

SC012021

Registered provider: The Loddon Foundation Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care and education for up to 31 children and young people aged eight to 19 years with autism, severe learning disabilities and/or associated complex needs.

Children and young people live in five houses, and all attend the school which is integrated with the home. There were 29 children and young people living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school. The school operates as a charitable trust and is registered with the Department for Education.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since March 2018.

Inspection dates: 25 to 27 June 2024

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	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 19 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/10/2023	Full	Outstanding
24/05/2022	Full	Outstanding
21/04/2021	Full	Outstanding
10/10/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress due to their warm and caring relationships with staff who know them well. Staff describe the home as being like a family. Children are confident when in their homes, making their views and wishes clear through their individualised communication styles. Staff are attuned to children's needs and subtle communication cues, meaning that children are listened to and understood.

Parents, carers and external professionals are positive about the care and support that children receive. They comment positively on the progress that children make, including in their personal care and their ability to communicate their needs. Generally, they are appreciative of the level of communication with the home, although there are some concerns that communication at times is less effective when key staff are away.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities, on and off site, as part of the 24-hour curriculum. There are a wealth of opportunities on site for the children to access and enjoy. These include a farm, with baby goats and a therapy dog in training, areas for horticulture and a swimming pool.

Children are well supported to understand their own and others' cultural heritage. Staff ensure that children can pray when they wish, and they cook foods from their own and children's cultures. They also encourage activities such as trying on traditional dress and playing musical instruments.

Moves into the home are well planned and tailored to each child's needs. Staff prepare children for adulthood, and support parents to seek the best home for their child to move on to. Parents are highly complementary of this support, at what they say is an 'incredibly worrying' time.

Children's health and well-being needs are well understood. Children are supported to learn about healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. The therapeutic support services are fully integrated into the children's care. This approach ensures that children can develop their skills and achieve to the best of their abilities. Parents comment on how well their children can now communicate because of the support from the therapies team and staff.

Staff work with partner agencies, including the local doctors and child and adolescent mental health services. This helps to ensure that children's needs are well met. Medication storage and administration in the home are generally safe and well managed. However, there have been some errors in records when distributing medication to the homes from the main store, meaning that some medication cannot be accounted for.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children's actions and demeanour show that they feel confident and safe in their home. The staff know each child's risks and vulnerabilities and do what they can to support them and keep them safe. There have been some gaps and delays in reporting safeguarding concerns to Ofsted. However, this is improving, and recent concerns have been reported swiftly and effectively to both the local authority designated officer and Ofsted.

The homes' practice of leaving bathroom or bedroom doors ajar or open when children are being supported with personal care does not promote children's dignity or their awareness of safety. Leaders' rationale for this approach is not in line with regulations or guidance.

Staff understand that children communicate through their behaviours. They use their relationships with children to calm situations and understand what the child is communicating. There are a high number of recorded physical interventions, although these are mostly brief 'guides' to prevent a child from hurting themselves or others. Records of interventions are not always clear. Some are completed by staff who were not involved in the incident, meaning they may not be accurate. Additionally, it is not consistently clear what actions have been taken when a hold has been used.

At times, staff use 'restrictions of movement' as a strategy to help children to manage their behaviour. This relates to movement in areas of the home. These strategies are used as the least invasive method to keep children safe. Clear records are usually kept when such restrictions are used. However, on occasion, the record of the intervention lacks clarity and has not been promptly reviewed by senior leaders. This undermines senior leaders' ability to quickly identify any patterns and themes or ensure that each restriction has been used in the best interests of the child.

Some of the homes are poorly maintained. Some cookers do not work, there are some trip hazards where flooring has been pulled up and the cleanliness of some toilets is not always maintained. Some of the decor is tired and requires a refresh. Some ongoing issues with damp are being remedied and there is a detailed development plan in place.

Children who are at risk of going missing or harming themselves are well supported. Joint working with other professionals and detailed plans mean that staff know how to respond in these circumstances. The risks to children have reduced because of the support from staff. For example, one child very rarely bites themselves now as staff have helped them to better communicate their needs.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There has been a recent change of responsible individual and the former responsible individual and headteacher were away at the time of this inspection. The changes in management are not impacting the day-to-day experiences for children. Staff know who

to go to and say that they are well supported by the registered manager and other senior staff.

Staff supervision is regular, and staff say that they find this a useful space to reflect on their practice and consider any training or development that they may want or need. Training is tailored to the needs of the children. Staff can request updates, refreshers or suggest training that may be useful. Staff are supported to complete their formal qualifications to ensure that there is a well-trained team.

There are currently several staff vacancies across the home. The recruitment team is using all avenues to recruit suitable staff. The use of agency staff does not negatively impact on the relationships that children make with staff or the care that they receive. Agency staff are consistent, and they receive the same training and support as permanent staff. Small gestures such as being given mugs, seeds or stickers make staff feel valued.

Leaders in the home know the children well and monitor and evaluate their progress regularly. Plans are updated with the multidisciplinary team, who are not averse to allowing children to take sensible risks, and they support children to achieve their best. This joined-up approach means that children have a rounded experience and all staff working across education, care and therapies are consistent in their approach.

Children's progress is celebrated, no matter how small the step. Managers and staff talk fondly about the children and how far they have come.

The registered manager has a clear understanding of the service and the plans for development. The manager is open to change and recognises the need to monitor and review the effectiveness of the current approaches to care. The senior leaders are aware of the risks of closed cultures developing and have safely opened the facilities and grounds to other schools in the community to reduce this.

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
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) In particular, ensure that the homes are safe, and well maintained, cleaned and decorated.	9 August 2024
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected; children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	9 August 2024

In particular, ensure that children have privacy and dignity when using bathrooms or in their rooms.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	9 August 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they are working in partnership with other professionals and parents and/or carers, including communicating regularly about children's day-to-day experiences and care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.7)
- The registered person should ensure that all medication is transferred accurately and safely between the main store and the individual homes. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that all reports of physical interventions, including restrictions of movement, are explicitly clear. In particular, that records are completed by the staff involved in the incident and are promptly and consistently reviewed by the appropriate senior staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

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: SC012021

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: The Loddon Foundation Ltd

Responsible individual: Joy Wake

Registered manager: Timothy Clark

Inspectors

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector
Joanna Heller, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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