

## Children's homes inspection – Full

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>08/11/2016</b>
<b>Unique reference number</b>	<b>SC403493</b>
<b>Type of inspection</b>	<b>Full</b>
<b>Provision subtype</b>	<b>Residential special school</b>
<b>Registered provider</b>	<b>Blackford Education (schools) Ltd</b>
<b>Registered provider address</b>	<b>Blackford House, Blackford, Minehead, TA24 8SY</b>

<b>Responsible individual</b>	<b>Joan Wilkes</b>
<b>Registered manager</b>	<b>Stacy Ward</b>
<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Linda Bond</b>

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>08/11/2016</b>
<b>Previous inspection judgement</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>This inspection</b>	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
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.	
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>

## SC403493

### Summary of findings

#### **The children's home provision is outstanding because:**

- Young people are making excellent progress in all areas of their lives. Professionals are extremely complimentary of the support young people receive and the impact this has on improving their individual outcomes.
- The home provides young people with an environment that is safe, homely and welcoming, where young people's confidence and resilience are strengthened and allowed to flourish. This is because the manager and the staff team understand the importance of young people being able to play and have adventures in an environment where risk is managed well. Considered and detailed risk assessments enable young people to develop age-appropriate skills and independence, and to take reasonable risks in a supportive environment.
- Detailed and regularly reviewed care plans and risk assessments outline how care is to be provided. These plans are of a high quality, and place an emphasis on collaborative working with placing authorities, schools, families and carers. Professionals spoken with provide overwhelming praise about the quality of assessments and the impact these have on ensuring care is provided in a consistent way to meet the individual needs of the young people.
- Young people make excellent progress with their education. A committed and motivated staff team provides continuity of care throughout the day by supporting young people at home and in class. Attendance at school is excellent. There is a 100% attendance rate, which is a significant improvement for some young people who, prior to living in the home, were not in receipt of education.
- The home is very well resourced with a committed, dedicated and motivated staff team. They are led by a newly appointed registered manager who has worked within the home in a senior position for more than five years. A particular strength of the home is the caring nature of the staff team. Strong, warm relationships exist between young people and staff.
- The registered manager is respected by staff, visiting professionals, parents and carers. She inspires and motivates the staff team with her knowledge of childcare, play and safeguarding. Regular training, team meetings and good supervision provide the manager and the staff with support and learning opportunities. Research and knowledge underpin the practice of the manager and the staff team.

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private company that also operates a school and a number of other children's homes in the locality. The home provides care for up to six children and young people.

### Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/10/2015	Full	Outstanding
26/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/12/2014	Full	Outstanding
07/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress

## Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p><b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b></p>	<p><b>Outstanding</b></p>
<p>Young people living in the home make excellent progress. Young people benefit from a home that places their safety and physical and emotional well-being at the very heart of all it does.</p> <p>Some young people have lived at the home for over three years. Changes to the staff team are rare. This results in young people enjoying exceptionally positive and purposeful relationships with members of staff. Continuity of care provided by a committed and dedicated staff team means the staff have come to understand the different needs of each young person. Detailed care plans and assessments support the staff team in providing a consistently high standard of care to each young person living in the home.</p> <p>A particular strength of the staff team is the importance placed on recognising each young person's individuality. Attention to detail is given by the staff when personalising bedrooms, building indoor and outdoor play areas, and accessing activities and holidays. They take into account young people's abilities, choices and learning needs. For example, one young person's confidence and concentration have significantly increased since joining an archery club. Other young people are helped to make dens in the garden and in their bedrooms so that they can experience adventures and imaginative play.</p> <p>Since the previous inspection, the home continues to provide support for a younger age group. The matching process is detailed and considerate to each young person. The younger age group is ideally suited to the home's warm, playful and therapeutic ethos. Young people who move on, do so positively. Detailed and highly personalised care plans enable professionals, carers and families to make a success of each move. A foster carer said that the support foster carers received when a young person was moving to their care was 'amazing' and that the staff were 'brilliant'. A detailed and carefully tailored plan enabled them to help the young person to move with confidence and support. For example, the foster carers spent extensive periods of time with the young person in the children's home at different times of the day, including bedtime. In doing so, they were able to observe routines that were important to the young person.</p> <p>Young people's attendance at school is excellent. Staff have a committed approach to supporting young people with their homework. Coupled with creative and imaginative play opportunities, young people make significant progress from their starting points. This is detailed across a number of records. 'Tremendous' and 'commendable' are among the comments from educational professionals about the</p>	

young people’s attainment and achievements.

Staff recognise the importance of young people learning through experiences. Regular holidays abroad — for example, to Canada and Portugal — provide young people with opportunities to experience different cultures. For one young person, their skills in skiing have improved significantly and they look forward to their next holiday.

All young people enjoy good health. Regular routine health appointments, together with healthy eating and physical activity, promote excellent health outcomes for each of the young people. The home is located in a rural area, with an extensive range of outdoor play and adventure opportunities. For example, chickens and a peacock, together with gardens and woodland, provide an environment where young people grow in confidence as they develop skills in looking after the animals, mountain biking and rambling.

	Judgement grade
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<p>Young people are cared for safely by a qualified and skilled staff team. The staff team reviews and updates risk assessments regularly. This enables the young people to learn through experience, and to be supported in taking risks appropriate to their age and ability. Young people enjoy the benefits of wood-burning fires in the home. They are encouraged to learn how to chop firewood and light fires safely. As young people develop these skills, they are able to become more involved in the running of the home.</p> <p>The registered manager and the staff team recognise the risks attached to the home’s location. A well-considered and detailed locality risk assessment ensures extreme weather conditions and neighbouring farmland do not impact too negatively on the young people.</p> <p>Staff spoken to confirm they receive training and learning opportunities, enabling them to keep young people safe. Since the previous inspection, young people have not gone missing. However, a broad range of policies and procedures provide staff with a sound knowledge of how to respond in the event of a young person going missing.</p> <p>A key strength of the home is the way it actively promotes the positive behaviour of each young person. The organisation’s psychologist works collaboratively with all staff to support the improvement of young people’s behaviours. Sanctions are rarely used, and regular therapeutic play sessions provide young people with</p>	

opportunities to talk, be listened to, and to work through any anxieties and worries they may have. In particular, one young person and the staff team have been very well supported by the psychologist as they work through difficult issues from the young person's past. The manager reports that staff worked compassionately and sympathetically with the young person, resulting in a significant reduction in physical interventions and the young person settling and looking happier.

All incidents are recorded in detail and shared in a timely manner with all relevant professionals. Staff understand that young people are not always able to talk about how they feel, so the staff have developed stickers for the children to use that show a range of emotions. This supports young people in developing communication skills, and helps staff to understand how the children may feel.

Staff files examined on this inspection related to staff appointed since the previous inspection. All personnel files are very well organised, and confirm that the vetting and recruitment of staff is safe and robust. This helps to ensure that only suitable staff are employed to work with the young people.

The staff team has a high level of awareness about whom the young people spend time with in the home and in the community, to ensure they remain safe.

	Judgement grade
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<p>There has been a change of registered manager recently. The newly appointed registered manager has worked within the home in a senior position for more than five years. As a result, she has extensive knowledge of the running of the home and a sound background in early years and childcare.</p> <p>Since being appointed, the registered manager has worked diligently, and demonstrated strong leadership and management oversight. The registered manager attends external and internal management forums and conferences. Recently, her learning about resilience of staff teams has been disseminated to her fellow managers, ensuring all managers are updated with research relevant to improvement. Her dedication and commitment to improving outcomes for young people are recognised by carers, professionals and staff. 'She's fantastic' and 'brilliant' are just two of the many complimentary comments shared with the inspector during the inspection. In particular, a foster carer praised the registered manager for producing a detailed plan that supported the smooth and successful move of one young person.</p> <p>The company provides an excellent range of training, and supports staff very well</p>	

in engaging in further learning and career progression. For example, regular supervision and annual appraisals, coupled with an accelerated management programme, identify those staff who are keen and able to progress within the company. In doing so, a 'grow your own' approach to identifying future managers ensures that consistent and well-trained practitioners are available.

Internal and external monitoring of the running of the home is rigorous. The home's regulation 44 visitor visits every month, and provides detailed and insightful reports that help drive improvement. The director of care works closely with the registered manager, and together they ensure there is continual improvement in the home. A professional spoken with was keen to compliment the work of the director of care, saying, 'She's a real gem. Her understanding of the needs of individual young people is excellent.'

Since her appointment, the manager has worked extremely hard to foster strong relationships with other agencies. Professionals spoken with during the inspection cannot praise the relationships they have with the staff team highly enough, and commend the manager's professional approach in particular. 'The leadership, safety and management of the team are exceptional,' reported a psychologist. Reports and assessments produced by the manager are of a high standard. They impact positively on the plans produced for each young person. A professional reported, 'Excellent assessments and reports are produced by the registered manager, which mean they are able to decide and plan the next best move for the young person.'

The manager collates data competently to produce excellent development plans. Doing so enables her to continually identify areas of improvement and the future development of the home.



## 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 children looked after 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 that 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 that 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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