. They place good emphasis on the young people's personal well-being, for example on young people's skin cleansing routines during a beauty lesson and on the links between food and brain activity. In one lesson, a teacher highlighted well the social benefits of playing sports.

The promotion of safe internet use is particularly well developed in the education provision. Young people receive detailed, practical information on the risks associated with the use of social media, for example, and they learn to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Appropriate internet search filters ensure that the young people cannot gain access to inappropriate material while using the computers at the home.

The education team provides appropriate careers advice to young people, including specialist advice when necessary. The team liaises well with other staff in the home to plan transitions. Transition arrangements are effective, and the team works with placing authorities to source future school placements.

Young people's attendance at education in the current academic year is improved and is good. Furthermore, the number of hours lost in education due to young people attending legal meetings improved last year.

The achievement of qualifications in English and mathematics considerably increased last year. Young people staying at the home for more than six weeks, in the current academic year, continue to make good progress in these subjects. As a result, the positive trend of achievement in English and mathematics qualifications remains.

The average length of stay of young people in the home for the current academic year has reduced to half of that in the previous year. This means that young people now stay for very short periods of time. Despite this challenge, managers and teachers are successful at ensuring that young people attend education, and that they progress and achieve well.

## **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:** SC046276

**Provision sub-type:** Secure unit

**Registered provider address:** County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon EX2 4QD

**Responsible individual:** Rachel Gillott

**Registered manager:** Darren Beattie

## Inspectors

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