

SC035380

Registered provider: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home provides short-break care and accommodation for up to six children or young people who have physical and/or learning disabilities. It is operated by the local authority.

The manager in post is awaiting registration.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 November 2018

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: 1 August 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/08/2017	Full	Outstanding
17/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/10/2016	Full	Outstanding
14/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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

Recommendations

- Significant changes to a looked-after child's care, such as a change of placement, should only take place following a statutory review of their care plan chaired by their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The child should be actively involved in these important meetings and supported to express their views, wishes and feelings. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.10)

In particular, this relates to children's and young people's files containing up-to-date minutes from children in need plan reviews.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children and young people who have short breaks at this home receive exceptional care. Assessments begin prior to a child or young person coming to stay at the home and continue throughout their subsequent stays. Information is sought from a range of sources, including parents and professionals involved in their care. This thorough preparation and working in partnership contribute significantly towards exceedingly good outcomes for children and young people. Staff develop trusting relationships with them quickly and effectively. Significant contact with families is maintained in between breaks and relationships are strong, with families feeling well supported and listened to. This means that families have trust and are confident that their children and young people are well cared for during their short breaks at the home.

The children and young people are making considerable progress and achieving as a direct result of having their short breaks. Key workers have a comprehensive knowledge of the children and young people. Child-friendly care plans and risk assessments are developed on an individual basis. They meticulously evidence the journey and progress that children and young people make throughout the time that they use the service. The ability and needs of each child or young person are taken into account to enable them to actively participate in decision making. The staff team uses a range of resourceful and imaginative techniques to ensure that children and young people who experience communication difficulties are able to make meaningful contributions. This makes them feel valued and included. Staff are attentive to indicators such as facial expressions, body language, gestures and behaviour. This approach respects and values the opinions of the children and young people.

The home is a large Victorian house set in extensive grounds. Facilities available include a sensory garden, a greenhouse, an allotment, an orchard and a chicken coop. Children and young people can participate in a number of creative and enjoyable activities within

the grounds. They take delight in caring for the chickens and tending to the allotment. In the summer months, camping in the grounds was very popular. This was a new experience for some of the children and young people, giving them much enjoyment. This helped them to gain self-confidence and practical skills, while having lots of fun in a safe environment. The manager and staff are committed to providing wide-ranging and memorable experiences for the children and young people. Barriers that can hamper such experiences are vigorously challenged. Regular use of facilities within the local area, such as parks, museums, theatres and youth clubs, provides stimulating and fun experiences. This ensures that the children and young people not only have new experiences but are consistently assured that they are capable of improving their emotional and physical well-being.

Photographs are taken when children and young people are seen to be happy and enjoying themselves. They are regularly shared with families, which helps them to see how their child or young person has benefited from their stay at the home. Many of the children's and young people's achievements are captured in photographs. These are displayed throughout the home. The staff take a great pride in all of the children's and young people's achievements no matter how small. There is a star rewards scheme that recognises achievements. Stars are awarded, alongside star achievement postcards. There is a lovely reward tree that displays the children's and young people's rewards. This is an effective way of ensuring that achievements are acknowledged and celebrated. It enables the children and young people to feel valued and to grow in self-worth.

The children and young people attend local schools. Communication is consistently effective. A senior teacher said, 'Communication is excellent. We do training and develop policies together. The staff are caring and professional. They go above and beyond for the children and young people.' Effective links with school staff ensure that a consistent approach to behaviour management is used in both settings. This increases the sense of safety felt by children and young people.

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

The children and young people at this home are kept extremely safe. There is an excellent safeguarding culture within the home. Safeguarding is a stand-alone agenda item in team meetings and supervisions. Efficient safeguarding procedures ensure that the staff have the knowledge and confidence to act promptly if there are concerns for a child's or young person's welfare.

There are high levels of supervision at all times, both inside and outside of the home. This supports the children's and young people's needs, ensures proactive responses to situations and reduces risk. Staff are vigilant and have a thorough understanding of the children's and young people's vulnerabilities and risks. Staff are successful in achieving a good balance between minimising risk and allowing the children and young people to take appropriate risks as part of developing their independence skills.

Staff have an excellent understanding of the children's and young people's behaviour.

They develop relationships that are based on genuine trust and affection. They are skilled in recognising when children and young people are becoming confused, angry or anxious. A wide range of de-escalation techniques are used to manage negative behaviours. Physical interventions are rarely used. On the occasions when they have been used, they have been low level and brief and to ensure safety. Individual assessments and robust risk management plans clearly identify risks and give staff a wealth of measures to help limit negative behaviours.

There is effective work undertaken with children and young people to help protect them. E-safety learning, anti-bullying and appropriate behaviours are taught to children and young people. The staff use inventive and creative ways to ensure that each child and young person receives support to help protect them regardless of their ability.

Since the last inspection, staff have undertaken safeguarding training specifically relating to children and young people who have disabilities. This ensures that the staff have a clear understanding of the added vulnerabilities of the children and young people. It enables them to provide an exceptionally safe and secure level of care.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is highly motivated and committed. She actively seeks to improve the outcomes for the children and young people. She is supported by a dedicated deputy manager and a highly effective staff team. Collectively, they share the same values and vision for the children and young people. Their enthusiasm means that children and young people receive nurturing and consistent care. The manager and staff team have put considerable effort into creating a culture and ethos that is consistently successful. She is an excellent role model and is ambitious for all the children and young people.

Staff team meetings take place regularly. They offer the opportunity for group learning and discussion on individual children and young people. Regular supervision, training and support provide purposeful professional development. This has helped to create a highly skilled and dedicated staff team that is forward thinking in the ways in which it strives to improve the service.

The manager demonstrates sound insight into areas of strength as well as areas that could be improved further within the home. Her motivation and enthusiasm are highly effective at sustaining and driving improvement forward.

There is a great deal of evidence of working in partnership with others. Work with health and education is highly successful. Working with families is at the centre of practice. Parents actively contribute to plans for children and young people and their suggestions and comments are listened to and acted upon. This makes them feel valued and enhances all aspects of the care that the children and young people receive. A parent said, 'The home is a lifeline to our family. Her key worker is great. They are really flexible. Recently, I had an emergency and staff were able to arrange for an extra stay, which was extremely helpful.'

There is an established monitoring and auditing system carried out on a regular basis by the manager and deputy manager. These systems are robust and ensure that practice achieves the aims of individual placements. To strengthen practice, up-to-date minutes from child in need plan reviews should be contained in all the children's and young people's files. This will ensure that all staff are aware in a timely manner of decisions and recommendations from reviews.

The manager is innovative and encourages this in the staff team. She clearly uses a wealth of research to inform practice. This is helping staff to develop and to learn and enables them to understand the needs of individual children and young people in a more systematic way.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC035380

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered Provider: Stockton Council

Registered provider address: Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland TS18 1LD

Responsible individual: Rhona Bollands

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Dot McGough: social care inspector

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