

1259734

Registered provider: Hampshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a purpose-built local authority home. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The home uses the 'Pillars of Parenting' model to work with and measure the progress of each child or young person.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 February 2018

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: This is the first inspection of the home.

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The manager and staff make great efforts to maintain positive relationships between themselves and children and young people, even when children struggle to reciprocate. One child described relationships as 'extremely,

extremely good', adding, 'I feel the love – it's in the house.'

- The model of care adopted by the provider has given staff a framework in which their work has focus and consistency. It has led to greater progress for children and young people than would have been thought likely so early in their placements.
- The home has been well designed to meet the needs of children and young people; they think highly of where they live, saying it feels 'like a family home'.
- Staff provide firm boundaries for children and young people within nurturing relationships. This is complemented by the excellent role-modelling of staff who help children and young people to devise ways they can achieve their own goals for behaving well and reducing risks.
- Children and young people are able to choose activities they would like to do, or join in with, and it is often simple pleasures shared with staff that have given them the most beneficial experiences.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The views, wishes and feelings of children and young people have not been sufficiently captured in plans made or records of significant discussions with young people, such as key-worker sessions.
- The manager has not had a clear understanding of some regulatory requirements. This has given rise to some minor lapses in processes, including recruitment checks, obtaining permission from a person who has parental responsibility for first aid to be administered, and timescales for monitoring incidents of restraint.
- Staff provide significant support to young people who move on from the home, but this is not clearly recorded in a way that gives a full account of what was undertaken.
- Risk assessments and behaviour management plans have not always captured the individual approaches to children's and young people's circumstances that staff are using to help support them.

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.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual satisfies the requirement that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (2)(d)) Specifically, ensure that if a person has previously worked in a position involving work with children or vulnerable adults, verification, so far as reasonably practicable, of the reason why the employment or position ended is obtained.	30/03/2018
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure. The registered person must ensure that within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person") has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. The registered person must ensure that within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a-c)) In particular, ensure that records demonstrate that these timescales have been adhered to.	30/03/2018

Recommendations

- Each child should have permission for staff to administer first aid and non-prescription medication from a person with parental responsibility for them recorded in their relevant plan. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.14)
- The registered person should work with the placing authority to ensure that each child's transition is planned and help each child to prepare for leaving both practically and emotionally. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.9)
In particular, ensure that transition plans are well documented.
- Children should be encouraged by staff to see the home's records as 'living documents' supporting them to view and contribute to the record in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.19)
- The responsible person must make and give effect to such arrangements as are appropriate, having regard to the size of his undertaking and the nature of its activities, for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventive and protective measures. The responsible person must record the arrangements referred to in paragraph (1) where he employs five or more employees (The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 11(1) and (2)(a))
In particular, record the names of all who participate in an emergency evacuation drill.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The manager and staff provide an environment in which children and young people feel a sense of belonging. They are successful in this because children described living here as like being in a family; one commented, 'We look after each other – like brother and sister.' There is an emphasis on establishing nurturing relationships in which children and young people begin to manage the difficult circumstances of their lives. As a result, they rely less on counter-productive defence mechanisms. The trust that ensues has led some children to talk and make disclosures about painful experiences. For others, progress is seen in much greater attendance at and engagement in school, improving self-care and in reducing behaviour that puts them at risk.

Few children and young people have a straight, upward path of progress, but the manager and staff display enormous patience and positive regard so that when young people appear to be rejecting them and make poor decisions, they know that the home remains a place of welcome and acceptance.

The manager and staff have a high level of knowledge of each child and young person that enables them to respond to their needs in ways that are highly individualistic. Professionals and most parents value the creative ways in which the home approaches care and works collaboratively with them. This frequently has a significant impact even in the early stages of a placement; one professional recounted visiting a young person just a few days after admission, saying, 'She looked a different child, happy and smiling. She talked fondly about staff and of having fun.'

When asked what was different now he was in the home, a recently admitted child responded, 'You get loved more,' explaining, 'You get taken to places you have never been before, going out on the bike, playing football and the skateboard park.' A young person said, 'We go out, cook dinner, watch a film – all the things a family should do.'

The purpose-built house is designed to meet the needs of children and young people, including having offices away from the communal areas so that activities there intrude as little as possible on life in the home. There have been continuous problems in the garden that have required contractors to come back to rectify problems. However, this has not been successful and has meant that large areas have been unusable. Staff have ensured that children have opportunities to go to other facilities, such as local parks, and no child said that this was a problem.

Recent admissions have been made swiftly, but this has been to the advantage of the children and young people coming to the home, and included staff spending considerable time with them before they arrived. The manager always considers the match with children and young people already living in the home, although when the move has been particularly quick an assessment of the risks has not been recorded. Children and young people are helped to quickly settle, particularly in making bedrooms 'their own' by the purchase of bedding and accessories, such as pictures. Appointments with professionals, including GPs and dentists, are made early on, giving children and young people the confidence that their health and well-being, which may previously have been neglected, are a priority.

A few parents feel that the emotional care offered by staff and their ability to provide a well-resourced environment undermines their relationship with their children, particularly early on in placements. However, as a professional supporting the home explained, the development of an emotionally secure base with staff, that many children and young people have not had elsewhere, 'is transferable'. This is illustrated by the recent return of one young person to previous carers, with the progress she made in the home continuing there.

For some young people, there is a dilemma in balancing the enjoyment of positive relationships in the home with loyalty to birth families. The manager and staff work hard to demonstrate that it is not a matter of making a choice and help them to find ways of benefiting from both.

Young people moving on are given the emotional and practical support to take the step, even if they feel daunted by the prospect. The home shares information and strategies they have found helpful with future carers, but accounts of the work undertaken to

prepare for a transition is incomplete and spread across different records. As a result, others wanting information about it later, including the young person, would find it hard to know what happened.

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

The provider has adopted a proven model to underpin work in the home. It provides a framework for the manager and staff, in conjunction with an educational psychologist, to understand children's and young people's behaviour and to respond to their needs. In this model, the development of warm, authentic relationships is regarded as key to helping children and young people to make progress.

Managers and staff identify risks and think together about ways of addressing these. Impact risk assessments are thorough documents, with the interests of both new children and existing residents considered throughout. However, other risk assessments and behaviour management plans tend to be generic, and the latter are not always available on case files. Staff know that some young people are vulnerable to sexual exploitation or have histories of self-harm and take steps to help manage these issues, but written assessments do not always address them. These shortfalls mean that staff, particularly those who are new, may not be aware of particular signs or responses that work best with individual children and young people.

Staff are well versed in following missing protocols if children or young people leave the home without permission, although the recording of incidents has not been accurate, due to a misunderstanding of what constitutes 'missing' and 'absconding'. Managers rectified this during the inspection. Safeguarding procedures are robust, and staff are fully aware of what to do if they have concerns for the safety of a child or young person. The manager has emphasised the need to report these promptly, following a single incident of there being a delay. No harm to the child occurred as a result, but the manager took decisive action to avoid a recurrence.

The provider follows safe recruitment practices which help to ensure the suitability of people being employed to work in the home, although attempts to establish why candidates had left all previous posts involving work with children or vulnerable adults had not been made.

Records indicate that incidents of physical intervention have been proportionate. Staff have helped young people to calm afterwards and to reflect on why they were restrained and to restore relationships. The manager has debriefed workers involved, and discussion with the team has led to staff changing behaviour management plans to avoid holds or change their use in future. These actions are not always within, or recorded as being within, the timescales required by regulation. Current recording formats lead to records being lengthy and details having to be written in several places.

Staff implement firm boundaries for children and young people to help them keep safe and behave in ways that take account of the needs of others. Examples include not having phones in bedrooms and not smoking. Positive behaviour is promoted, often with

appropriate humour. Staff help young people to work out their own strategies to reduce risks so that they 'own' them and are more likely to behave appropriately. This means that young people learn to manage age-appropriate experiences with acceptable levels of risk, such as unsupervised social activities with friends.

Staff hold emergency evacuation drills, including after children have been admitted or new staff join the team. However, records do not include an indication of who was present. It is therefore not possible to evidence when or how often individuals have participated.

Staff encourage children and young people to maintain healthy lifestyles; most are willing to improve their diet and take more exercise, particularly when workers model making good choices or accompany them on such things as walks and gym sessions. Medical records, including consents are in good order. However, those with parental responsibility have not been asked to give written permission for staff to apply first aid.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers are ambitious to develop the service offered by the home and improve the lives of the children and young people here. The registered manager and her deputy are aware of the strengths of the home and the staff who work in it and of the areas that need improvement.

Despite many members of the team having limited experience in children's residential care, skills gained in other fields are effectively utilised. The Pillars of Parenting approach helps them to consider strategies and particular actions to take for individual children and young people. They have access to consultation with an educational psychologist, which has helped all staff to develop their knowledge and skills very quickly. It has also meant that, as a new group, they have been able to manage the difficult process of forming a team approach around the model.

Team meetings and supervision have also assisted this process. Records demonstrate that supervision includes each staff member's personal well-being, practice and team working. The format helpfully provides for the recording of learning as well as actions for each area considered. Staff members report that supervision, induction and more informal support from managers and colleagues motivates them to manage the often-demanding aspects of the work and to approach it with confidence.

Staff engage well with external agencies to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people, particularly in regard to education and involvement with police. One professional described how she found this 'to be a very supportive home'. She went on to say, 'The staff are brilliant... they think about so much and keep coming up with ideas. They are on top of everything, like communication with school. They are good at involving parents, such as having the family round for Sunday dinner.'

Decisions arising out of statutory reviews and relevant plans are promptly acted on, ensuring that staff cooperate with external professionals to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people. Collaboration includes staff suggesting changes in

approach to comply more closely with the principles of the Pillars of Parenting model or challenging other agencies if the manager believes that plans made are not in children's and young people's best interests.

Managers and staff seek the views of children and young people through key-work sessions, house meetings and everyday conversations. However, these are not well represented in documentation, particularly in placement plans and records of key-work sessions. As children's and young people's opinions are not formally captured and shared, there is a potential for these not to be given due weight and consideration; as they do not see or have copies of key-work session records, children and young people may not see that their views have been taken into consideration or acted on. During the inspection, a new format was adopted that addresses the latter issue. In addition, case discussions were held that involved home staff, professionals and family, in which it was evident that the opinions of a young person were sought. Choices were offered to her that had a direct and considerable impact on plans for her placement, demonstrating that managers saw this as crucial to the prospect of a successful outcome.

The manager, ably supported by her deputy, has established a home that has quickly developed an approach to working with children and young people which is affirming, and effective. One professional summed it up, saying, 'This is one of the nicest homes I've been too. I have been impressed so far. They have done the work I've been asking for.'

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: 1259734

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hampshire County Council

Registered provider address: The Castle, Winchester SO23 8UG

Responsible individual: Susan Lomax

Registered manager: Lauren Moloney

Inspector

Chris Peel, 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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