

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	21/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC038276
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school
Registered provider	Underley Schools Limited
Registered provider address	1 Merchants Place, River Street, Bolton BL2 1BX

Responsible individual	Ann Henderson
Registered manager	Christopher Kirkbride
Inspector	Ceri Evans/ Janine Shortman Thomas

Inspection date	21/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
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

SC038276

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Children and young people make exceptional progress from their starting points. They are extremely well supported to develop their confidence, emotional resilience and self-esteem.
- The staff team members regularly go above and beyond their roles. As a result, children and young people build exceptional relationships with individual staff members.
- The manager and staff team have high aspirations for children and young people and work strenuously to ensure that they make substantial progress from their individual starting points. Parents and professionals confirm this and are consistently positive about the home. One parent said: 'This is an outstanding provision for children and young people. The progress my son has made is astonishing.'
- Behaviour management is effective. Staff are consistent in their response to negative behaviour and have been successful in their efforts to help children and young people to manage their frustrations and anxieties, which are often brought about by their complex needs.
- The staff team is managed by a passionate, dedicated and child-focused leader who is committed to securing continuous improvement and to providing a high-quality service to all children and young people who live at the home.
- The staff team members said that they are very well supported in their roles by the manager, and they have regular supervision and team meetings. They participate in regular training. This ensures that they are well equipped to meet the individual needs of the children and young people placed in the home.
- The shortfalls relate to records and do not detract from the high-quality care offered at this home. Shortfalls have not impacted negatively on the well-being and safety of children or 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) meet(s) 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
The registered person may only employ an individual if the individual who works in the home in a care role has, by the relevant date, attained the level 3 diploma for residential childcare. (4)(a),5(a) and (b)	01/06/2017

Recommendations

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

- All staff must have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of young people, families and professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and children in the home's care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

- The home may only provide care and accommodation for up to 48 children.
- The home may provide care and accommodation for children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities.
- The home must reduce the number of children by the number of people aged 18 and over for whom it also provides care and accommodation.
- The service is also registered with the Care Quality Commission for young adults, post 19 years old, accommodated on site.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/11/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/10/2015	Full	Good
18/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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>Children and young people who have complex needs enjoy a settled and stable placement that significantly improves the quality of their lives. Being able to be part of a sociable, safe and welcoming environment significantly enhances their well-being, overall progress and development. Children and young people receive high-quality, personalised and individual care that reflects their abilities, needs and vulnerabilities. The manager and staff team are extremely committed to improving outcomes for all children and young people who live in the home. As a result, children and young people are happy, settled and thriving.</p> <p>The staff team provides child-focused care and support to enable children and young people to achieve positive outcomes. Children and young people enjoy a high level of nurture and care in the home, which significantly enhances their life chances. This is confirmed by unequivocally positive feedback from external professionals and relatives. One parent said: 'I can honestly say that [Name] has developed and blossomed since living in this home. I am amazed with how well he is doing. His progress is outstanding. The environment is calming, and staff genuinely care.' Professionals are equally positive. One social worker commented: 'Since being placed in this provision, [Name] has blossomed and he is very happy there. I can honestly say that he has developed more than expected.'</p> <p>Most children and young people attend school on the home campus. They are all engaged in full-time learning. For some, this is the first time in many years, and the progress they have made is exceptional. Young people are supported to move around the building, and this helps to reduce their anxieties about change and ensures that they are ready to learn and progress. The continuity of approaches across the care and education settings enables children and young people to feel secure in their learning. Young people know what is expected on a day-to-day basis and thrive from the structure and routines put in place by teaching and care staff. As a result, children and young people are flourishing and are able to plan for their futures with an anticipation of being successful.</p> <p>Staff are highly committed and have an intrinsic understanding of each child's and young person's specific and complex needs. Staff fully understand and systematically follow the detailed and comprehensive care plans that enable them to place children's and young people's well-being at the centre of their practice. Effective multi-disciplinary target setting ensures a holistic approach to supporting children and young people. The provision of an in-house occupational therapist, speech and language therapists and specialist nurse ensures that children's and young people's emerging and/or changing health needs are identified and addressed immediately. Children and young people have clear health plans, which</p>	

link with their care plan targets. Staff pay close attention to promoting healthy lifestyles and are proactive in ensuring that children's and young people's health outcomes improve over time, by, for example, supporting children and young person to eat a healthy balanced diet. For one young person, this resulted in an excellent weight loss of seven stone. Consequently, this young person is now fitter, healthier and more confident.

Staff effectively support young people who have complex and challenging needs to reach their potential in every aspect of their development. There is a real focus on helping children and young people to progress through promoting a variety of experiences that enhance social, emotional and physical development. Small steps, such as children and young people learning how to dress themselves, playing with their peers and eating healthily, represent significant improvements in terms of their health, emotional literacy, self-determination and independence. Staff have consistently high aspirations for young people irrespective of the complexity of their needs. Staff have a 'can do' approach to care, and this enables children and young people to have access to a wide range of opportunities to explore the world, build confidence and develop their social skills.

The dynamics between peer groups is positive, and children and young people are learning to make and sustain appropriate friendships. Furthermore, they are making excellent progress in managing their behaviour and self-care skills. For example, a young person who was previously socially isolated is now playing out with friends and participating in a range of activities in the community. These represent huge achievements and demonstrate that children and young people are developing confidence in their own abilities.

The manager and staff value the relationships that children and young people have with their families. They support and encourage family time; family members comment on feeling welcomed into the home by staff, children and young people on their visits. The support provided to children, young people and their families is of exceptional quality and makes a significant difference to their lives. Every effort is made to help to promote and strengthen family relationships, and this is something that parents clearly value. One parent said: 'The relationship I have with my son has strengthened, due to the support we receive. Our relationship is now unbreakable.' This clearly demonstrates the positive impact that the service has had on the lives of children, young people and their families.

Staff and young people work hard to ensure that the house feels like a home. Photographs of shared experiences are proudly displayed. The environment is welcoming and pleasantly decorated. This is a comfortable home where young people feel relaxed and safe.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
<p>Children’s and young people’s safety is afforded top priority. Their strengths, vulnerabilities and triggers are highlighted in detailed plans and risk assessments. These plans are understood by the staff team that implements these in their daily practice. Risk assessments are reviewed and updated, and information is shared and reviewed with parents and health, education and social workers. This ensures that children’s and young people’s holistic needs are well met.</p> <p>Every effort is made to ensure that children and young people have optimum life experiences and that they are effectively supported to lead full and fulfilling lives. Their complex needs do not inhibit their opportunities. For example, children and young people have a wide range of social experiences, including work experience in a variety of settings, such as local restaurants, farms and shops. This ensures positive promotion of children’s and young people’s emotional and physical well-being.</p> <p>Staff spoken with during the inspection demonstrated an excellent understanding of children’s and young people’s tolerance levels and are proud that many of the children and young people are now much more able to manage their emotions and express themselves safely. Children and young people were observed to be relaxed and comfortable in a calm and homely environment. Living in this pleasant environment further supports a sense of belonging and safety.</p> <p>Children and young people have very complex needs, including challenging behaviour. The ethos of the home is one of encouraging positive behaviour, kindness and respect between children and young people. Staff work very effectively as a team, and this means that children and young people begin to understand the difference between socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Staff are skilled and meticulous in using de-escalation techniques to channel children’s and young people’s behaviour in a positive direction. Physical intervention is only used when absolutely necessary. All staff are trained in its use, and regular refresher training ensures that staff maintain their skills in safely managing these techniques. Improvements have been made in the manner in which physical intervention is recorded. The manager ensures robust oversight and evaluation of each incident. De-briefs are insightful and reflective, and this helps staff, children and young people to understand their experiences before, during and after a restraint. This method is beneficial to aid and adapt future interventions in the best interest of children and young people.</p> <p>The organisation has robust safeguarding policies and procedures for staff to follow in the event of allegations. Professionals confirmed that the organisation is very transparent and takes proactive action to protect children and young people.</p>	

Records evidence that investigations are managed fairly, quickly and in consultation with appropriate external agencies. This provides effective protection for children and young people.

The recruitment of staff follows rigorous procedures to minimise the risk of unsuitable people, who may present a risk of harm to children, being employed at the home. Staff are appropriately vetted prior to commencing their employment in the home. This helps to ensure that young people are kept safe from adults who may wish to harm them. Visitors are checked and monitored, again to reinforce children's and young people's safety.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

Children and young people benefit from living in an effectively managed home. The manager was registered with Ofsted in February 2017. He is currently working towards gaining the relevant management qualifications to undertake the role. The manager presents as an enthusiastic, committed and passionate leader who places the welfare and safety of children and young people at the heart of his practice.

A strong leadership team supports the manager extremely well. The manager is open and transparent about his service and is driven to making positive changes and developing the service for the benefit of children and young people. The manager is committed to mentoring his staff, while providing support and training, which ensures that his staff team delivers an exceptionally high standard of care. On the rare occasion when he becomes aware that his staff team does not deliver this, through his effective and robust monitoring systems, he is able to address and challenge this in a timely manner.

Staff training and progression are valued by the senior leadership team. The manager is passionate about ensuring that his management team is skilled and trained to deliver an exceptional level of care, which is supported by a theoretical base. Improved links with the local education provisions and in-house therapy services ensure that bespoke staff training is identified and delivered to the staff team to further enhance members' skills and abilities in supporting children and young people effectively. Mandatory training is also updated regularly, and staff confirm that training is purposeful and informative. However, due to the short period of time between the inspections, the requirement raised to ensure that all staff obtain their level 3 diploma has not been fully met. That said, good progress is noted, and the manager is maintaining a thorough overview of the staff team's

advancement through the course.

Staff support arrangements have been improved greatly. Supervision is regular, purposeful and progressive. Supervision records now include discussion points from previous meetings, consider performance issues and children's and young people's progression and set targets. Staff confirmed that they feel very well supported in their roles and that staff morale has improved over the last six months. The manager ensures that the staff team is helped and encouraged to expand members' competence and confidence in all areas of work. Consequently, the home is continuing to improve, and the staff team remains motivated and well equipped to meet the individual and complex needs of the children and young people.

Appraisals on staff performance are not routinely undertaken by the leadership team. Furthermore, appraisals do not take into account the views of families and professionals and, where practical, the views of children and young people. This is a missed opportunity to undertake a more holistic review of professional practice and would aid the manager in identifying development needs within the team.

Children's and young people's records are of a high quality and provide a good insight into their individual and diverse needs. Care planning is inclusive and cohesive. A multi-agency approach to care planning ensures that children's and young people's known and emerging needs are fully understood and addressed well by the staff team. The manager has high expectations of his staff and motivates them to be creative and evaluative in the work that they do. He regularly monitors the quality of care, learning from practice and seeking from a range of sources to improve children's and young people's care experiences. The registered manager has excellent oversight of children's and young people's specific plans, ensuring that they are meaningful and achievable, and he is able to demonstrate the progress that they have made from their starting points.

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 whom 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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