

SC032058

Registered provider: Buckinghamshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a local authority and provides residential care for up to six young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 April 2018

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 13 December 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/12/2017	Full	Inadequate
15/09/2016	Full	Good
25/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/08/2015	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
<p>12. The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure that staff—</p> <p>(2)(a)(i) assess whether each child is at risk for harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child</p> <p>(ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe</p> <p>(iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm</p> <p>(Regulation 12(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii))</p>	<p>06 June 2018</p>

Recommendations

- Staff should be skilled in understanding the range of influences that friendships can have and should encourage those with a positive impact and discourage those with a negative impact. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 36, paragraph 8.8)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The experiences of the two young people currently living in the home have improved greatly since the last inspection, when the home was judged inadequate. There have been no young people admitted to the home in this period, thus enabling staff to concentrate their efforts on the two remaining young people in the home. The home environment now feels relaxed and settled. Both young people said that they are happy living in the home and want to be here.

The views of the young people are now a priority. They feel listened to as the staff have increased their efforts to obtain their wishes and feelings. The young people are taking

advantage of the process in place to express themselves freely. They understand the procedure for making a complaint. The young people offer their ideas to the staff for consideration. A young person said, 'The staff are asking for our input more, which is very good compared to how it used to be.'

The young people have good relationships with the staff. Many positive interactions between the young people and staff were seen on inspection. The young people trust the staff and present as comfortable in their presence.

Planning for the young people is sound. The young people are engaging well with professionals from supportive services outside the home. The revision of all records for the young people has led to comprehensive care plans being in place. Historical and current information is compiled in a document that guides and tracks the progress of the young people.

Transition planning for young people moving out of the home is well organised. Pre-arranged visits and discussions lower the anxiety levels of the young person as they prepare to move on. The managers have created an ambitious programme aimed at young people who are aged 17 plus, called 'staying close'. The staff will be able to remain in contact with the young people and offer support that can be monitored.

The health needs of the young people are met in accordance with their designated health plans and as needed. The young people have no outstanding health-related issues and receive specialised medical care when needed to treat existing issues.

Education is encouraged and supported. There is communication between school personnel and the staff that provides consistency in responding to concerns, behaviours, and understanding achievement levels. When young people are struggling with attendance and performance, the staff endeavour to have alternative provisions in place.

The staff work well with parents on behalf of the young people. Effective communication exists between the staff and parents that allows parents to be well informed and active in the care of their children.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

New policies and procedures have been put in place aimed at the protection of the young people. However, there are some faults in the staff practice that need to be addressed.

The staff need to evidence that they practice diligence when young people spend time with peers outside the home. Specifically, the staff should consult with the parents of friends when the young people will be visiting their homes. On one occasion, a young person was placed at significant risk due to the lack of effort by the staff to verify the arrangements. The development of inappropriate friendships continues to be an issue for some young people, as not all relationships known to the staff are explored.

The risk assessments have improved, although not all risks associated with the young people are fully explored. For example, relationships that could prove detrimental to a young person were not assessed despite the staff being aware of their probable negative

impact.

The overall safeguarding of the young people has improved. They feel safe and are aware of concerns for their safety through discussions with the staff. The young people are able to identify members of the staff that they trust and can speak with about concerns.

There has been a reduction in the number of times the young people have been reported as missing. The young people were consulted regarding these incidents, which were mostly attributed to curfew infractions. The staff responded by extending slightly the time that young people needed to return to the home. When young people are late when returning to the home, they now maintain contact with the staff by phone to ensure that their whereabouts are known.

There have been no physical interventions in this inspection period. The staff behaviour management strategies have been revisited through training, specifically around de-escalation techniques. The young people have responded well to the boundaries set by the staff with no incidents of challenging behaviour occurring of late.

Bullying is proactively addressed. The staff quickly try to intervene when young people experience conflict with each other. Incidents reviewed evidence that staff attempt to resolve the matters and prevent them escalating.

All significant safeguarding concerns are promptly reported to the designated officer for the local authority for consultation. Managers ensure that Ofsted is made aware of any significant concerns, including allegations made by the young people.

The physical environment of the home is safe. The home is maintained well by the staff to keep the environment risk free. Health and safety checks have been completed at regular intervals.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A highly committed registered manager leads the home. He has increased his knowledge of the regulations and is currently undertaking the management qualification required. He is transparent in his views and acknowledges that many changes were needed to address the shortcomings in the home. He now feels fully supported by the senior managers compared to previous years.

The wider leadership of the home is competent and proactive. The newly appointed responsible individual and the head of care have been an active presence in the home. They have developed a substantial action plan that has guided the obvious improvements observed in the home. The young people are starting to benefit from having permanent senior managers in place with a guided vision for the service.

The process of admitting young people to the home has been completely overhauled. The managers now carefully consider the needs of young people who are referred to the home. An impact assessment tool, which prompts discussions on what impact the admission of a new young person may have on other young people in the home, has been utilised. At this point in time, managers have reviewed some referrals which are deemed inappropriate. The new process should act as an effective gatekeeper for the

home.

The external monitoring of the home is sound. A new independent visitor, who was appointed in December 2018, has submitted good reports that identify areas of improvement. The manager completes an action plan based on the recommendations. The actions are submitted to the responsible individual for inclusion in the six-monthly reporting for that period.

The staff display an increase in their confidence and morale. The core group of the staff is suitably qualified and has worked together for a reasonable amount of time. The staff are a stable group and are committed to the changes in their practice. The staff now feel supported and listened to, specifically around the admittance of emergency placements.

The staff are developing their practice. Regular supervision, team meetings, and training that is purposeful to meeting the needs of the young people are part of the workforce development plan. In addition, the staff are provided with an opportunity to meet as a group with a psychologist in order to reflect on their practice. A member of staff described the team as being rejuvenated in recent weeks.

The statement of purpose has been updated and submitted to Ofsted. The level of service provided is now in line with the ethos of the home. A new children's guide has been drafted by the staff and rolled out to the young people.

The engagement and quality of relationships outside the home is good. The managers have increased their efforts to engage with the wider community; for example, the young people delivered Easter baskets to the local police and to an elderly care project in the area.

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: SC032058

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks HP21 1AU

Responsible individual: Noel Beaumont

Registered manager: David Knowles

Inspector

James Harmon, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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