

SC035954

Registered provider: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service provides short-term breaks for up to six children or young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities. In addition, three children or young people can live in the home on a more permanent basis. The local authority owns and manages the home.

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 January 2020

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: 18 December 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/12/2018	Full	Outstanding
01/11/2017	Full	Outstanding
01/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/11/2016	Full	Outstanding

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

Recommendations

- Enhance further the independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of internal and external monitoring to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

In particular, scrutinise the audits of the children and young people's files.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people receive exceptional levels of care and support, and this enables them to make progress across all areas of their development. Children and young people thoroughly enjoy their stays here. A parent said that their child counts down the days to their stay and excitedly packs their bags the night before.

Children and young people are cared for by a very experienced and consistent staff team. Children and young people are actively encouraged to try new activities and explore new experiences. One parent said that, because of the staff's support, their child is now able to have a school lunch and has enjoyed their first roast dinner at home.

Staff are highly skilled communicators who understand the subtle nuances of the children and young people's non-verbal communication. This means that every child and young person has a voice, is heard and can make choices.

Care plans are meticulous and reflect the uniqueness of each child or young person. Plans are live documents which are continually evolving to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people. The plans are known and understood by staff, which means that children and young people receive continuous, high-quality care and support.

Introductions to the home are carefully planned and managed. Parents are fully consulted about the stays, and the child or young person come to the home several times for tea visits prior to staying overnight. Parents of young people who are due to leave the service said that they are, 'devastated' that they will not be a part of the '[name of home] family'. They said that the support that the whole family has received has been 'incredible, and that the staff are wonderful'.

Partnership with parents is exceptional. Parents said that the staff 'go above and beyond' not only to care for their child but also support the family. This support includes amending children and young people's stays at short notice due to family emergencies, attending meeting with parents and 'being a lifeline' to parents. This has helped to keep families together.

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

Contextualised safeguarding is at the heart of everything that the staff do. They continually reflect and analyse situations to consider any environmental factors and extenuating circumstances that have had an impact on the child or young person. This enables staff to think creatively to reduce these issues and revise the support that they provide. For example adapting and reorganising the number and length of stays at the home for individual children and young people to ensure that they get the most out of their stay.

Parents reported a high level of confidence in the staff team's ability to keep their child safe. A parent said that they can now go away for a weekend and relax, because they know that their child is happy and safe.

Behaviour management strategies and support are effective. Staff understand the subtle changes in children and young people's behaviour and body language and respond accordingly to prevent an escalation in the child or young person's anxieties. Physical interventions are rarely used, and always only as a last resort to protect the child, young person or others.

Each child or young person's bedroom is designed to meet their specific needs. Some have a very sparse-looking room; however, due to careful planning, they are now beginning to tolerate soft furnishings and posters on the walls. A parent said that, because of their stays, their child was now sleeping in a bed rather than using a 'safe place'.

Staff recruitment and vetting are secure. The registered manager has recently recused herself from the recruitment process due to a conflict of interest. This ensured transparency in the recruitment process.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home benefits from excellent leadership. The manager is suitably experienced and qualified to undertake the role. She is supported by a very experienced deputy manager and, together, they form a strong and visible leadership team. They are committed to providing a high-quality, child-centred service to the children and young people in their care.

The manager uses learning from research and internal and external monitoring systems to identify and address areas for improvement. She also encourages the involvement of parents, children, young people and staff in the development of the service. Staff are empowered, as the manager is always open to their suggestions for new ways of working.

There are a few minor issues with record keeping which have not been picked up by the internal file audits. These were rectified during the inspection.

The staff team has a wealth of experience and benefits from a comprehensive training programme that further equips them to fulfil their roles. The management team has also sourced specialist training that is aligned to the communication and healthcare needs of the children and young people who use this service.

Staff are highly motivated, passionate, and expressed pride in the home. They are committed and are enthusiastic about providing children and young people with fun activities and new opportunities during their short stays.

Key to everything that the staff do is enshrined in this statement, ensuring that 'I [the child] have the same opportunity as everyone else to enjoy life and experience the sights, smells and opportunities that everyone else does. Don't let my disability bar me from taking part in anything that I show interest in'.

Parents are extremely complimentary about the staff, and they said 'that this is not just a job for them. They are extended family, they are angels; we know that they are always there for us and our child'.

Partnership working is a key strength of the service. External professionals spoke highly of the manager and were very complimentary about the service. They reported very good levels of communication and have experienced positive joint working with the home. This has resulted in very positive outcomes for the children and young people and their families.

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 difference 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: SC035954

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, Education Department, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH41 4FD

Responsible individual: Beverley Hurst

Registered manager: Debra Kewley

Inspector

Chris Scully, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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