

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 for 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-breaks 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, there were seven children living at the home. 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: 23 and 24 January 2024

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	outstanding
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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: 22 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/11/2022	Full	Outstanding
23/11/2021	Full	Outstanding
12/02/2019	Full	Outstanding
06/02/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Living at this home and attending the on-site school makes a significant difference to the children's lives. This is because of the exceedingly strong and trusting relationships children forge with the adults who care for them. One child expressed they have total confidence and trust in the staff.

Deaf members of staff are inspirational role models for the children and guide them through their journey as they grow. The collective level of nurture from across a highly effective staff team helps the children to thrive. Children are supported to develop their identity and confidence. One parent said, 'They really understand my child. [Name of child's] confidence has just flourished over the past year.'

Established relationships with parents and a wealth of information provided to families help them to stay strongly connected to their children's lives. The children's wonderful memory books beautifully illustrate the children's experiences. Weekly letters and other forms of frequent communication ease parental concerns as children are often far away from their home town. One parent said, 'They have made [Name of child] feel so comfortable. It's like home from home.'

The integrated home and on-site school model help children to make significant progress with their learning. The strong interface between school and care staff ensures that the children's transitions are well managed, and everyone involved with the children knows what the children need. As a result, children feel safer, happier, grow in confidence and make excellent progress with their British Sign Language (BSL) and education.

The children's physical and emotional health needs are well met. For those children with more complex health needs, staff ensure that they have all the information they need to meet those needs. This helps to give parents reassurance about their children's well-being.

Giving children their voice is the cornerstone of the staff's ethos and care strategy. Their insight into the children's individual needs creates a foundation for children to make sustained progress with their communication, irrespective of the children's starting point. The staff's reassurance develops the children's courage and determination to learn, and children's vocabulary grows. One child said, 'They have helped me with my confidence so much.'

For those children who have less BSL vocabulary, staff use their creative skills to help them to share their feelings, such as using role play. This helped one child tell staff they were not happy with another pupil in school. Staff were able to share this with the school to agree a way forward.

Children have an array of enjoyable experiences at the home and in the community. Children have choices to take part in the activities they enjoy. This helps to ensure that their opinion is important. Staff keep children busy and active. This promotes good health, provides opportunities for children to try new things, and, for some children, provides a forum for developing and maintaining their friendships. Children socialising in unfamiliar surroundings, with the guidance from staff, helps to broaden their communication skills.

Staff's attention to detail helps them to capture the evidence needed to demonstrate the children's progress against their plan. The children's targets are achievable and progressive. Small steps are recognised as big wins to help build the children's self-esteem. Staff's positive re-enforcement strengthens the enjoyment children get from their achievements.

Short- and long-term goal setting helps children build their individual skills to become more independent. Staff focus their attention on when children need the most help. Since the last inspection, one child has made a successful transition to the on-site college.

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

Children have a strong sense of safety and well-being. All children consistently expressed that they feel secure in the care of the staff. Staff's cohesive practice, their exceptional awareness of the children's needs, and their sensitive approach all enhance this sense of safety. One child said, 'Staff are able to help me with anything.'

Children treat each other with kindness and do not feel bullied at this home. Staff reflect with children to help them learn from their experiences and understand the impact of words that can be hurtful to others. As a result, children grow their vocabulary and develop better ways to express their thoughts and feelings.

Well-managed routines and clear expectations about behaviour help children to remain focused each day. Staff help children to channel their energy positively. They encourage children to have open dialogue with one another to help prevent differences developing into unwanted behaviours.

Children's risk assessments and plans are well written and provide staff with easy-to-use guidance. The children's communication profile document gives staff a deeper insight about how to help the children, reducing the risk of misunderstanding the children's communication cues and avoid unnecessary frustrations.

Frequent conversations with children about keeping safe online and in the community help to improve the children's sense of danger. Open lines of communication amongst the staff team help them to keep children's risks under review so that help can be timely and responsive.

Children do not go missing from this home. High levels of supervision and care, and the bond children have with the staff, significantly reduce the likelihood of an incident occurring. However, staff are clear about what steps they must take should an incident occur.

The effective use of the integrated safeguarding recording system across the home and school ensures there is exceptional oversight of the children's safety and well-being. All staff have access to the recording system to support a constant flow of information about the children's well-being. This allows for collaborative working with other safeguarding agencies, demonstrating a strong safeguarding culture.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The highly effective manager and established staff team provide children with a real sense of having a home from home. Their collaborative working relationships enable them to maintain the foundations of their excellent childcare practice. As a result, children feel well cared for, safe and loved.

The experienced manager's dogged determination and commitment help to uphold the high standards of practice. This aspirational mindset is replicated throughout the team. Staff's pride in their work promotes the best possible care for children.

Staff talk freely during practice-related supervision sessions about their role and own developmental needs. Reflective conversations constantly focus on the children's experiences. Regular team meetings provide staff with a forum to keep up to date about the children's needs and have open discussions when planning the children's care. The staff's confidence and willingness to share their views help to maintain the team's synergy and promote high levels of consistency, in an open culture where opinions are welcomed.

Members of staff work as part of a multi-disciplinary team within the school. The working relationships with the other professionals such as teachers, the speech and language therapist, and the audiologist, ensure that the children's care plans are kept under review, in particular the assessment of the children's communication needs. The benefit of having these professionals so closely connected enhances the children's ability to make progress.

The manager knows the strength and development needs of the team and is highly analytical. She uses monitoring tools, feedback from the children, their families and the staff effectively to support continuous development, so that the children receive exceptionally high-quality care and support.

The style and clarity of children's records enhance the children's ability to look back on their time living at the home. The wealth of photos and how these are presented will likely amplify the children's memories.

The independent person completes external monitoring of the home as well as providing the manager's supervision. However, children do not have the opportunity

to speak with them in private as staff assist with communication. This prevents the independent person from making a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children.

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

Recommendations

- The independent person should ensure that they interview children in private, away from staff, to assist their assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 65, paragraph 15.5)
- The registered provider should ensure that the role of the independent person remains impartial, and they must be employed solely for the purpose of quality assurance within the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 65, paragraph 15.7)

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

Aaron Mcloughlin, Social Care Inspector

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