

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	19/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC060839
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Blackford Education (Schools) Ltd T/A Libra
Registered person address	Blackford House, Blackford, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 8SY

Responsible individual	Alan Wilkes
Registered manager	Gemma Thorne
Inspector	Linda Bond

Inspection date	19/01/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC060839

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people are safe and feel safe because there are positive and trusting relationships with the staff team. The young people spoken to during the inspection confirm they feel safe and well cared for.
- Young people make very good progress at the home, given their individual starting points, and in all aspects of their lives. This includes health, emotional well-being and social opportunities. In particular they enjoy a range of activities and holidays, and time spent with their friends and families.
- Young people make very good progress at school, resulting in good qualifications. This is supported by a focus on education and aspiration by the manager and staff.
- Young people are listened to and their wishes, views and feelings are integral to planning and development. For example young people are involved in the refurbishment of the home, the planning of activities and the recruitment of adults working in the home.
- The manager and staff team work very closely with the parents and social workers of the young people. 'The communication between myself and the manager is fantastic' a social worker confirmed.
- Staff report feeling 'supported' and 'valued' by the manager and senior management team. An extensive range of training ensures they safely care and support the young people.
- The manager uses effectively a variety of reviewing and auditing tools that ensures improvements and developments of the home are captured. However, during the course of the inspection two shortfalls in respect of case records were noted. These shortfalls do not impact on the safety of the young people.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>36: Children's case records</p> <p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which - (a) are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1) (c))</p>	<p>29/02/2016</p>
<p>36: Children's case records</p> <p>Case records must be kept - (c) securely in the children's home during the period the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there. (Regulation 36 (2)(c))</p>	<p>29/02/2016</p>

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private company which also operates a number of other small homes in the locality. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/03/2015	CH - Interim	Improved effectiveness
27/11/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
11/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
25/09/2013	CH - Full	Adequate
18/02/2013	CH - Interim	Not Judged
26/06/2012	CH - Full	Good
27/02/2012	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
07/09/2011	CH - Full	Good
04/01/2011	CH - Interim	Good
12/08/2010	CH - Full	Good
09/12/2009	CH - Interim	Good
20/07/2009	CH - Full	Good
26/08/2008	CH - Full	Good
28/05/2008	CH - Interim	Good
27/11/2007	CH - Interim	Good
11/06/2007	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>The young people benefit from highly personalised care plans that are reviewed regularly. Young people’s views and opinions of the care they receive are captured within their care plans. Consequently young people feel listened to, supported and cared for by a manager and staff team that have a very good understanding of their individual needs.</p> <p>Young people explore their own identities and develop interests through individualised care. For example playing football, cycling, model railway building and charity work. Regular sporting activities, attending clubs and contributing to fund raising for charitable work has resulted in young people developing self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth. One young person said ‘it’s the greatest experience you can have as a child living here ‘because of the opportunities you have with activities’.</p> <p>Staff have a very good understanding of the importance of young people being healthy. As a result of the young people regularly taking part in sporting and outdoor activities, eating a well-balanced and nutritious diet and attending all necessary medical appointments young people’s health outcomes have improved. Furthermore the manager works well to ensure parents are involved with all appointments and meetings and, where possible, remain responsible for the oversight of their son or daughter’s health. When necessary advice and support from experts are commissioned, for example play therapy. A play therapist working with the young people reports on ‘excellent progress’ and ‘attachments have strengthened’. As a result some young people’s ability to manage difficulties has improved.</p> <p>A key strength of the home is the manager and staff’s commitment to improving young people’s educational outcomes. Attendance at school is 100% and young people are provided with an excellent level of support to engage in learning both at school and at home. Subsequently young people have made excellent progress at school. A social worker contacted during the inspection feels strongly that the inclusion in extra curriculum activities has further supported this outstanding progress. They have seen the ‘most progress made in a long time’.</p> <p>Consultation and partnership working with parents is effective. The manager and staff offer high levels of support to families, such as supervising visits home, planning holidays that include family members and support at young peoples’ meetings. Records kept of communications between families and the staff confirms</p>	

this support is appreciated and valued. The support has led to the development of positive relationships and the successful return of young people to their family.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>Young people are safe and protected because the manager and staff give the highest priority to their safety and well-being. They all have a very good understanding of the individual risks and behaviours of the young people living in the home, and these are clearly recorded and routinely reviewed within all case files. To further support their experience and knowledge base, staff receive a good and varied range of training with regular refresher sessions. As a result decision making and the updating of records is underpinned and informed by learning.</p> <p>A wide and detailed number of records safely kept within the home indicate that young people are not going missing and the use of sanctions or physical restraint is rare.</p> <p>Young people are supported to take age and ability appropriate risks; this means they are able to experience new opportunities for example, walking to the shops and local play areas. In turn this has built their confidence and independence skills.</p> <p>Young people benefit from consistent boundaries, routines and positive reinforcement. The staff team use models of intervention for example THRIVE and play therapy, to help young people understand about relationships, attachments and behaviours. Professionals report 'strengthened attachments enable the young person to feel safe', resulting in young people forging safe relationships with family members.</p> <p>The home is generally well maintained, and all necessary checks and risk assessments are in place ensuring young people live in a safe environment. There are however, areas within the home that are looking tired and worn. A planned refurbishment is due to take place and young people speak enthusiastically of this plan.</p> <p>Young people in the home are being cared for by a very stable staff team, and changes to the structure of the team are rare. However, a robust and sound recruitment and induction process ensures young people continue to be cared for safely when new staff are introduced to the home.</p>	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>The registered manager is qualified, highly experienced, confident and skilled in her role. This has meant that the staff team have been led and managed very well. A member of staff really enjoys working in the home and says 'the manager is really easy to talk to'. Further to this the staff confirm they benefit from regular supervision, detailed handovers, appraisals and team meetings. One member of staff says because we communicate well as a team 'I know what is expected from me'.</p> <p>The registered manager has recently commenced maternity leave and in her absence a member of the senior management team is acting in the role as temporary manager.</p> <p>The manager and staff, supported by the senior management team are committed to providing an environment which prioritises and supports the young people's individual needs. The skilled and motivated staff team provide positive role modelling through engaging in all activities alongside the young person, for example snowboarding and surfing, and by using learning opportunities to reflect on their practice. In doing so they are able to improve the outcomes of the young people.</p> <p>The manager understands the importance of communication between professionals, parents and the staff being regular and useful. One professional reports how 'impressed' they were with the manager in the pre-placement planning process, and how this in itself helped to secure the right type of therapeutic support.</p> <p>The manager continually monitors, reviews and updates all documents and records held within the home. However, during the course of the inspection a number of records seen were not signed by the author, there were missing actions and outcomes and on one occasion a page had been ripped out of a communication log book. Whilst significant there is no evidence that these shortfalls have impacted on the safety or well-being of the young people.</p> <p>Regular internal monitoring ensures the manager has an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. A sound and detailed development plan is in place and evidences how refurbishment and improvements to the décor of the home are planned. Furthermore there is significant supporting evidence within this and other documents to demonstrate how young people are being consulted with, and remain integral to, any changes.</p>	

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*.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*, which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, workbased learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It inspects services for looked after children and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016