

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. It provides short-breaks and four longer-term residential placements for children with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2021.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 February 2025

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: 12 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2024	Full	Good
22/11/2022	Full	Outstanding
08/06/2021	Full	Outstanding
30/07/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff are dedicated to supporting children to achieve their potential. Staff and the manager set targets for the children, which helps them to make significant progress in all areas of their lives. One child has been supported to learn Makaton so they can communicate effectively with other children in the home. This supports children to build relationships with others. Another child has progressed from being non-verbal to being able to communicate effectively. This has broadened the social world of this child and has better enabled them to have a voice.

Children are remarkably well supported when they are introduced to the home. Staff have a range of ways to obtain information about the child, such as observing them in school and speaking with families. This helps to assess if staff can meet the child's individual needs. Where possible, the manager will arrange stays so that children can spend time with their friends. This helps children to maintain important relationships and contributes towards the children's progress with their social skills and self-confidence.

Staff personalise the method of communication they use with each child based on children's individual need. This extends to the social stories that staff create, which help children to understand any changes to their usual routine. This has helped one child to understand the reason they were being re-introduced to an important family member and contributed towards an especially successful outcome.

Children are exceptionally well supported with their education. This extends to children who visit for short breaks. Staff creatively provide children with additional learning to develop their skills and knowledge, such as creating science experiments in the garden. The manager also liaises with children's teachers to ensure that there is a consistent approach to managing behaviour. For one child, this approach has resulted in no incidents in the past year in school. It has supported another child to participate in a class of thirty children, from a starting point of a class of five children. Another child's attendance has increased from 60% to 100%. The ethos that the staff adopt to learning contributes towards exceptional outcomes for children.

Children are extremely well supported with transitions. Staff who currently work in this home will be moving with two children who are going to live in a newly established residential home. This helps children to maintain trusting relationships and will minimise any anxieties that they may face.

Children and their families build trusting relationships with staff. Families value the additional support that staff provide. For example, staff support families who struggle to attend medical appointments with their children outside of children's stays. Staff also contact children's families for an update in advance of their stay so that any necessary adjustments can be made to their child's care. Families are provided with a monthly newsletter which contains details of local events and activities, and a thorough report

after their child's stay. This communication is vital for parents to reassure them that their child is safe and well cared for during their stay.

The home has undergone an extensive refurbishment, which is still in progress. This has contributed towards a more homely environment for the children.

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

Staff understand the needs of the children well. Children's care plans and risk assessments are detailed and personalised. They are updated regularly and contain clear strategies that support staff in caring for the children.

Incidents are recorded in detail by staff and include body maps of any injuries. This helps the manager to be satisfied that staff are following the necessary safeguarding procedures. Physical interventions are rarely used and only to help to keep children safe during an incident. Incidents and physical interventions have reduced in frequency because of the relationships the staff have with the children. Staff always communicate with children after an incident to try to help them understand the need for the intervention. This helps children to understand that staff want to help them to stay safe.

Staff support the children with their medical appointments. Staff contribute towards the review of children's prescribed medication to ensure that it meets the needs of the child. The staff have helped one child to understand that medical appointments and personal hygiene routines do not always mean a painful experience for them. This has resulted in the child attending all required medical appointments and has improved their personal hygiene and independence.

Due to the complex needs and vulnerability of the children accessing the service, external doors are operated by a key fob to help to keep children safe. Some internal doors are operated by using a keypad. However, monitoring devices are only used in specific situations to keep children safe and with the consent of those with parental responsibility.

Allegations made by children are responded to quickly. The necessary safeguarding steps are taken to help to keep children safe. However, the manager has failed to notify Ofsted of one allegation. Although the outcome of the investigation was that the allegation was unfounded, this prevents inspectors from being assured that the provider took appropriate action to safeguard children.

Staff generally adopt an approach of applying natural consequences to children's behaviour. For example, if a child kicks a ball into a neighbour's garden, the child is helped to understand they need to wait for the neighbour to return this before they can play with the ball again. However, when consequences are used, they are not always recorded in a way that allows the manager to review the effectiveness of the consequence.

There has been one error in the administration of medication to a child. This was responded to well and the child was unharmed. The manager has implemented additional monitoring systems to reduce the likelihood of this reoccurring.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is ambitious for the children in her care. She is dedicated to providing all children with an equal experience regardless of their level of need. She actively seeks to reduce the stigma and restrictions that are associated with children's disabilities. This provides children visiting for short breaks with experiences they are unable to be provided with at home. One staff member described the manager as inspirational.

The therapeutic approach adopted by the manager is embedded in staff practice. Staff understand their model of care exceptionally well and know how to apply this to meet the needs of the children. This consistent approach contributes towards the exceptional outcomes for children.

The manager sources specific additional training for staff and invites education professionals and families to these events. This contributes towards a consistent approach to children's needs being met, whatever environment they are in.

The manager is creative in satisfying herself that staff know the children well. She uses supervision sessions, team meetings and group supervisions to discuss all the children who visit or live in the home. She provides staff with regular quizzes to test their knowledge. This creates additional opportunities for learning and reflective discussions.

The manager is responsive to the needs of children and makes adjustments to help to improve their stay. When necessary, the manager employs additional bank staff ensuring that the same staff are used to provide continuity of care.

Some documents were seen to be missing some dates and signatures by the author of the documents. This has not been picked up through management audits and oversight of those documents.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's case records must be signed and dated by the author of the entry, and where management oversight is required, this is clearly signed and dated also. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that Ofsted is notified of any allegation made by a child against a staff member as specified in regulation 40. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)
- The registered person should ensure that all sanctions are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and that the principles as set out in 9.35 are respected. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

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 TS24 8AY

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Natasha Salmon

Inspectors

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

Kirstie Sutherland, Social Care Inspector

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