

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	23/03/2016
Unique reference number	SC438764
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Potton Homes Ltd
Registered person address	Potton Homes, 1 Cresswell Park, London, SE3 9RD

Responsible individual	Susan Potton
Registered manager	Emma Brady
Inspector	Fiona Littlefield

Inspection date	23/03/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
<p>The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection</p> <p>This home was judged Good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has Sustained effectiveness.</p> <p>The manager has addressed the requirements following the last inspection. Staff files have been checked for accuracy and are now held in the home. Incidents of restraint are now fully recorded. The back garden has been landscaped and provides an attractive space for young people and staff.</p> <p>Some young people have left the home, moving into long term placements. Young people can find the transition unsettling and this is reflected in volatile behaviour. Staff and managers understand this and work closely with colleagues in social care and education to alleviate their anxieties. As a result, the majority of placements end positively. One young person wrote to the provider to say: 'Meeting other kids from care made me realise how lucky I was to live in your home. I'd really like to thank you. I'm not perfect but I'm on the right path.'</p> <p>Young people have complex needs and challenging behaviour so managers are careful when introducing a new young person into their home. They consider background history and balance risks with management strategies. They visit the young person and invite them to meet the team. Young people already in the home are part of the process and one of the group is delegated to act as a mentor for the new arrival. As a result, young people know what to expect and are welcomed into the home.</p> <p>Staff are skilled in helping young people reach their educational, emotional and behavioural milestones. Daily routines are organised around the school day and most young people have bespoke educational programmes. These can include time in school running alongside alternative educational provision or work experience. If a young person does not have an education programme, staff are persistent and assertive in challenging this until the situation is resolved. This means that there is a consistent sense of purpose in supporting young people to learn. This improves their self-esteem and motivation.</p> <p>Staff are skilled in engaging young people in reflective discussions. As a result,</p>	

young people develop confidence, learning how to manage their emotions and address difficult issues. However, there are gaps in recording of routines and informal work that staff carry out with young people. This makes it difficult to track progress that a young person is making or what action is required. The management team acknowledge this and have started to address this in weekly staff meetings.

The number of negative incidents indicates that this has been a volatile time. In these circumstances, staff and managers have done their best to maintain a safe and stable environment. Young people are protected by close relationships with staff who know where they are and help them manage their free time. Young people learn to negotiate safe arrangements. For instance, the key worker for one young person has recorded: 'She understands why we wish to stay informed. We ensure that she has credit on her phone and she lets us know that she is safe.'

The premises are safe and the locality risk assessment has been updated to include new developments. Safeguarding issues, including bullying or sexual exploitation are raised in meetings for staff and young people. However, there are some gaps in managerial oversight, in particular the recording of return from missing interviews.

Parents and most external professionals speak positively about the home. Some young people are placed some distance from their families and communities. Staff and managers understand the importance of these relationships and support contact arrangements. The grandmother of one young person said: 'They are very good at keeping me informed. She is making progress but there are still worries, as there are with all young people. I know that she is going to school and is better at keeping calm.'

Information about this children's home

This home provides long term care for a maximum of six male or female young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is one of three residential services operated by this privately run organisation, in addition to a school adjacent to this home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/06/2015	Full	Good
09/10/2014	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/06/2014	Full	Good
19/02/2014	Interim	Satisfactory progress

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 that staff record information in a way that will be helpful to the child. This is with particular reference to consistently tracking young people's progress in their personal routines and keeping notes of all significant discussions, whether planned or informal. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62 paragraph 14.4)
- Ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. This is with particular reference to ensuring that these interviews take place and that they take account of any information when assessing risks and putting arrangements into place. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 45 paragraph 9.30)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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