

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	16/09/2016
Unique reference number	SC012021
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school
Registered provider	The Loddon Foundation Ltd
Responsible individual	Marion Cornick
Registered manager	Joy Wake
Inspectors	Keith Riley/Sophie Wood

Inspection date	16/09/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC012021

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children build strong and trusting relationships with staff. The adults around them understand what they are trying to communicate. Children are confident that staff will meet their needs.
- Children make good progress in their self-management skills, social interaction and communication.
- Staff are totally committed to their role. They demonstrate a caring attitude and 'go the extra mile' to make sure that they meet the needs of the children whom they care for.
- The management team has been successful in recruitment. It has used imaginative and innovative solutions to address the issues. A diverse range of qualified staff are now in place. Morale is significantly improved.
- The management team ensures that children are at the centre of practice. They consider the wider family and are successful at helping to re-establish positive relationships between parents, brothers and sisters, and the children.
- Staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of safeguarding issues. They apply their training in practice and keep children safe. They use any physical intervention as a last resort.
- The 'learning for life' curriculum means that education and care are closely inter-related. Care staff use every opportunity to ensure that children learn, with suitably structured 'chill time' for children on the autistic spectrum.
- The registered manager ensures that the home is adapted to meet the needs of each child. She demonstrates a specialist knowledge of the essence of a low arousal environment that is personalised for each child.
- Children benefit from the oversight of the nursing team. They have professionals who advocate for them to ensure that they are getting the treatment that they need, as well as routine checks and vaccinations. Staff know and follow the guidance to keep children as safe and healthy as possible.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
Regulation 10 In order to meet the health and well-being standard, the registered person is required to ensure — (2)(a)(i))that staff help each child to achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans.	31/10/2016
Regulation 14 In order to meet the care planning standard, the registered person is required to— 2)(b)(ii) ensure that arrangements are in place to manage and review the placement of each child in the home.	31/10/2016

Full report

Information about this children's home

This school provides education and residential care for up to 30 pupils from eight to 19 years of age who have severe and complex learning difficulties associated with autism. The home operates as a charitable trust and, as it is a school as well, it is approved by the Department for Education.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
17/07/2015	Full	Good
19/02/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/11/2014	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
A key strength of the home are the relationships that children form with staff. Children clearly enjoy being with them. A parent said that her child is really happy in the home and that 'the staff know her to a tee'. Staff are responsive and are able to divert children away from the need to use challenging behaviour as a form of communication. Children who struggle with social interaction because of their disability make good progress. Staff create a calm environment to meet their needs and promote socially acceptable behaviour. Some children, with a starting point of engaging in very little social interaction, are able to tolerate other children in groups. Other children are able to look at a book independently, from a starting point of rocking on the floor. Some are able to have their hair cut, after a long period of not being able to tolerate anyone touching their hair. Staff celebrate all their successes, such as posting 'I can' pictures on the wall or presenting an award at the weekly 'star assembly.' A member of staff said, '(name of child) has made massive progress. He is now calm and uses his photos well to communicate'. Staff are attentive to the well-being of each child. A parent said, 'Whenever we visit, she is always dressed beautifully. It is obvious that she is extremely well cared for.' Staff are committed to their role. For example, some raised money for the charity in their spare time. The proceeds were of direct benefit to the children in the home through the purchase of specialist equipment. Staff are effective in seeking the views, wishes and feelings of children, some of whom have severe communication difficulties. They use sign language, photos and picture exchange, as well as a sensitivity to the idiosyncrasies of each child. They learn how children are communicating their needs non-verbally and respond quickly. Staff are keen that the children access activities as much as their mainstream peers do. Team coordinators carefully plan the logistics of the week ahead to ensure that children access a wide range of stimulating and meaningful activities, such as a boat trip or an activity centre. They support them to participate in swimming galas and to undertake the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Children are able to access the wider community, for example exploring stone sculptures while on a trip to another town. They are inspired to create their own sculptures and, with the support of staff, to display their own creations in the garden. Staff are attentive to the health needs of the children. They highlight any concerns	

to the nurse, who pursues the necessary clinical referral so that children get the treatment that they need. Children benefit from close attention to their diet. Staff record food intakes and follow any dietary guidelines. They understand the difficulties that some children on the autistic spectrum have with food, such as the texture, smell or colour. They persist to try to improve their diet. A parent said, '(name of child) has made good progress. His diet is now varied.'

Care staff further the education of children in their day-to-day work. An example is supporting a child to learn how to count seconds while cleaning his teeth. The senior management team has recently introduced 'green weeks', where there is less intensive education and the children enjoy a structured holiday period in a similar way to their mainstream peers. This prepares them for the real world.

When thinking about care, the registered manager considers the wider family. She ensures that there is good support and strategies to make contact a positive experience. Staff mark the success of activities with photographs, sometimes producing a story of events in a high-quality book presented to the family. Family relationships that were once strained improve significantly. Families have the use of a parent room where they can cook a meal and spend time with their child. Parents can choose to do this with staff assistance, if they want. Children are able to enjoy the whole day with their relatives in a family-like environment. Staff keep parents informed on a regular basis. A parent said, 'We receive weekly phone calls from staff, and also my daughter sends a letter home every week.' Another parent said, 'I never have to chase any messages I leave. Staff always phone back very quickly.'

Staff empower children to be as independent as possible. They use an individualised approach to ensure that each child is making progress, such as in personal care or developing cooking skills. A parent said, '(name of child) is supported in learning independence skills and has access to work experience.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Staff ensure that risk assessments underpin the range of activities and hobbies that children pursue and are not risk averse. The registered manager has reviewed the individual risk assessments as requested at the last inspection. For example, the frequency of night-time checks is now proportionate to the level of need. Staff promote children's health. They know what signs to look for in children with specific medical conditions that indicate that they are deteriorating or are in need of emergency medication. They are confident to apply their training in practice and are clear on which health professionals to consult. They provide support at routine appointments that children on the autistic spectrum may find difficult, such as	

dental checks. A parent described the support as excellent, after a trip to the dentist. She said, 'This is the best home that he has ever been in.' Staff ensure that they do routine monitoring such as height and weight. Senior managers are clear on individual plans for children, such as monitoring body mass index as well as body shape. In one case, staff are not fully aware of the long-term strategy to promote health. They have written a report for a statutory meeting that lacks detail of the plan. There is no immediate risk.

Staff are knowledgeable of child protection and safeguarding practice. They absorb their professional training and apply it. They instinctively know when something is not right and explore that feeling in discussion with other safeguarding professionals, taking swift and decisive action when necessary to keep children as safe as possible. This is a culture where staff will challenge the practice of their peers in a supportive and non-threatening environment, and are committed to safeguarding the children in their care.

The approach of staff to behaviour management is good. Staff diligently write incident reports as soon after an episode as possible, so that there is an accurate record. Key staff review such records with the senior management team. They analyse and reflect on events, identifying potential antecedents and trends. They have a clear process in place to review strategies in the behaviour management plan. Staff only use physical intervention as a last resort. They carefully think about any spikes in behaviour. They consider the possible reasons, for example the child's current health, such as earache, and the impact on their behaviour. A parent reported that there has been a significant reduction in self-injurious behaviour. Another parent said, 'They have excellent supportive and behaviour strategies in place to help her to manage her feelings and behaviour.'

Staff keep the children in their care under close supervision, due to their needs. It is unlikely that children will go missing from care. Nevertheless, the senior managers are not complacent. They have a detailed plan of what to do in such an event and practise it. Staff are clear on their individual responsibilities.

The registered manager has a good vetting process in place when recruiting staff. She shows a good knowledge of safer recruitment practice. She has recognised the need to renew disclosure and barring checks for long serving members of staff and this is underway.

The registered manager considers the risks in the event of a child activating the fire alarm. She has worked with fire professionals to modify the system so that there is a pre-warning alarm, during which staff ascertain if a manual call point has been activated because of a fire. Staff were observed to follow the procedure and avoid an unnecessary evacuation that has the potential to cause children distress.

	Judgement grade
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The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The senior management team is showing good leadership. The registered manager has developed an effective, professional working relationship with the new headteacher. Together, they have tackled the issues of staffing. Through creative and imaginative ideas, they have successfully recruited the full complement of staff who are well qualified. Morale has significantly improved. The senior leadership team has a vision of how to run and improve the home. Overall, care planning and recording are very good. The registered manager has taken the previous requirement very seriously and reviewed each risk assessment. She ensures that staff are fully aware of the targets for each child, especially using 'pen pictures' and key targets. These are well known to staff, being easily accessible to them. Some records lack detail as to progress. For example, a child now tolerates the presence of other children on an activity, but the record lacks detail as to how many children and for how long. The registered manager ensures that the attendee at statutory reviews provides a written report of the discussion and outcomes. However, she does not have a system in place to ensure that the home receives statutory minutes, such as looked after child review minutes. The registered manager ensures that staff have regular supervision. Staff speak positively of the process and the 'open door' policy. They say they find her both supportive and approachable. The registered manager recognises the need to provide further detail and depth in some written supervision records. The registered manager adapts the home to meet the individual needs of each child. Some children are demanding of their environment, due to their disability. Staff modify bedrooms and key areas into a low-arousal space, keeping them as personalised as possible to minimise children's anxiety. A parent said, 'They have set her room up so that she is safe'. Some of the houses on the site are top class. Some houses still need improving. Particular areas have already been improved, such as a replacement kitchen and air conditioning in bedrooms. The registered manager has a rolling refurbishment programme and development plan to improve the environment within realistic time frames. She has introduced an electronic communication system for staff to make requests about minor maintenance. Staff report a considerable improvement in the speed that maintenance staff address such tasks. The registered manager ensures that staff are suitably trained. New staff speak in the most positive terms of the induction process. They say that their manager supports them very well and there are plenty of 'shadow shifts'. New staff see good practice modelled. More established staff say that their ongoing development is good. They have bespoke training, such as in the administration of emergency medication or in managing health conditions, to meet the individual needs of the children. A member of staff said, 'We have a wide variety of regular training that	

enables us to carry out our roles effectively.'

The registered manager has developed good working relationships with other professionals, including child and adolescent mental health services and the designated officers in local authorities. She ensures that the needs of the child are at the centre of practice and that staff advocate for them. A member of staff said, 'There is a multidisciplinary approach to all we do, and everyone is looking to improve and enhance the quality of life for the children, whether this be through creative learning opportunities, learning the most basic of independence skills or fun activities they might otherwise never have the opportunity to engage in.'

The registered manager has a good overview of day-to-day care. She uses other monitoring systems, such as the monthly independent visitor's evaluation and the six-monthly statutory report, to drive forward improvement.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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 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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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