

Children's home inspection – Full

Inspection date	21/12/2016
Unique reference number	SC035220
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Joan Inns
Inspector	Debbie White

Inspection date	21/12/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC035220

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The children progress exceptionally well and their outcomes are excellent. This is due to the consistently high-quality support that they receive. The relationships that they have with the staff are exemplary. The children have access to all the services that they need, including direct access to the local authority therapy team.
- Innovative, individualised care is pivotal to the children positively developing and achieving. Precise care planning from the point of referral to the children transitioning is meticulous. The home operates under a research-based therapeutic model of care, which enhances the children's lives and their positive well-being.
- The children's day-to-day experiences are wide-ranging and meaningful. Group and individual activities unquestionably inspire the children to fulfil their aspirations. The children are making rapid progress in their educational outcomes, and they are reaching their developmental milestones.
- The staff are very skilled in purposefully communicating with younger children. Consequently, they regularly consult with the children, whose views and feelings are highly valued. The staff see the children as unique individuals, and they have high aspirations for each child.
- The children are very safe and the staff see each child's safety and welfare as paramount. Behaviour management is very individualised and child-focused. Risk management is robust.
- The staff skilfully manage transitions from the home to ensure that they fully support the children and their future carers. After-care support maintains appropriate links with the children until they feel established in their new homes.
- Leaders and managers consistently improve the services provided to the children and their outstanding outcomes. Partnership and interagency working is first class. Comprehensive monitoring ensures that the children's care and the home's operation is exemplary.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for three children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/12/2015	Full	Outstanding
04/08/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
16/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/01/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The registered manager and the staff team provide the children with exceptional care and support. The children have significantly progressed from their starting points as a direct result of living at this home, and they continue to thrive and flourish. Relationships between the children and the staff are very caring and nurturing. This enables the children to learn how to develop trust, and how to form positive attachments. These life skills make it possible for the children to move on from the emotional security of the children's home to their forever home. A child said: 'I like it here, and I like the staff and I can talk to them. I know they look after me, and they make me feel safe.' The children receive highly individualised care that meets their needs. From the point of referral, the registered manager meticulously researches the children's background and their social care history. This innovative approach provides a detailed pen picture of their lives and significant events, which informs highly effective care and support plans that underpin the excellent care that the children receive. A social worker said: 'I have worked with the home for some time and I have nothing but praise for them. The manager and the staff are brilliant, I could not ask for more. They will do anything to support the children. This is an outstanding home and they are excellent. There is nothing that I can think that is wrong, they are wonderful.' The children respond very enthusiastically to the range of activities that they can access. The staff seek the children's views, aspirational thoughts, and ideas of what they would like to do. Examples of children having had their wishes come true include learning to ride a horse; joining a theatrical club; being part of a football team; camping and going away on holiday. These valuable experiences fill the children with confidence and increase their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. A child said: 'I love to go out, we do everything. I like to go to the allotment, and help with the garden. I love swimming, and going out on the bike. The staff are a good laugh, and we have a great time.' The staff see the children as unique individuals with unlimited potential. They have received comprehensive training, which enables them to deliver outstanding childcare using a research-based therapeutic model. The model involves a lot of direct work with the children by using stories to help the children to understand	

why they are living in a children's home, and why they sometimes get upset and distressed. This dynamic approach actively contributes to the children successfully moving on to lead a happy, emotionally healthy life.

A social worker said: 'The staff know what they are doing, and they do an excellent job. They have supported [name] very well. She has made excellent progress and is a changed little girl.'

The children are regularly consulted about important aspects of their lives and how their home operates. This values them and promotes their equality. They live a healthy lifestyle, and the staff support them to access the healthcare services that they need. The children's educational outcomes have surpassed expectations. All the children have 100% school attendance and they are achieving their full potential. Joint working between the staff and schools is excellent.

A schoolteacher said: 'When I heard [name] was moving into a children's home, I was very concerned. I did not know what to expect. I visited the home and I was very pleasantly surprised. Since [name] moved into the home, she is a very different child. I cannot believe the difference. Academically, she has progressed tremendously. She is doing so well, and we are so proud of her. The manager is brilliant, and so are the staff. We regularly communicate, and ring if there are any issues. This consistency works really well. I cannot say enough about them, I think they are fantastic.'

Extensively planned transitions thoroughly support children moving on from the home. The registered manager and the staff work closely with the children's social worker, fostering services, and therapists to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to this important time in a child's life. The staff provide after-care to support the children, and their new carers, until they feel confident to progress independently. This wrap-around care has seen a number of children move into successful, long-term foster homes.

A foster carer said: 'Everything is going really well and we are really happy. [Name] has settled in, he is now part of our family, he is happy, and we love him. Before he moved in we got lots of information about him, and the manager came to visit us. We also met [name's] key worker, who has been supportive, and she still visits us. They do a marvellous job.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The children are safe and they live in a safe environment. All the staff have regular child protection training, and they know what to do if they have any concerns about a child's welfare. They understand that safe levels of observation are paramount. This is due to the children's young age and their under-developed understanding of potential risks. There are very good staffing levels that ensure that the children are able to experience free play and to learn by taking appropriate childhood risks, while at the same time being supervised to prevent any unnecessary harm or injury. The children have a comprehensive risk assessment that clearly sets out their known risks and how these can be minimised. These include physical risks alongside emotional and psychological risks. The staff are very knowledgeable of each child's past, and how some situations may trigger a negative emotional response. They carefully plan the children's routines and activities to avoid these stressful situations, which significantly promotes the children's welfare and well-being. An independent reviewing officer said: 'The children are safe. Their risk assessments are good and always updated. There will always be an element of risk; however, this is carefully balanced by the staff team. I have never had any cause for concern.' There have been no children who have gone missing, and there are no risks of exploitation or being bullied. The children know that they can talk to a member of staff if they are unhappy or upset about anything. They have regular visits from their social worker, and they can talk to the independent visitor or their teacher. This ensures that the children have an option to talk to someone who they know, or someone who is independent of the home. Having access to a range of trusted adults keeps the children safe. Behaviour management is exceptional. When the children come to live at the home, they exhibit a range of behaviours that link to their emotional needs and experiences. The staff are extremely patient, caring and understanding. Using the therapeutic model, the staff skilfully support the children through difficult episodes. They utilise a range of therapeutic techniques specific to each child, which calms and reassures them. Over time, these behaviours significantly reduce and the children begin to feel emotionally safe and secure. They gain in confidence and begin to enjoy a happy, fulfilled childhood. This important work equips the children with the skills and coping strategies that they need to successfully move on to their long-term placements.	

The registered manager robustly ensures that all the required safety checks are undertaken. These include fire, and health and safety, risk assessments. All the home's utilities are regularly checked and serviced, and the staff regularly ensure that the children's outdoor equipment is in good order and safe to use. There are systems in place to monitor and update the staff's safety checks, and all visitors to the home have their identification clarified. This thorough way of working protects the children.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The registered manager is highly experienced and she has the right qualifications to effectively manage the home. Her experience is primarily in children's residential care, which has enabled her to develop a wide and diverse range of exceptional skills. The registered manager is a motivated, committed worker who provides unquestionably outstanding services to children. A member of staff said: 'The best thing about the home is the manager, who is child-centred, balanced and has good common sense. She has a vision for the very best outcomes for the children.' The registered manager has been pivotal in driving improvement since the last inspection. She has extended her role, taking a more active part in selecting foster carers for the children moving on from the home. She is best placed to assess potential carers, because she has an in-depth knowledge of the children. This aids a smooth transition and increases the likelihood of a successful child/carer match. The registered manager has been instrumental in supporting improved practice in other childcare residential settings within the local authority and with private providers. She does this inspiring work alongside managing the children's home. Her support includes visiting other children's homes, and a residential special school, to give advice and to share her knowledge. She mentors other managers and staff to support their learning and development, and she has shared her child-friendly documentation to encourage the engagement of children and young people. This dedication to disseminate good childcare practice is extremely commendable. A registered manager colleague said: 'I cannot thank [name] enough for her help and support. I have visited her home and have seen how they work, which was very helpful. [Name] also gave me some literature to read and recommended some books. She is very approachable and friendly.'	

The home and the children have received awards for their hard work and their progress. Two of the children received special awards at the local authority's celebration of success event. They were very proud to be honoured, and they thoroughly enjoyed the evening's activities. The home was also nominated, and short-listed, to receive two national public sector awards. It won the award for 'team of the year', which is a testament to the excellent services that it provides to children.

Multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working is outstanding, and it aids very rapid progress. The local authority team around the children consists of representatives from staff at the home; the children's social workers; a fostering officer and the local authority therapy team. The team assembles at the point of a child's referral, and they work together to support the children throughout their journey to their forever family. All aspects of each child's care plans are assessed, scrutinised and evaluated. Reflective practice is a key element in the process, which results in the children receiving consistently high levels of support.

A reviewing officer said: 'This is a unique home with a specific remit. I have chaired two children who have successfully made the transition to permanent foster placements. I am very much of the view that if it was not for this home, these children would have bounced back into the system.'

The registered manager and the staff also have good links with external professionals. They co-work with a range of healthcare professionals, which include children's mental health specialists. Relationships with schools are a strength and, where families are involved, the staff forge good relationships that are supportive of the children's best interests.

The staff are committed and their sole focus is to improve the children's outcomes and their quality of life. They receive professional training that keeps their skills and knowledge current and meaningful. The registered manager is supportive and values her team. She provides regular, meaningful, supervision and ongoing opportunities for informal support and reflective practice. The registered manager receives clinical supervision from a senior psychologist, and all the staff have direct access to professional and personal support from a member of the therapy team. This cohesive way of working provides for a strong, dynamic team that works over and above expectations.

A member of staff said: 'All the team get on really well. We talk about working practice regularly, and we will take praise as well as constructive criticism to aid best practice and to learn new things. We have regular supervision, meetings and daily handovers so we are all aware of the current needs of the children.'

Superior monitoring provides an extensive overview of the children's outcomes and the home's performance. The internal and independent monitoring are robust. The

home's operation and its effectiveness are tracked using comprehensive auditing systems. Positive working is celebrated, and any shortfalls in practice are addressed immediately. The registered manager consults with the children, families where appropriate, the staff, social workers and other professionals. Their views, wishes and suggestions are taken seriously and acted upon. This open and transparent way of working leads to continual improvement and the home's development.

There are no requirements or recommendations arising from this inspection.

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

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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