

1241263

Registered provider: Aspire Care and Education Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and provides care and accommodation for up to six children or young people who have learning disabilities and associated social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

The home has had no registered manager since 14 June 2018. There is a manager in post who has submitted an application to Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 30 to 31 October 2018

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 16 January 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/01/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/07/2017	Full	Good

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

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

Recommendations

- Staff should have the skills and confidence to communicate easily and understand the importance of listening to, involving and responding to the children they care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.10) In particular, support new staff to develop appropriate communication skills as quickly as possible.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

All children are making exceptional progress in this home, and this is enabling them to both explore new experiences and to join in with community activities. For example, some children can now tolerate eating with others, and do not routinely attack those people near to them. Other children no longer self-harm regularly, and their emotional presentation is more stable, less anxious and happier overall.

Much of this outstanding progress is because of the relentless focus that staff have on providing what is in the best interests of each individual child. As a social worker commented, 'Their [the staff group] commitment is fantastic. It's all about the relationship with them, and [the child] has made amazing progress.' Where children would also benefit from outside specialist help, staff are creative in sourcing what will work for them, for example therapy sessions via Skype.

Relationships with education providers are strong and involve daily contact and collaborative work over such areas as transitions and use of social stories. As such, education attendance for most children is excellent, but a small minority of children do not attend formal education. However, their education needs are still being addressed, and together with their local authority, the home has developed a structured education plan which is in place and being followed.

Children's views are actively sought and followed wherever possible. For example, staff regularly conduct a 'you said, we did' exercise with individual children which results in suitably individual outcomes such as the provision of a foot spa for one child and a regular soft-play session for another child. Staff and managers are endlessly patient at working through with individual children why some of their longer-term aspirations cannot be immediately met. If children are not happy with a decision they are assisted to complain, and each has personalised access to the complaints procedure in an individual format designed to meet their communication needs.

Children have access to a huge variety of well-planned experiences and activities both inside and outside the home. Some are active and social, such as horse-riding and trampolining, and others are more individual, such as lorry-spotting and Minecraft. Staff capture key aspects of these experiences in professionally produced photo albums which children will keep as happy memories and confidence-boosting records of their progress.

Staff treat children with exemplary levels of respect and dignity, such as following their preference to be called by a different first name. Staff try and reflect children's increasing interest in adolescent freedom, for example by researching with them when they can have an alcoholic drink, and encouraging them to be more involved in their own medication processes. This helps to give the children a sense of their own self-worth and of their potential to have an ever-developing self-identity.

Staff support children in having a variety of family contact experiences, both face-to-face

and virtual. Whatever the nature of the contact, staff strive to nurture these lifelong relationships by sending regular updates on the child's progress to families, and on occasion supporting bespoke chat forums such as individualised WhatsApp groups. These efforts help to reinforce sometimes fragile bonds.

To most appropriately meet a child's independence needs, staff have redesigned part of the building. This excellent piece of work has successfully enabled this child to begin working on the necessary skills for adulthood and is well grounded in the child-led pathway plan which was initiated by the home with strong social worker approval. Other children are also starting the process of learning to be as independent as possible, and a social worker remarked on one child's 'amazing' progress in self-care skills.

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

Risk management practice and the procedures linked with this are of the highest quality. Placement matching is thoughtful and thorough and is linked with a comprehensive impact assessment which assesses in detail the potential risk to other children's well-being. This highly considered approach to new admissions continues the home's primary focus on the impact on children of any action, and as far as possible ensures the safety of children already in the home.

Children's risk assessments are personalised, detailed, clear and regularly updated, and as such they represent excellent working tools for staff to use. Measures to reduce individual risks are imaginative and bespoke, for example developing a 'messy' activity area inside the home. Although some strategies to minimise risk are still being worked through, generally these creative solutions are very successful.

For most children, risks from self-injury and from attempts to injure others have reduced dramatically. Where there is still a residual pattern of risky behaviour, thorough monitoring is in place involving reporting back to other professionals. Staff are also extremely well briefed and have several well-rehearsed strategies to minimise any adverse impact from the risky behaviour.

Behaviour management practice is underpinned by the research-based 'positive behaviour' model and supported by staff communication based on the 'intensive interaction' model. As an independent reviewing officer said, 'This home has a no deficit or punishment model for children.' Most staff have an excellent understanding of these theories and how to successfully apply them in practice, although some newer staff sometimes lack confidence in communicating appropriately.

Staff know children extremely well and understand their individual triggers for risky behaviour. Staff appreciate that children's behaviours are a way of communicating and strive to interpret them and respond appropriately. Staff are adept at distraction and diversion, and physical interventions are sparingly used. When physical intervention is used, recording is appropriate and detailed, and these events are followed by helpful 'lessons learned' debriefs.

There have been no safeguarding notifications since the last inspection, but there have been allegations relating to historic incidents which have been well dealt with. Staff recruitment practice is thorough and is used well to help protect highly vulnerable children. Staff are well trained in protecting children from a wide range of environmental risks. For example, managers use the Breck foundation resources in relation to children remaining safe on the internet.

The physical environment of the home is comfortable but not over-stimulating, which helps keep children calm. Appropriate environmental checks are carefully carried out to help ensure the safety of the premises.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led by a management team which is ambitious for excellence for children in their care and has a very strong vision of how that can be achieved. The permanent manager is not yet registered, but her application is well underway, and she has successfully led two other children's homes as the registered manager. She is appropriately qualified as well as experienced, as are the two directors of the company who visit the home regularly.

This home opened in 2017, so it is a relatively new home. It is very well staffed with what a director referred to as 'cherry-picked' staff who come from diverse backgrounds, including specialist learning disability settings. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the high levels of support they receive, and this means that they are well placed to offer the same support to the children in their care.

Monitoring systems in this home are excellent and involve all members of the leadership team contributing by assessing different aspects of the home's functioning. The monitoring reports then come together in an overview document which is rigorously monitored, reviewed and updated.

A particularly noteworthy aspect of the monitoring systems is the 'triangle targets'. These are the individual outcomes that each child is working towards, and progress on these is regularly and thoroughly monitored by managers. This means that managers have excellent oversight of the progress that each child is making, and they are well placed to make any necessary adjustments.

Supervision and appraisal systems are efficient and effective in supporting and benchmarking staff performance. Team meetings are used strategically to further embed the leadership vision of a homely environment for very challenging children, and this helps secure staff's understanding of, and commitment to, this vision.

There is an exemplary learning culture in the home, with regular debriefs following events and a more structured response to fundamental issues. For example, the staff group has rapidly increased in size, which risks inconsistencies in delivering high-quality care to children. To ensure consistency, the leadership team has commissioned its own special educational needs coordinator and a speech and language therapist. These

specialists observe and report on practice and will then do coaching as needed.

Both social workers and education specialists are very pleased about the quality of partnership working in this home. As one external colleague said, 'Working with this home is always a really positive experience.'

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: 1241263

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Aspire Care and Education Services

Responsible individual: Jonathan Deslandes

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector(s)

Bridget Goddard, social care inspector

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