

SC030967

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority and provides short breaks and two residential placements for children with learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2021.

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.

We last visited this setting on 3 December 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 June 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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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 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: 30 July 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/07/2019	Full	Outstanding
06/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
11/09/2017	Full	Outstanding
28/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make exceptional progress because of the specialist care provided by the staff. Detailed and individualised care plans help staff to support children to thrive and make measurable and sustainable progress in all areas of their development. For example, one child has taken positive control of their toileting routine. For another child, they are now able to speak in complete sentences and their vocabulary continues to grow. These are life-changing achievements for the children and as a result, children's confidence and self-esteem are clearly evident. Children's families are exceptionally positive about the home. One parent said, 'It makes [child's name] so happy coming here and I know he is safe and looked after.'

Staff help the children to lead healthy lifestyles, eat a good diet and take part in regular exercise. The chef tailors the menu around children's specific dietary needs to ensure that they enjoy a balanced diet. Staff support children to attend any routine health and medical appointments. The registered manager ensures that the children have access to specialist emotional or mental health and well-being support. This means that children receive individualised healthcare that reflects their bespoke needs.

Children's bedrooms are personalised and clean, although at the time of the inspection, one bedroom did have an unpleasant smell due to the location of a clinical waste disposal bin. The rest of the home is clean and well maintained. There are photographs of the children on the walls, easily accessible books and toys and a sensory room that children can use at their leisure. This creates an environment where children flourish and enjoy spending time. One child put on a show for other children and staff; this is an innovative way to build the children's confidence and self-esteem.

Children learn appropriate cognitive skills, such as tying their shoelaces and riding a bike, that support their dexterity. These are skills and experiences that children will continue to use throughout their lives.

Staff encourage and support children to participate in a range of activities, such as going to trampoline parks, going on holidays and enjoying walks on the beach. All activities are designed to challenge the children's physical capabilities and this in turn supports the development of their social skills. The experiences that children enjoy would not be possible without the support of the exceptionally competent staff team.

Children naturally gravitate towards staff for care and comfort, such as cuddles and hugs. This means that the children have secure and safe attachments with staff and feel comfortable in the home.

Many of the children have additional needs that impact on their ability to articulate their views and opinions verbally. The staff use a variety of communication methods to support children to express their preferences and to be involved in decision-making.

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

Health and safety concerns were identified within the grounds during the inspection. Weedkiller was stored in a shed with no door and an access ramp was not securely fixed to the wall. The registered manager took immediate action to secure the ramp and remove the weedkiller to prevent harm to children. Nevertheless, staff did not notice these shortfalls.

Staff know the children well and have a good understanding of their specific risks and vulnerabilities. These are reflected in clear plans and risk assessments that help staff to manage these risks appropriately. The registered manager regularly reviews children's risk assessments and always does so following any incidents of concern. This provides staff with an insight into the frequency of the presenting risks and the effectiveness of the steps taken to reduce these.

Managers and staff provide stability and continuity of care to the children and families who use the service. This means that children and their families are able to build close and trusting relationships with the staff. This ensures that children feel safe and secure when they are at the home, and that children's families are confident that their children are safe, and that they are well looked after. Parents recognise that their children enjoy going to the service. When asked to describe how the staff manage incidents that may potentially cause a child distress or harm, a parent said: 'They are absolutely brilliant. I just can't fault them at all. My child is safe and happy and not stressed at all.'

Detailed plans help staff to manage children's behaviour and staff quickly respond to these incidents. Consequently, there are only a few occasions when staff use physical restraint to keep children or others safe. Following these incidents, staff and children participate in debriefs and discuss their responses to the situation. This means that the registered manager can review these incidents and when needed, ensure that staff use a different approach. This continual learning and evaluation results in a reduction in the number of negative incidents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is new in post. She is making positive changes that are of benefit to staff, and consequently children, such as introducing new and meaningful documentation that reflects children's progress.

Children's records are well organised in a way that enables the registered manager to track and monitor children's progress effectively against their personal targets. Consequently, the registered manager is able to adjust practice and routines in the home to continually and consistently support children to achieve their goals.

The registered manager makes sure that staff receive regular and reflective supervision, and that they are able to participate in the development of the home through effective team meetings. The home operates an open-door ethos where leaders and managers are also available for discussions outside of supervisions and team meetings. This promotes a cohesive culture which means that leaders, managers and staff work together to focus on meeting children's needs.

Staff benefit from specialist training, such as play therapy. This helps them engage effectively with children and to use this engagement to stimulate children's sensory and motor skills.

The registered manager and staff team are highly valued by their fellow professionals. Feedback is consistent in recognising the positive care and help that the registered manager and staff provide for children and the exceptionally positive impact that this has on children's development. Other professionals, such as children's social workers, recognise that the registered manager is a strong advocate for the children and will escalate concerns to ensure that the children's rights are promoted.

The registered manager has a clear passion for the home and continually demonstrates her sense of responsibility ownership and dedication. She is innovative with her ideas, such as creating memory books for the children and sending education and activity packs out to families during the COVID-19 pandemic for children who were unable to attend the service. This approach means that children's day-to-day experiences are greatly enhanced because of their involvement with this home.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d)) In particular, ensure that all potential hazards to children's safety are removed and/or made safe to prevent injury.	20 July 2021

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the children's bedrooms are clean and fresh, and that the home should, as far as possible, maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC030967

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool, Durham
TS24 8AY

Responsible individual: Jane Young

Registered manager: Natasha Salmon

Inspectors

Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspector
Deb Duffy, Social Care Inspector

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