

1227788

Registered provider: Solent Child Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a small private company which operates two homes in the south and west of England. This home is registered for two children, irrespective of gender, who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 9 to 10 November 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **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: 2 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Experienced, child-focused staff care for children to a very high standard. The children are often admitted in crisis. Because they have complex needs, they require a great deal of support when they arrive.
- The feedback from surveys and interviews with children, parents and professionals is very positive.
- The registered manager makes good decisions about who shall be admitted to the home. The staff help the children to settle and respond to the care provided. As a result, even children who have recently arrived in the home in crisis have made good progress.
- The staff use a range of interesting and educational activities to help build relationships with children. They make sure that children who have been excluded from school take part in educational activities. This reduces the risk of the children's education being seriously disrupted.
- The registered manager and staff keep children safe through careful risk assessment and a gradual introduction of well-managed free time. This helps young people approaching adulthood to develop independence skills and start to prepare for the world outside the home.
- The registered manager is very skilled and experienced. She provides very good support to her team and advocates strongly for the children. The manager keeps the home's statement of purpose under review, and is not afraid to change the home's ethos in response to individual children's particular needs.
- The home is extremely clean, attractive and light. It is situated in a small, traditional rural village. This helps to develop a safe and secure atmosphere for the children.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The registered manager has not yet consulted with the most recently admitted child about having an advocate. This child's circumstances have changed since he first arrived. This means that he is likely to benefit from an independent advocacy service. A recommendation has been made.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/08/2016	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.

Recommendation

- Ensure that all children have access to appropriate advocacy support, and wherever possible this should be provided by a person that the child chooses. Looked after children are entitled to an independent advocate to advise them and ensure they have the support needed to express their views, wishes and feelings about their care and lives. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.16)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children's home was registered 18 months ago. Since registration, all the children who have lived in the home have made good progress.

The home initially offered short-term, focused care. It soon became clear that some children would benefit from greater flexibility in how long they stayed. As a result, the home now offers longer stays of a year or more. This allows children more time to settle in the home and develop good relationships with the staff. This has had a beneficial effect on the children's progress and outcomes.

Social workers and parents are enthusiastic about the home. They praise the staff's dedication and their determination to make a positive difference to children's lives. Social workers said that children respond well to the home's clear boundaries and realistic goals.

Children in this home learn new coping strategies to help them to understand their feelings and change their behaviour. One social worker commended the staff for their work with a young child who can become very distressed at times. A parent said that their child has started to learn to take himself away from situations that make him anxious.

Children who completed the Ofsted survey were very positive about the home. One child told the inspector that the home is 'really good'. He likes living there and is getting on well with the staff. He really enjoys going swimming and crabbing. Activities planned for

the day of the inspection included visiting a car museum, followed by going to a climbing wall.

Children have regular daily routines to promote healthy eating and sleeping patterns. They respond well to the well-balanced diet. One child has learned to avoid chocolate, which he now realises has a negative effect on his behaviour. Instead, he is provided with a snack box with five healthy items in it every day. As a result, he is learning to manage his diet in a positive way.

The registered manager explained that both children have built good relationships with adults. One child, who has been resident for many months, said that he has only just started to speak with the staff when he is worried. This supports the registered manager's view that the home should offer longer-term care to some children.

Another child has been excluded from school for most of the present term. The staff have worked hard to obtain education for him. A decision has been made that he is not yet ready for a school environment. With this in mind, the staff have introduced educational elements into his daily activities. This reduces the impact of the break in his formal education.

The staff help the children to take photographs of their activities. This provides them with positive memories of their time in the home. Both children have memory books, which show them enjoying having fun with the staff.

An older child now enjoys free time and has been on his first camping holiday. This child had 100% school attendance and did well in his GCSE exams. He is now at college and is starting to prepare for independence.

The registered manager consults children about their daily routines, food choices and all aspects of the home. They are encouraged to take pride in the home and to personalise their rooms. The home provides plenty of space for the two children. The large garden is well used and during the summer the children grew a variety of vegetables.

The staff encourage and support children's contact with family members, in accordance with the local authorities' plans. Families are pleased with the good-quality communication with the staff. They say that their children have responded well to the care provided, and that they feel valued and respected as parents.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Some children arrive in crisis, with little understanding of why they are being looked after. During times of distress, they may have serious incidents. Some of these incidents involve injuries to the staff.

Social workers and parents confirm that the staff manage these situations very well. One parent said that the staff had 'gone over and above' to keep their child safe. Incidents

are already reducing in frequency and intensity. This is because the staff have begun to establish good relationships with children.

The registered manager makes sure that all children who may be admitted to the home have a detailed risk assessment in place. She carries out assessments on the likely impact of one child on another. Social workers confirm that the manager makes good decisions about matching children in the home. This helps to ensure that children have reasonably harmonious relationships. It reduces the risk of bullying and serious incidents.

Restraint is used when necessary to protect the child and others from harm. When children have to be restrained, the staff manage this well. The registered manager has changed some of the techniques used. This was in response to a child saying that he did not like a certain 'wrap' hold. At the last inspection, some recording of restraints required more detail, but this has now been actioned. The single recommendation made at the last inspection has therefore been met.

Some older children have gone missing on several occasions. The circumstances are that they are spending time with their families, or returning late from agreed free time. One previous resident was considered to be at risk of harm from adults in the community. The staff took appropriate action to reduce these risks to her safety.

Social workers confirm that the staff always act correctly and do everything they can to keep children safe. Incidents of going missing are reducing in frequency. For example, there has only been one episode in the last 10 weeks.

The registered manager makes sure that children understand which behaviours are acceptable. When children's behaviour needs to change, the staff encourage this through a fair system of rewards and consequences.

The company manages staff recruitment well. Staff files are well organised. They have been audited to make sure that they contain all the required information to show that staff have been fully checked before they start in post. This helps to keep children safe from unsuitable adults.

Health and safety checks are generally good. One fire alarm test in September was not recorded. Other fire safety tests carried out on the same day were recorded, so this is an isolated oversight. No recommendation has been made on this occasion.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

This home has an experienced, qualified registered manager. She inspires and leads her team very well. The staff team has recently experienced a difficult period, with two team members resigning or otherwise absent from work. With one child needing to be supervised by two adults at all times, this has proved to be a challenge.

The manager has maintained safe levels of staffing throughout. Although she would prefer not to employ agency staff, there has been no choice. She requests that the agency sends the same people to the home as far as possible. She also took on the key worker's role for one child, after his key worker left. This has all helped to provide continuity of care for the children.

In spite of the staffing challenges, the registered manager has maintained staff supervision. New staff have been inducted and supervised well. They receive fortnightly supervision to support them in their new role. As a result, the staff who helped with this inspection were very positive about their work and the support they receive.

The staff receive regularly updated training. This includes training on therapeutic parenting and developmental trauma. This enables staff to help the children to manage stress. Team members are well supported through monthly team meetings. The first hour of each meeting consists of clinical supervision. The clinical supervisor is a qualified therapist who specialises in attachment and trauma. Her input enhances the staff's ability to work well with traumatised children.

The registered manager monitors the home extremely well. She makes good use of electronic systems to audit every aspect of the children's care. The manager produces detailed reports to show how well children have progressed over time.

Management monitoring is well supported through monthly independent visits. The independent visitor produces good-quality, detailed reports which include children's views. He also seeks the views of parents and professionals who visit the home. The registered manager makes sure that policies and procedures are kept up to date. The statement of purpose is sent to Ofsted with every change.

To promote continual improvement in practice, the manager shares research papers with her team. Staff members are asked to study individual quality standards and present information to their colleagues during team meetings.

Social workers and parents say that the registered manager and staff communicate extremely well. They keep them informed at all times and work to agreed strategies to support the children. One social worker, in an Ofsted survey, praised the staff team's commitment to supporting their young person in attending school. This has resulted in very high attendance and positive exam results.

One professional who visits the home said, 'I have been incredibly impressed by both the management and the staff of the home. They continue to offer a safe, welcoming and warm environment where children are encouraged and supported to achieve their full potential.'

Another professional said, 'This is by far one of the best [homes] I have seen used for our young people. They manage extremely difficult situations with ease and always report issues appropriately.'

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: 1227788

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Solent Child Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Solent Child Care Ltd, 9 St Georges Yard, Farnham GU9 7LW

Responsible individual: Charlotte Tanner

Registered manager: Kirsty Sheppard

Inspector

Heather Chaplin: social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

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