

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 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: 18 to 19 December 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 November 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/11/2017	Full	Outstanding
01/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
21/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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

Recommendations

- Enhance further the staff's familiarity with the home's policies on record keeping and understanding of careful, objective recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

In particular, ensure that the dates of achievements on the outcome arrows for children and young people, and the start and end times of staff supervision, are recorded.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people receive bespoke packages of care, which include personal care, education, healthcare and a wide range of activities. This carefully tailored approach means that each child and young person flourishes during their stay as they build positive friendships with other children and young people and enjoy opportunities that they may not otherwise have. Parents said that they could see their children becoming less anxious, while at the same time they are increasing their independence. This is because of the high-quality care and attention that their children receive. Parents acknowledged that the service is 'invaluable' to them and their children.

The manager meticulously scrutinises all referrals to ensure that the home can meet the child or young person's needs, and that they are compatible with the other children or young people living or staying here. The manager and staff meet with the child or young person, their parents and the linked professionals before any decision is made to offer a place at the home. Placements are not made unless staff and the manager know that they can meet the child or young person's needs. As a result, transitions are exceptionally well planned and managed.

This is also the case with transitions into other placements. For example, staff work intensely with other services to ensure that the new provider is aware of and understands the needs of children or young people who may be moving on. Staff visit the new placement and encourage the new staff to meet the child or young person. The transition only takes place when the registered manager and staff are confident that it is the right move for the child or young person and that all those involved are clear about the objectives and expectations going forward.

The children and young people have a wide range of communication skills, levels of comprehension and complexity of needs. The children and young people thrive at their own pace because of the sensitive and carefully thought-out support from staff who

have an incredibly thorough knowledge and understanding of each child and young person's needs. This is reflected in their progress.

Staff are highly skilled communicators and are adept at using various methods of communication. This means that they can seamlessly communicate with each child or young person using the child or young person's preferred communication style. Therefore, their views and wishes can be heard and acted on. Staff are also accessing information and training about a new communication system that is being used at a school where the children and young people attend. The staff's willingness to learn and implement new initiatives helps ensure that they can support children and young people effectively as well as promoting a consistency of care and learning across settings.

Encouraging children and young people to be as independent as possible is a key strength of the home. A staff member said, 'It is not about a child's disability, but more their ability.' This is summed up by a parent who said, 'My child is doing more chores and is being more independent since being here.' Other parents said that their children were now trying different foods and activities and were experiencing new things.

Staff have high aspirations for each child and young person, and they go above and beyond to help them to succeed. An excellent example of this is the work undertaken to enable one child to get their hair cut. The child's parents were struggling with this task and asked for support. Through careful, detailed planning and collaborative working with a local barber, the child was able to get their hair cut on the service's minibus. This is an important step forward and achievement for the child, although the goal remains for him to have his haircut at the barbers.

Children and young people's healthcare needs are exceptionally well supported. Staff are well trained to meet the complex needs of the children and young people. For example, one young person has significantly reduced the amount of medication that they need to take because of the consistent bedtime routines that have enabled them to settle at night. Staff work particularly well with other professionals to help children and young people overcome their fears of attending appointments. One example is having the dentist visit the home and allowing the children and young people to explore some of the instruments. Children and young people are also provided with battery-operated toothbrushes to play with so that they become familiar with some of the sensations they may experience when having treatment.

Staff are incredibly supportive of the families. They have attended hospital appointments with parents and their children to provide reassurance and support at what is often an anxious time. This commitment has been much appreciated and has meant that children and young people are much more confident and prepared to attend appointments to receive the care and support that they need.

Staff promote a culture of high aspiration and positivity to change and improve the lives of the children and young people that they care for. Children and young people's inclusion in community life is impressive. They enjoy an extensive range of well-considered activities and experiences, which are thoroughly risk assessed in line with

their plans. Children and young people's sense of fun and laughter reverberate throughout the home. Activities follow the interests of the children and young people. One parent said, 'The new activities that he has been able to enjoy include going to the cinema, which we have struggled to manage ourselves.' However, the activities also focus on developing children and young people's confidence on a practical basis by trying new things, such as using the self-service checkout at the supermarket. This approach is exposing them to new experiences and learning that helps to build their level of independence.

Partnership working with parents and carers is exceptional. The manager and staff understand that parents can be anxious about leaving their child in the care of others, and they work hard to alleviate parents' worries. As a result, parents value the service highly. This is summed up by one parent who said, 'All of the staff that deal with my son are amazing. [name of service] is like a home from home. My son feels safe and secure and has fun there. All the staff are personable and talk to us. They are very helpful. If I need to change any holiday dates, they will do their best to try and accommodate him if possible.'

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

Parents have confidence in the service because of the exemplary safeguarding practice. Staff act quickly and effectively to address any emerging concerns. Comprehensive records are kept and monitored about all aspects of safety and protection; these include detailed risk assessments. This attention to detail means that any issues are quickly identified and rectified. A parent said, 'It's extremely important that we can be confident that [name of child] is safe and happy during his respite stay. When I needed a holiday, I was able to enjoy it knowing that [name of child] was safe and he was being well looked after.'

The staff's comprehensive understanding of the children and young people reduces their anxieties. Detailed behaviour support plans are highly effective and help staff to address unwanted behaviour consistently. Staff's attention to maintaining children and young people's routines is of paramount importance. This approach provides children and young people with stability and aids their understanding of what is happening and when. This allays their anxieties and enables the children and young people to feel safe and enjoy their stay.

Children and young people's safety and well-being are priorities for staff. The staff have an excellent understanding of the unique vulnerabilities of each child and young person. As a result, their stays are carefully planned so that they can enjoy similar experiences to other children or young people of their age, such as having a sleepover and spending time together playing games. Detailed risk assessments mean that children and young people engage fully in a range of activities just as any other child or young person would. For example, staff successfully facilitated a 'date night' for two young people and took several children on a barge trip. Staff said, 'The risk assessments were very complex, but the look of joy on the young people's faces was worth it.'

The home is maintained to a very high standard. During the inspection, an independent person undertook the home's annual health and safety audit and reported that the home's attention to detail in the recording and management of health and safety matters was excellent. The deputy manager leads on the management and oversight of health and safety matters and shares information from her training, audits and health and safety updates with all the team. As a result, the staff's understanding of health and safety matters and their responsibilities for maintaining high standards are impressive.

The addition of more artwork and photographs of children and young people throughout the home makes for a much homelier environment. Additional soft furnishings soften the feel of communal areas. Staff have carefully considered all of the children and young people's needs and their sensory stimuli when decorating the home in readiness for the Christmas period. For example, they have purchased collapsible Christmas trees that can be removed when some young people stay as they would not be able to tolerate them.

Staff recruitment and vetting are rigorous. All visitors are required to sign in and out of the home and are carefully monitored or supervised within the home. This level of scrutiny provides additional safeguards for children and young people and ensures that they are only cared for by suitable people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is an inspirational and dynamic leader. She is very well supported by staff who have high aspirations for all the children and young people that they care for. A staff member said, 'This is not a job to us, it is a vocation.' This commitment is reflected in everything that staff do and in the continued high-quality care and support provided to the children and young people. The registered manager and staff use research and a range of resources well to inform their practice and to share information with parents. For example, a member of staff sourced a child-friendly document about epilepsy, which they shared with a parent to help her children understand what epilepsy is. As a result, the children have a greater understanding of epilepsy and how this affects those who may have it.

Parents and social workers are highly complimentary about the registered manager and staff. A social worker said, 'The family would have been lost without [name of service].' A parent wrote, 'The staff are fantastic. It's amazing how hard they work to make sure all children are happy, safe and entertained.' Another wrote, 'I have peace of mind knowing he is in a safe environment. I don't worry about him when he is here, as I know he is well looked after.'

The service is organic in that it is constantly evolving and changing to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people. Staff said that the registered manager is very supportive and welcomes their new ideas and provides them with the resources and time to implement them. This is evident in the success of the new interactive communication boards, which have significantly enhanced children and young people's ability to make

choices. Many children and young people are now taking staff to the boards to show them what they would like to eat or the activities that they want to do.

The manager and staff work collaboratively with a wide range of agencies and professionals who are involved in the children and young people's care. When services have been slow to respond or have not been available, the manager has challenged these shortfalls effectively. She and her staff are passionate advocates for children and young people. For example, they refused the placing authority's requests to provide emergency placements and declined to take children and young people when they felt that they could not meet their needs. Ultimately, this approach has safeguarded the children and young people in the home's care at those times.

Supervision and training records show that there are highly effective approaches to supporting staff practice. Members of staff talked about how regular supervision supports their development, how training gives them the skills that they need and how the manager continually gives them opportunities to progress. Ultimately, they said that this then helps them to assist children and young people to develop and progress.

Children and young people's written records contain a detailed picture of their history, experiences and progress. These records are regularly updated and signed by all parties so that everyone works towards the same goal. Parents welcome the opportunities to review their child's plans and to make amendments when appropriate.

However, records can be enhanced further by recording the dates of children and young people's achievements on their outcome arrows, and by recording the start and end times of staff supervision. These issues are very minor and do not have an impact on the high-quality care and support provided.

Rigorous monitoring by the independent person and registered manager means that nothing is missed. Reports by the manager and independent person are detailed and evaluative, and contribute highly to the ongoing development and continuous improvement of the home.

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: SC035954

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

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

Responsible individual: Ian Godfrey

Registered manager: Debra Kewley

Inspector

Chris Scully, social care inspector

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