

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	09/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC470513
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Bradstow School (Wandsworth Local Authority)
Responsible individual	Sarah Dunn
Registered manager	Deborah Tomlinson
Inspector	Sophie Wood

Inspection date	09/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Good
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 exceeds 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	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC470513

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people make exceptional progress from their starting points because they are effectively looked after by staff who know how to support their often complex needs.
- Excellent communication between different departments results in cohesive care planning and bespoke packages of care. There is a culture of mutual respect amongst the whole team, leading to a collaborative approach which benefits young people. Defining key-worker roles would enhance accountability arrangements.
- Young people are highly valued. Warm and nurturing relationships are commended by parents and carers, one said 'the staff totally 'get' him and understand what he is all about'. Many young people, who previously had difficulties with social interaction and touch are actively initiating cuddles and hugs from those they are learning to trust.
- Staff are fully conversant with child protection arrangements, including lone working practices. Everyone is suitably protected within a culture that takes measured risks and fully recognises the specific vulnerabilities of the young people.
- This learning organisation robustly reviews its practices on a regular basis. Rigorous monitoring systems result in decisive positive action. Senior leaders have embraced previous identified shortfalls as a means to secure continuing improvement. The head teacher, who is also the Responsible Individual, is commended for steering the organisation with integrity, passion and always placing the welfare of the young people at the very centre of her thinking and practice.

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):

Ensure effective care planning and strong working relationships between the

staff of the home and the placing authority by reviewing and amending the current guidance on the role of the key worker (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 56, paragraph 11.2)

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 and with communication and interaction difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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>This home is able to demonstrate superb progress being made by young people because it never loses focus of its aims and objectives for each individual. Bespoke care plans change and grow as an honest reflection of young people’s progress and changing needs. Reviewing tools are effective in identifying positive outcomes or the need to alter the focus of prescribed interventions. When an approach is not having the desired effect, it is quickly identified and remedied. This increases the likelihood of success and builds confidence.</p> <p>This pathway to positive outcomes starts with a clear and effective admissions procedure. Diligent information gathering ensures that young people are only offered a placed if they are deemed to meet the service’s admission’s criteria which is clearly outlined within the statement of purpose. Young people are visited in their current home and school environments, the views of involved agencies, parents and carers reliably informs the admissions process. This leads into residential assessment stays which provide useful information to help develop plans. 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 exist. They are ultimately able to prescribe and deliver positive solutions. Examples include young people learning to develop improved communication techniques and coping mechanisms for stressful situations.</p> <p>A staff member said, ‘our young people are trying to communicate and this is frequently demonstrated by their behaviours’. Others explain, ‘it is very frustrating for young people to be in a world that doesn’t always make sense; it is our job to help with that’. Such comments are demonstrative of the insightful practice which relentlessly scrutinises the young people’s ability to understand their wider world and how to cope with it.</p> <p>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, results in safe arrangements that effectively manage individual health conditions and needs. Young people recognise, where their disabilities and cognitive understanding realistically allows, the need to take prescribed medication, to eat healthily and to follow a healthy living regime filled with regular physical exercise, where this is in their best interests. Positive outcomes include young people learning to follow healthy eating plans by helping to prepare their own meals and snacks. Key workers routinely</p>	

liaise with health care professionals to ensure their input is factored into day-to-day care arrangements.

Young people develop a hunger for learning because they are stimulated and provided with enriching pastimes. They 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. High staffing levels ensure 1:1 support is provided, where needed. Through local fund raising and positive community presence, the service is highly regarded. This fuels young people's feelings of self-worth as valued members of the local community.

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. Superb communication between care, teaching and therapy teams results in thoughtful targets and goal planning. Fundamentally, these are realistic, suitably challenging, and aimed at teaching individuals the skills they need to be as successful as possible when they leave the setting.

Individually tailored transition plans are thought about 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 are accurately captured and passed on. Thus young people, and their parents and carers, are assured that this significant aspect of their lives is carefully considered and extremely well planned for.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>Robust systems, combined with weekly safeguarding meetings, maintain a watchful oversight of young people's welfare, safety and general well-being. Staff across all disciplines understand what to report and to whom. Senior managers routinely remind staff that the subtler nuances of welfare concerns are as important as any serious safeguarding concern. Consequently, 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.</p> <p>This diligent approach protects young people. It is also part of the wider ethos of the home and school whereby staff fully subscribe to a culture of professional challenge and reflective practice. During this inspection, examples were seen of behaviour management incidents whereby all involved were supported to challenge</p>	

and question their own and each other's practice, potential conflicts and what could and should have gone better. Staff comments included, 'we always have time to review any incident we are involved in, just in case we missed something.'

Owing to recent senior staff recruitment the opportunity has been seized to review historic safeguarding management arrangements. This has resulted in re-structuring, to provide more layers of safeguarding accountability and management oversight. In practice, this gives the safeguarding leads more time to consider and monitor each separate issue, as well as to maintain robust safeguarding quality assurance systems.

The service is situated in one local authority and owned by another. To mitigate any potential confusion procedures for making consultations and referrals to the local authority designated officer are explicitly clear and always followed. Senior leaders say it is actually helpful to have direct access to two key external safeguarding leads stating, 'you can never have too many good practice discussions.'

Such positive links maintain the home's on-going awareness of current and changing risks to young people. This keeps the staff training programme up-to-date and ambitious. Recent courses included the use of external training providers on topics such as radicalisation, safer recruitment and child sexual exploitation. It is the quality and content of these courses which benefits the staff. One said, 'a recent course pointed out that some of our young people might not be easy targets to be radicalised but it could still happen within their own families' another, 'our young people remain highly vulnerable to all sorts of risks, purely by the very nature of their complex needs. New risks are being identified but the old ones are still there.'

Notwithstanding the home's commitment to safeguard and protect everyone, young people are fully and creatively supported to also take measured and appropriate risks. Examples include increasing access to the internet and social media for some and greater independent travel opportunities for others. One young person currently requires a 3:1 staffing ratio outside of the setting but this is constantly under review in the home's attempt to teach and educate young people to keep themselves safe.

The high risk factors and extreme vulnerabilities of the young people are uppermost in policy and procedure decisions. One example is the home's use of surveillance measures which are present in many of the communal areas. Clear guidance outlines its intended use which parents and carers find reassuring. The topic of potentially restrictive measures and practice is routinely explored through additional training such as the 'Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards' to ensure staff's continued understanding. Although the premises remain safe and secure from public access every effort is made to maintain young people's freedom of movement within the home as much as their disabilities and understanding allows.

Incidents of running away and being absent are extremely rare. Two occurred since the last inspection; they have been rigorously investigated and determined to be more about the young people's desire to explore and investigate as opposed to more worrying push or pull factors. Both instances were very quickly resolved and resulted in swift and appropriate action to minimise the chances of reoccurrence. The home's missing procedures, in line with local police protocols demonstrated efficiency on both occasions.

The service continues to act as an ambassador of the 'Gentle Teaching' approach to behaviour management and is routinely involved in research projects. Sanctions and consequences are not used and all instances of the use of physical intervention are comprehensively scrutinised. Excellent monitoring systems find potential patterns or trends and this enables the staff to continue to drive down the use of such measures. The home's mantra of understanding challenging behaviour and seeing it as a form of communication is embedded.

Regular consultation forums encourage young people to have their say and to influence how the home and school are run. Speech and language colleagues regularly visit outside of office hours to support young people and staff to improve two-way communication. This means complaints, concerns and issues are actively encouraged. This approach has led to allegations being made by young people, as well as staff; resulting in swift, appropriate action which has protected all involved.

Following the last inspection, further improvements have occurred with regards to recruitment practices. Robust systems diligently explore applicant's working histories with rigour. This is complemented by a searching reference verification process and inquisitive panel interviews. This strong, safe practice serves to protect young people.

Maintenance and repair systems are efficient; thus minimising environmental risks and hazards. Routine health and safety checks are up-to-date and the current major building works are being diligently monitored. Since the last inspection Ofsted was immediately notified of a significant incident and the home worked in liaison with the Environmental Health Department.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
An assiduous review of the whole service followed the previous inspection in January 2015. New roles, including a head of residential services position which encompasses the Registered Manager duties, have been created and appointed to, as well as an additional deputy post. The current Registered Manager, who will	

transfer to another substantive role within the service, is conducting a thorough handover while the new post holder submits their application for registration to Ofsted. This significant change is the result of careful consideration, a review of senior roles and responsibilities, and a reflection of the organisation's drive to further embed the transition from being a residential school to a registered children's home.

The deputy head of care currently carries the responsibility of being a safeguarding lead; this individual was previously a Registered Manager and is suitably qualified and fully conversant with the local authority's child protection procedures. Such appointments are demonstrative of the home's drive to secure a strong and effective leadership team.

Robust and thorough recruitment practice has underpinned these appointments and those of a number of new care staff joining since the last inspection. Specific job descriptions, contracts of employment and rigorous selection and interview criteria have been skilfully implemented to ensure those appointed have the desired qualifications, skills and experience to meet the needs of the young people.

The home is within its second year since changing its registration status; much learning is eagerly demonstrated by the responsible individual. Previous requirements regarding recruitment practice were positively received, resulting in current practice that now exceeds minimum requirements. One requirement from the last inspection concerning the recording of physical interventions is also fully met. Indeed, the rigour with which any such intervention is investigated and reviewed leaves no stone unturned to ensure its use was valid and necessary.

Further developments have focused on staff supervision and appraisal systems. The supportive and learning elements of these meetings and forums are commended by staff. One said, 'it is always regular, inclusive and really gets me to think about my practice'. This process dovetails neatly into reflective practice, performance management and career development. A separate training and development department sits within the senior leadership team; thus placing the skills and expertise needs of the entire workforce as an integral element of development plans and financial planning.

Excellent monitoring systems provide an accurate account of the home's strengths and weaknesses. In pursuit of securing increasingly challenging external scrutiny, the Responsible Individual has recently commissioned a new independent visitor. These probing reports raise appropriate questions and are received by staff as a vehicle to continue to improve the quality of the care provided.

Such mechanisms directly feed into the organisation's development and improvement plans which roll over on an annual and longer term basis. Clear evidence of an embedded process is seen by a number of examples which were recognised and targeted before the home changed its registration. One example is

the residential accommodation; the second phase of improvement is now well underway. This enhances the quality of the accommodation for the young people and reflects the significant financial investment of the local authority and tireless fund raising by the whole staff team. The key working role is also under review to ensure clarity about who is making significant decisions on behalf of young people. This topic is causing much lively discussion in trying to establish if and how this role should change. To further strengthen partnership working arrangements with external agencies an external liaison officer post has been created and appointed to.

This service has embraced the challenges of changing its registration because of recognised benefits for young people in doing so. Those who had to previously utilised alternative residential and short break provisions outside of term times now benefit by staying at the home full time, with familiar staff and established routines. It is their welfare, happiness and need for a safe and stimulating early stage of their lives which continues to motivate and drive this exceptional team.

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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