

SC034953

Registered provider: Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority-run home for up to five children aged between 12 and 18 years old. Care is provided for children who need a stable placement until they can achieve independence. The home also accommodates children who are in the process of being reunited with their families or carers.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 9 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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: 9 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/10/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
10/07/2019	Full	Inadequate
04/12/2018	Full	Outstanding
17/10/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children live in a home where they feel part of a family. Some children have been living at the home for over four years. This has provided them with a strong sense of stability. All of the children enjoy excellent relationships with staff. This home replicates one of family life and the sense of warmth and nurture is evident throughout.

The manager and staff value the importance of children's family and friends. They advocate on children's behalf to spend further time with family and provide supporting evidence to ensure that decisions are in the best interests for all. Children voice that their family relationships have improved as a result of the support provided by staff.

Children's friends are known and welcomed into the home. They are seen as an important part of the child's life, and work is undertaken with both children to ensure that relationships are focused on mutual respect. Children are able to talk to staff about any worries and receive the support they need because of this open approach.

All of the children have made significant progress from their starting points. The staff work with children to ensure that they know the importance of education and to help them overcome any barriers to learning. Education has been difficult for some children, but with the support and tenacity of the manager they now attend regularly. This gives the children the best possible chance to achieve their future goals.

The staff worked hard to engage children during the period of national COVID-19 restrictions. They incorporated fun learning activities into children's daily routines. As the restrictions have lifted, staff and children have embraced the opportunities available to them and have taken part in numerous activities, including holidays to the coast with all of the children.

The manager has built strong links with the therapeutic team to understand the impact of the trauma children have experienced and how this affects the way that children respond. She has embedded this way of thinking into the team, which has enabled staff to support the children more effectively. Other professionals have been invited into meetings with the therapy team to support staff learning and understanding. This has ensured that children receive the best possible care from those around them.

Children are encouraged to explore their interests, heritage and sexual identity. Staff respond quickly when children share how they feel. This helps to ensure that children feel listened to and have access to the support they need.

Achievements are celebrated and daily life is captured in a child-focused way that children can access, including after they have left. Journey books are seen as an extension of this and are live projects that continue to be built on. The staff team recognises the importance of children having these memories and shares them with family, if appropriate, to ensure that these memories continue to be held.

Although there is some work to be done to the physical building, the team has worked hard to overcome this. Efforts are made to ensure that the home is well maintained and is decorated to a high standard. Children have decorated their rooms to their taste and are comfortable in their environment.

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

The ethos of the home is one of encouraging positive behaviour, kindness and respect. Staff work effectively as a team, and this means that children are supported in a consistent way. Staff are skilled and meticulous and have a detailed understanding of children's needs. This helps them to lessen children's anxieties and enables them to channel behaviour in a positive direction.

The dynamics of the children living together is recognised and well understood. Incidents between children are well managed and defused quickly. Children share how they rebuild these relationships and resolve their issues as they would in a family home.

The manager has excellent oversight of incidents in the home and is quick to respond, ensuring that concerns are escalated to the right people at the right time. When needed, preventative work is undertaken with the children, including from outside agencies. This helps to better protect children from harm.

The staff explore with children the reasons for any incidents, showing curiosity without any blame or shame. Children actively engage in these discussions as a result of the approach used by staff.

Missing from home episodes are rare. However, when incidents do occur staff know how to respond. The manager recognises the potential risk of this happening and ensures that missing person plans are kept up to date with information to further support staff.

Risks associated with the individual children having internet access are understood. Children are given guidance and support to help them to understand how to stay safe online and appropriate websites they can access. Individualised plans are in place to monitor children's use to reduce the risks associated with online activity.

Behaviour management plans are up to date and provide clear strategies for staff to follow. The plans are reviewed and shared with staff quickly after incidents to

update strategies and implement new plans. This helps to ensure that staff know what action to take to better protect the children.

Staff educate children on the risks that are posed from society. This gives children the knowledge they need to keep themselves safe as they move on from living at the home.

Negative consequences are used, but are proportionate and involve the child. Extensive work is completed with the children to help reduce the overall risk and/or behaviour. Children know the importance of making amends and are able to share the consequences of their actions on themselves and others.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has worked hard to build a staff team that shares her vision for the home. She wants what is best for the children and this is evident in how she and the staff advocate for children. The manager understands the home's strengths and the areas for development and has clear plans in place to address these.

Communication has significantly improved between the team, which has increased the consistency of the staff's responses. The manager recognised that team meetings held virtually during the restrictions of COVID-19 were not effective. She has since made changes to how these meetings take place. As a result, team meetings are more reflective and provide staff with an opportunity to share good practice ideas.

The manager has also implemented new recording systems, including action plans on incident forms and a communication log. This strengthens communication and ensures that staff know information and expectations.

Staff routinely lock internal doors overnight. Professionals and children are aware of this, but this practice has not been fully risk assessed for appropriateness. The manager and responsible individual took immediate steps to address this during the inspection.

Staff receive a high level of training to ensure that they have the skills to meet the children's needs. The management team is quick to respond when a training gap is recognised. Online training and guidance is given while awaiting formal training to ensure that staff have the information and guidance needed to support the children.

Staff feel well supported and receive regular supervision with a clear focus on staff, their development and areas of improvement. The manager recognises the importance of all staff needing supervisions, including casual staff who work full time at other homes. This helps to ensure that she has a good understanding of all of the staff that work with the children and how to support them.

Additional support structures are in place, such as case management meetings and shared discussions. This helps to further improve practice and ensures that children's needs are known and understood.

The manager has excellent oversight of the home and uses auditing tools well to ensure that any shortfalls are identified and addressed. She uses the regulation 44 visits and feedback from stakeholders to ensure that the home continues to develop and move forwards. However, at times, some safeguarding events have not been shared with Ofsted. This hinders the regulator's ability to have full oversight of the home.

The manager and staff team genuinely care about the children and want what is best for them. This shines through in the interactions and the progress the children are making.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of the home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Limits on privacy and access may only be put in place to safeguard each child in the home. Any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should ensure that significant incidents are notified to Ofsted without delay. This includes when initial review of the incident raises concerns of sexual or criminal exploitation, or when incidents in the home are of a significant level that it affects the welfare of the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.11)

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: SC034953

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Calderdale School Effectiveness Service, 2nd Floor, Westgate House, Westgate, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX1 1PS

Responsible individual: Guy Greenwood

Registered manager: Zoe Hygate

Inspectors

Debra Boldy, Social Care Inspector

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