

SC035241

Registered provider: Doncaster Deaf Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a charitable trust. It is registered to provide care for up to nine children who have sensory impairment. The home operates as one home but with two accommodation provisions, providing accommodation up to six children in one provision and three children in the other. The home provides planned care on a 52-week basis, 38-week educational residential placements and short-break care for children who attend the trust's school.

This registered children's home is part of a specialist school that provides education on site. The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school.

At the time of the inspection, all the children's care was planned over a 38-week, term-time educational residential placement.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2012 and is suitably experienced and qualified for this role.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

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 **outstanding**

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: 23 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/11/2021	Full	Outstanding
12/02/2019	Full	Outstanding
06/02/2018	Full	Outstanding
01/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The current group of children live in this home from Monday to Friday, term-time only. This has been a long-term arrangement for these children, and usually once children start their residential placement these arrangements remain in place until they transition to college. One parent said, '[Child's name] loved the home so much and made so much progress, I wished they could have stayed.'

Children's moves into the home are managed sensitively and with a child-focused approach. During one child's first night in the home, the manager stayed with them until they fell asleep, providing comfort and reassurance, as the child missed their family. This child has really settled into the home, and they expressed delight and excitement as they spoke to the inspector about the home. One parent said, 'I was apprehensive sending my child to live away from home, but it is the best decision I have ever made. He is so happy and he has friends who he can talk to. [Child's name] sign language has vastly improved, and this makes a massive difference to his communication and confidence.'

Living at this home and attending the on-site school makes a significant difference to children's lives. Children thrive because of the opportunity to identify with deaf people as role models. Children see deaf adults in the home fulfilling their career as carers and deputy managers. The children also attended a session in school where deaf adults were invited to speak about their professional career choices. Children are encouraged to be aspirational.

Communication is fundamental to the children's development and progress. Staff are skilled and highly effective in their response to the communication needs of the children in their care. Staff are proficient in British Sign Language (BSL), with all staff qualified to a minimum of level two. Some children are also fluent in international sign language, and parents are happy that their children are using BSL as their primary sign language.

Children's excellent school attendance and engagement helps them to achieve their goals as identified within their individual education, health and care plans. In addition to the curriculum, children's use of BSL is accredited, with children achieving the level two qualification. The staff support the children to complete their homework and reading to further develop their learning.

Children enjoy a range of social activities and their social engagement in community groups encourages inclusivity within the deaf and hearing community. Children were thrilled to show the inspector photographs that were taken during activities. The children expressed their feelings of excitement as they talked about trying new activities, for example miniature golf with animatronic dinosaurs, and rollercoaster rides at theme parks.

Children live in a lovely home that is well equipped. The manager continues to make changes to the home that create a positive impact for children. Further adaptations are used in the home to maintain the children's safety. This includes a comprehensive alert system that warns staff and children of potential hazards, such as fire or carbon monoxide, and the movement of people into and out of the home. The introduction of this system demonstrates to children that aids and adaptations can be used to support safe and successful independent living.

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

Communication barriers can frustrate deaf children. Children's frustrations can present with a display of negative behaviours. Staff confidently communicate with children, which prevents the escalation of behaviours. As a result, children live in a settled home where physical restraint is not necessary.

Staff quickly identify and resolve any tensions between the children. Children have formed trusting relationships with the staff. When necessary, staff use other methods of communication, such as role playing for children who need additional support to aid their understanding. This means that children can speak out and express their concerns, and resolutions can be reached. Children do not feel bullied or intimidated in this home. Children consistently informed the inspector that they would speak to staff if they had any worries.

Being deaf brings a greater risk and vulnerability to the children. The children receive high levels of care and supervision from staff. This unquestionably maintains their safety and well-being and reduces the risk of harm. Children do not go missing from this home.

The children use mobile technology as a tool for communication with their friends and families. Personal safety programmes are routinely taught to the children, to educate them and to reduce risks associated with online abuse. Staff encourage open dialog with children about online activity and provide appropriate oversight and boundaries to prevent potential harm.

The manager ensures that her staff team is aware of the children's associated risks. Staff practice reduces children's presenting risk, and any potential safeguarding concerns are shared and escalated. This practice is significant for those children whose welfare is currently being reviewed through a local authority child protection plan. The manager reviewed one child's risk assessment during the inspection as it did not capture all potential risks that were recorded within other areas of the child's case records.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The staff are led by an established and experienced manager. The manager is highly motivated about her role. She is passionate about deaf culture and continually strives to improve children's lives now and for their future.

Children are cared for by a consistent group of staff, who collectively have the knowledge, experience and skills to provide the high standards of care. The manager understands the significance of staffing stability, and she has implemented measures to retain her team. In the past five years, no staff have left their roles. This stability provides previous residents with a familiar face when they return to visit the home as adults.

The manager has high aspirations for children. She is ambitious and has similar high expectations of her staff team. The manager will not accept substandard practice and provides routine practice direction and guidance to the staff. The level and form of training that staff complete ensures that they have the knowledge and skills to be able to meet the needs of the children.

Children's families consistently praise the effective communication from staff, and partnership working is a considerable strength of this service. Families feel part of their children's lived experiences. Parents feel able to engage their child in discussions about their time at the home because they are well informed and provided with a detailed weekly summary of their child's achievements and progress.

The manager is striving to continue to improve the service and outcomes for children. She ensures that children are consulted with and that their wishes are heard and actioned. This means that children are involved in decisions about their care and how they spend their time in the home. A professional identified the significance of a child's voice being heard, this was linked to mental capacity and best interest decision-making. Staff used their expertise in BSL to support the assessing social worker and child during this crucial decision-making.

An integrated safeguarding system is used across the home and school to record significant and potential safeguarding concerns about children. The manager, including the deputy manager, access this system, ensuring they have exceptional oversight of children's information. Managers use this system to evidence their decision-making and sharing of information and guidance to the team. However, internal operating procedures need to be reviewed to ensure that all managers are routinely alerted to all records about the children.

Internal and external monitoring is a routine practice at this home. The manager's auditing procedures ensure that any areas for development are identified and acted on. However, external monitoring reports need enhancing to provide context to the reader about the residential care package of children.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. The independent person's evaluation of the home should provide context to the reader about the current service offer for children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)
- The registered person should ensure that the children's risk assessments are continually and actively updated to reflect the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should ensure that, just as with the other standards, those responsible for the day-to-day running of the home, including leadership teams, play a key role in enabling the registered person to fulfil the requirements of this standard. Therefore, internal procedures for the integrated electronic information-sharing system need to consistently tag the children's home's managers into information about their children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.2)

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: SC035241

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Doncaster Deaf Trust

Registered provider address: Doncaster College for the Deaf, Leger Way,
Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN2 6AY

Responsible individual: Alexis Johnson

Registered manager: Catherine Warner

Inspector

Jennifer Fenlon, Social Care Inspector

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