

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	23/01/2017
Unique reference number	SC470513
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school
Registered manager	James Connolly
Inspector	Helen Lee Sarah Olliver

Inspection date	23/01/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC470513

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The children's home delivers outstanding outcomes for young people in respect of their health, emotional well-being and educational attainment. All the young people in the home have made exceptional progress since their arrival, because they are looked after effectively by staff who know how best to support their complex and highly individual needs.
- Young people have excellent and trusting relationships with an established staff team that manages very personal and multifaceted issues with great sensitivity. This makes the placements highly successful for every young person. Effective interaction between different departments on site results in unified care planning and bespoke packages of care. There is a clear vision throughout the whole organisation, leading to a shared approach which successfully enhances the experiences of young people.
- Staff are ambitious for young people and continuously seek to improve their life chances by focusing on their individual needs and advocating on their behalf. The staff have an in-depth understanding of the underlying causes of young people's behaviour.
- Use of the home's new buildings and space has been very well considered, with young people's needs at the centre of the decision making. Everyone is properly protected within a culture that takes measured risks and fully recognises the specific vulnerabilities of the young people.
- Leadership and external monitoring of the organisation is strong and effective. The registered individual leads by example, always placing the welfare of the young people at the very centre of her thinking and practice, and she has driven improvement consistently, with integrity and passion. Senior leaders have embraced previous identified shortfalls as a means to secure continuing improvement. Extending management oversight of recording would enhance accountability.
- Young people who had previously to utilise alternative residential and short-break provisions outside of term time now benefit by staying at the home full time, with familiar staff and established routines. Their welfare, happiness and need for a safe and stimulating environment continue to motivate and drive this exceptional team.

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- All children's case records (regulation 36) must be kept up to date and stored securely while they remain in the home. Case records must be kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. This includes having a written impact risk assessment with matching elements for any new child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The children's guide should help children to understand:
 - how to make a complaint in line with the home's complaints procedure;
 - how they can access advocacy support or independent advocacy if eligible; and
 - how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.22)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This service is a residential special school, registered as a children's home to care for up to 52 children on a weekly, termly or 52-week basis. It is operated by a local authority. The home is registered to accommodate children with a learning disability, including those on the autistic spectrum or with communication and interaction difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/12/2015	Full	Outstanding
13/01/2015	Full	Good
03/12/2014	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Outstanding</p>
<p>The children’s home delivers outstanding outcomes for young people. They make great strides in their health, emotional well-being and educational attainment. All the young people at the home have made remarkable progress since their arrival, because they are looked after effectively by staff who know how to provide highly individual support.</p> <p>Young people receive highly nurturing, tailor-made and consistent care. They benefit from a structured daily programme which helps them to feel safe, because they understand exactly what is going to happen. Their daily routine is attractively presented on the wall so that everyone at the home knows what they are going to be doing on a given day. Young people always know which staff will be supporting them, which helps them to feel secure. Regular routines were observed in the home and provide the bedrock for excellent practice.</p> <p>Young people have exceptionally warm and positive relationships with the staff team. As a member of staff stated, ‘relationships are the key’. The young people thoroughly enjoy their time with the staff, taking part in activities inside and outside the home. Behaviour management is very well informed by the company’s theoretical model of practice. Young people benefit greatly from staff’s sensitive and skilled management of some very personal and complex issues. Staff, at all times, prioritise the dignity of young people, thereby supporting their self-esteem and emotional well-being. The young people have achieved superb and sustained improvement in all areas of their development and behaviour since coming to the home, and staff continuously work to improve their life-chances.</p> <p>All young people have achieved good or outstanding outcomes in education. The very nature and location of the home lends itself to young people experiencing a seamless transition between home and school. With both elements on the same site, a cohesive 24-hour curriculum is achieved. Excellent communication between care, teaching and therapy teams results in thoughtful targets and goal planning. Fundamentally, these are realistic, suitably challenging and aimed at teaching young people the skills that they need to be as successful as possible when they leave the setting.</p> <p>Young people use a community council to express their collective views and take part in influencing and steering the home. At the meeting attended by an inspector, young people proudly demonstrated their use of a web-based information sharing system which their families can also access. They are fully consulted about their own wishes and aspirations, contact and any other issue that</p>	

is important to them.

Some young people have additional health and medical needs which add to the complexities of their day-to-day living experiences. Sensitive and thoughtful arrangements, including additional staff training, result in safe practices that underpin the effective management of individual health conditions and needs. There is well-coordinated and purposeful integrated work from the on-site therapy team, including speech and language and occupational therapists, and an aromatherapist.

Young people are encouraged and supported to explore the local community through a variety of hobbies and social interests, such as using leisure centres and local clubs. They also enjoy exploring the local areas for long walks. High staffing levels ensure that one-to-one support is provided, when needed. Young people increase in confidence and have acquired important life skills, for example they have learned how to cook and do their laundry, and have developed some core skills to help them to manage their own lives. Staff support young people's emotional and identity needs as they move towards leaving the home.

Individually tailored transition plans are considered carefully well in advance of young people's leaving age. This results in well-planned communication/transition aids being developed and shared with prospective future placements. Young people's preferred communication techniques, individual preferences and the nuances of how and why they behave as they do are accurately captured and passed on. Through this, young people, their parents and carers are assured that their best interests are central to the undertaking of this significant event in their lives. As one social worker stated: 'I had a really positive experience working with this home. Staff ensured a good transition for my service user into further education and worked closely with the new provider to ensure that this was a smooth transfer. They always advocated the needs of the individual and provided an exceptional standard of care.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
<p>The manager has an excellent understanding of risk and how to evaluate this for each young person in different circumstances. This means that risk assessments are clear and robust, with structured guidance for staff and effective strategies to help manage behaviour. As a result, staff have a clear understanding of each young person's vulnerabilities so that they can work with them in line with their targets. The young people are closely monitored by caring staff who are quick to pass on and report any changes in their behaviour, mood or any untypical presentation. Consequently, all the young people in the home have been helped to improve their personal safety. All staff are now trained in safeguarding and,</p>	

following a recommendation made at the last inspection, a bespoke training course has been developed to focus on children with particular vulnerabilities due to their complex needs. This innovative training was devised with an external organisation and it will be rolled out to staff in April 2017.

Young people are fully and creatively supported to take measured and appropriate risks. Examples include increased access to the internet and social media for some, and greater independent travel opportunities for others.

Complex and challenging behaviours are positively reviewed by a team of well-qualified and experienced professionals who are skilled at understanding the root cause of why and how behaviours occur. The service continues to act as an ambassador and trainer of the 'gentle teaching' approach to behaviour management, and it is routinely involved in research projects across the globe. This approach is embedded across the staff teams and demonstrated by all, from the staff on reception to key workers and the leadership team. Staff have adapted their styles to integrate the gentle teaching ethos successfully into practice and increase their mindfulness of when they can manage behaviour without the need for physical intervention. As one staff member stated, 'gentle teaching is to keep young people safe and engaged, and build relationships to get the best out of the staff and the young people, and reflect on our work. I am more aware of my presence and approach, voice and demands. I think that it has made a big difference to the school, and adapting to a less hands-on approach.'

The leadership team and home have embraced fully the last recommendation to review their restrictive physical interventions and have really 'gone the extra mile' to analyse this practice and develop positive approaches to recording and reporting interventions that are comprehensive and closely reviewed by the managers. The new database system allows the teams to check for triggers and patterns to inform their practice, and make adaptations to care planning to reduce interventions further. This has been effective in reducing interventions for many young people. One young person has not had any physical interventions since the team completely revamped her routines across the provision, better to suit her needs. The home's mantra of understanding challenging behaviour and seeing it as a form of communication is fully embedded in practice.

The topic of potentially restrictive measures and practice is routinely explored through training and supervision to ensure staff's continued understanding. The premises remain safe and secure from public access. The young people's freedom of movement within the home has been enhanced by the staff looking at each part of their practice and thoughtfully challenging every aspect to ensure that it is as unrestricted as possible. Internal closed-circuit television within all seven homes has been removed, following a decision by the senior leadership team to respect the privacy of the young people and recognise the restrictive aspect of this practice.

Incidents of running away and being absent are extremely rare. One event occurred since the last inspection. This has been rigorously investigated, alongside the young person's parents, and was determined to be more about the young person's desire to explore and investigate than more worrying push or pull factors.

Medication errors are followed up comprehensively. Staff are suspended from administering medication while investigations are underway, and medical advice is sought regarding any missed doses. In response to an error in August, the medication is now provided in blister packs to reduce the risk of error further.

The recruitment process is robust, gaps in employment are checked, and references are sought and verified by a phone call which is recorded clearly.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

The registered manager holds a level 5 qualification in leadership and management. He has been in his current post for just under a year. The service encompasses seven homes, each accommodating up to eight young people. The leadership team continues to embed further the transition from residential school to registered children's home. The manager is highly committed to the ethos of the home. This encompasses a holistic and innovative approach to caring for young people. He ensures that his staff deliver care to young people on the basis of the principles of normalisation, social inclusion, rights and responsibilities, and unconditional positive regard for the individual. The service continues to pick up awards from the UK and Europe, and staff present at conferences as key note speakers. This is a learning organisation which routinely reflects upon its practice.

Leadership and external monitoring of the organisation are extremely strong and effective. The registered individual leads by example, always placing the welfare of the young people at the very centre of her thinking and practice. She has driven improvement consistently, with integrity and passion. The young people's needs are right at the forefront of excellent day-to-day practice. This ethos is central to the statement of purpose and can be seen in every aspect of care, from the quality of the care to redesigning the buildings to accommodate young people's changing needs. The leaders are hands-on and unite the whole staff team in their drive for excellence.

Minor shortfalls were found in the management of records. Recording did not consistently include the author and date. Records of care planning, targets, review and progress were also inconsistent. Some key-work recording was brief and did not reflect staff's evaluation of the young person's progress against care plan targets or placement plan objectives. The fire drill records do not detail which young people were evacuated, which made it difficult to assess whether their

personal evacuation plans were effective. New and more effective ways of gathering and analysing key-working data to improve practice and to measure outcomes have just started to be used.

Positive and decisive action has been taken by the organisation in response to the last inspection. Previous requirements and recommendations regarding recording of restraints and sourcing specific training were positively received, resulting in current practice that now exceeds the minimum requirements.

Although placements are effective in matching young people to the provision, the decision-making process of matching is not recorded. The responsible individual explained the process of visits to the potential young people by her and other senior staff, speech and language therapists, teachers and care staff. However, the records do not reflect this work.

Specific job descriptions, contracts of employment, and rigorous selection and interview criteria have been skilfully implemented to ensure that those appointed have the desired qualifications, skills and experience to meet the needs of the young people. All staff at every level receive regular supervision. The supportive and learning elements of these meetings and forums are commended by staff. They confirmed that this is effective and helpful in their professional development. They feel valued and well supported. Staff supervision has a strong reflective element, and the manager encourages his staff to think for themselves, undertake independent research regarding the young people's needs and voice their opinions. He is keen for staff to challenge and enjoys debating issues with them. Examples were seen in supervision where all those involved were supported to challenge and question their own and each other's practice, sometimes by using video. Staff fully subscribe to a culture of professional challenge and reflective practice within the wider ethos of the home and school.

The home has an effective training programme. Staff have completed comprehensive induction training and higher-level courses according to the young people's needs, for example an art workshop, sensory communication using touch and music, and rebound therapy. Staff receive specific training to meet young people's individual needs. The leaders of the home are passionate about continuing professional development. A separate training and development department sits within the senior leadership team, which ensures that the skill and expertise needs of the entire workforce are an integral element of development planning.

The children's guide is bespoke and made for each individual young person. However, it does not include details of advocacy or support services. The home has a clear and effective statement of purpose that has been reviewed in line with the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 and schedule 1. The statement reflects the ethos and functions of the home, and provides young people, staff and commissioners with an accurate picture of what the service provides. Through robust internal and external monitoring, the manager is confident that the home is

run in line with this document. The home has a highly effective and challenging independent visitor who visits monthly, and consults with young people and staff to gain an accurate picture of the home and set clear actions from this.

The home has working relationships with other agencies. Social workers commented on the beneficial communications about their young people. Good relationships between the home and other agencies have helped to improve outcomes for young people.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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