

SC006010

Registered provider: Care Afloat Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private company. It provides care for one child who may have emotional and/or behavioural needs. The organisation offers an education service and therapeutic support from an external contractor.

The home is managed by an experienced and qualified registered manager.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 May 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 30 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/01/2020	Full	Good
22/08/2018	Full	Good
01/12/2017	Full	Good
01/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

One child has left the home since the last inspection. The child has benefited from the time spent living alone, supported by staff who were responsive to his known and emerging needs. The effectiveness of this support is evident in how the child has successfully transitioned to a group-living situation. The child's mother said: 'Staff were creative and persevered, breaking down barriers that made [name of child] feel secure and more confident. I am glad that he has moved to the manager's other home, where he continues to do well.'

One child has been admitted to the home. His needs were carefully assessed, and his transition involved meeting staff and visiting the home. The child confirmed that he is happy and that he was made to feel welcome when he arrived. When comparing the home to his last placement, the child said: 'The staff have good personalities. It's not just a job. They really care and do their job properly. It is good here.'

Care plans are detailed, understood and consistently implemented by staff. The manager is proactive in ensuring that any emerging issues are discussed, and that the right professionals and agencies are involved. For the child currently living in the home, this means that assessments relating to education and disability have now commenced.

Healthy living is promoted in this home. Children are encouraged to develop a varied and healthy diet and engage in regular exercise. They are supported to attend routine and emerging health appointments and follow medication regimes as prescribed. However, the same diligence is not afforded to medication records, which contained several recording errors.

Staff work closely with consultant therapists, who offer one-to-one sessions to the children as well as advice and guidance for staff. A visiting therapist said: 'Staff have a good understanding of [name of child's] needs. They give us a good picture of how he has been and what has happened during the week. The staff are supporting our work by sharing information, in particular conversations that [name of child] has about areas of concern.'

The child is not currently attending school. The manager has taken all the necessary steps to ensure that finding the right school for this child is a priority. An interim timetable has been put in place. However, delays in having work provided by the school mean that staff are occasionally unable to work to this timetable.

Staff go to great lengths to ensure children are supported to have their say and be involved in the decisions affecting their care. Barriers to communication and understanding are creatively overcome using a range of child-friendly strategies including emojis, photographs and simplified text documents.

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

Effective safeguarding contributes to each child's safety and well-being. The risk management elements of care planning are carefully considered. Managers analyse and consider past and current incidents when developing risk management strategies. This means that effective action is taken when responding to behaviours, such as going missing from home.

The manager and staff know what action should be taken in response to allegations and safeguarding concerns, of which there have been none. Effective partnerships have been established with the police, substance misuse services and the youth offending workers and used to further promote children's safety and well-being. A youth offending worker said: 'The staff are brilliant with [name of child]. The communication and support for us has been great. They always support [name of child] to attend his appointments.'

The manager and staff take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. A range of approaches are used to help children to understand the concept of risk to themselves and others and make better choices in the future. The effectiveness of this approach was evident in the removal of a court-directed order for the child who has left the home.

The staff act as positive role models. They look for opportunities to acknowledge, praise and reward positive behaviour. Underpinned by positive relationships, staff take a proportionate approach to managing challenging behaviour, which is a rarity. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the fact that there have been no physical restraints since the last inspection.

Children are protected by a range of health and safety risk assessments and routine checks. However, propping designated fire doors open and not storing fire extinguishers in a way that allows clear access has the potential to compromise children's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is run by an experienced and suitably qualified registered manager. She is supported well by a competent and enthusiastic deputy manager. This arrangement works well and enables the manager to split her time effectively between this and a second home for which she is registered.

The manager provides strong leadership. She models an approach that recognises and responds to each child's individual needs and has been influential in helping children to progress, relative to their time living at the home.

The manager leads by example and has high expectations of the highly experienced and stable staff team. Staff talk with enthusiasm about their work, demonstrating a warm affection for both the child in placement and the child that has left.

Staff are highly complimentary about the support that they receive from the manager. They describe the manager as always being available, solution-focused and committed to improving the lives of children.

Cohesive links between induction, supervision and appraisal maximise staff development and potential. Mandatory training has continued to be delivered during the pandemic, ensuring that staff maintain their core skills. The manager has been proactive in sourcing needs-led training and/or researching and delivering bespoke training to the team. This has been effective in helping staff to develop communication strategies and an understanding of autism spectrum disorder.

The manager knows the strengths of the home. This is because she maintains close oversight of staff practice, care planning and children's progress. She implements a range of effective internal quality assurance processes that are used to promote an improvement agenda. Team meetings are used effectively to share ideas, and staff share the responsibility for making the home the best that it can be.

Suitable action has been taken to address the three requirements from the last inspection. This has contributed to making the environment safer, improved planning around admissions and a statement of purpose that accurately reflects the services and support on offer in the home. Four recommendations were also made and have been suitably addressed.

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, the 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
If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(1) applies to the home— paragraph (1) does not apply; and the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)) Specifically, ensure that staff do not prop open any designated fire doors, and clear the cupboard under the stairs to allow clear access to the fire extinguishers.	28 May 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that education work is received in time for the child to engage in learning in accordance with the agreed interim plan. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that accurate records of the administration of medication are maintained. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: SC006010

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Care Afloat Limited

Registered provider address: 158-160 Birkrig, Digmoor Parade, Skelmersdale
WN8 9HP

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: Anita Higham

Inspector

Paul Scott, 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
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