

SC035971

Registered provider: St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides short breaks for children aged seven to 18 years old who have severe learning disabilities. The aim of the home is to make a positive difference to the lives of children and their families.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since June 2012.

Inspection dates: 27 to 28 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: 6 December 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
-----------------	-----------------	----------------------

06/12/2017	Full	Outstanding
11/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
01/09/2016	Full	Good
22/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

Recommendations

- Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial 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)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are extremely happy and settled during their short stays at the home. This is because of the exceptional quality of care they receive. Children have many positive experiences during their stays, including numerous opportunities to participate in activities, some of which they have not previously experienced, for example, visits to autism-friendly cinema screenings, visits to the zoo and enjoying meals out.

Children build trusting relationships with staff in a caring, nurturing environment. Staff are passionate about their work and strive to ensure that children receive the best possible care to meet their needs. The staff know the subtle triggers and signs for each child that may indicate that they are feeling anxious. The staff follow clear strategies so that they can respond quickly and sensitively and offer immediate reassurance and support. For example, for one child this is about allowing him the time to speak first and avoiding using certain words when he is spoken to. This approach helps to ensure that he is relaxed and happy during his stays.

Staff have an in-depth understanding of the health and development needs of children and these are recorded in detail in the child's personal plan and the individual profile for each child. This helps staff to alter practice to meet the specific needs of each child. Specialist diets, such as gluten- and lactose-free, are catered for very well. Routines similar to those at home and school provide consistent care for the children.

Children feel valued because staff are extremely attentive to their needs and spend time talking and listening to them and their parents. Furthermore, action is taken in response to their views, wishes and feelings, which enhances the care they receive and makes their time at the home a very positive and highly enjoyable experience. For example, overnight stays are coordinated so that children can enjoy staying over at the same time as their friends from school. The cook has also changed her hours in response to the children's requests to have a full breakfast on some weekends. The responsive approach to children's requests and the willingness to adapt the service to the children's needs contribute to the quality time children spend at the home.

Transitions into and out of the home continue to be exceptionally well planned, and are undertaken at a pace that is suitable for each child. Detailed introduction plans for each child set out the arrangements that must be in place to ensure a smooth transition into the home. The arrangements for transitions to adult services have improved significantly. Monthly meetings now take place with staff from the adult services to ensure that the necessary plans are in place for those children who are approaching the time when they will be moving on. Because of careful planning and effective joint working, transitions into and out of the home are increasingly positive experiences that seek to ensure that the impact of any such move on children is minimal.

Regular events are held at the home that help to make parents feel a part of their children's lives when they are staying here. For example, a celebration day was held in the summer which allowed everyone to celebrate their contributions to making the home an outstanding place for children to stay. The day included lots of different activities and entertainment for children and parents to enjoy together. These occasions, as well as the times when children stay, are captured on individual DVDs that help to show the experiences of children while using the service. The DVDs are also used creatively as part of the children's guide to show any new child what they can expect from the service in a more accessible format. In addition, the DVDs are shared at child in need reviews as a medium for presenting children's views and wishes, as well as showing the progress children are making during their time at the home.

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

The home is a very safe place for children to stay in. Parents feel confident that staff have the knowledge and skills to help and protect their children. A parent said, 'I do not leave my son with anyone, not even with extended family members. However, I trust that the staff here will look after him well, so this is the only place I will allow him to stay.'

Staff take immediate action to prevent any harm to children during their stays at the home. For example, after a recent incident, a thorough investigation was undertaken. As a result, practice at the home was amended and additional measures implemented to further strengthen safeguarding practice.

The approach to behaviour management at the home contributes greatly to the home being a happy, fun, safe, stable and secure environment for children to stay at. Detailed behaviour support plans focus on the positive behaviour of each child and how this is promoted and celebrated. The support plans also describe the strategies that staff are to use to manage challenging behaviours safely. This means that all staff provide a consistent and sensitive response when children need help and support to manage their feelings and emotions.

Health and safety practice at the home is very good and helps to ensure that the home is a healthy and safe place to live and work. Weekly, monthly and annual checks, such

as checks on emergency lighting, fire and smoke alarms, fridge and freezer temperatures and portable appliances, are regularly undertaken. Medication is safely stored, administered and recorded at the home. Furthermore, a full health and safety audit has recently been completed by an independent person.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led and managed highly effectively by a committed and motivated manager who has high expectations of the staff and high aspirations for the children. He is supported by an equally dedicated and motivated deputy manager and a team of staff who work very well together. They strive to ensure that children have positive experiences and that, as a result, children and their families benefit from the time children spend at the home.

The manager, deputy manager and staff know children exceptionally well and they all take an active role in children's daily care. Strong professional relationships with parents, social workers and school staff ensure that important information is regularly shared. This helps to provide children with high-quality and consistent care at home, in school and during their short stays at this home. A social worker said, 'The home is absolutely fabulous, and staff are really good at what they do. It is a shame the home is not bigger to accommodate more children and more stays.'

Staff receive regular supervision that enables them to reflect on their performance and the needs of the children they care for. The staff are enthusiastic and highly competent people who have plenty of opportunities for continual professional development through training that is relevant to the assessed needs of the children they care for. Team meetings take place regularly. These provide staff with the opportunity to discuss and plan for the children's current and future needs, as well as the chance to share good practice and learning that will enhance their knowledge and skills further.

The managers and staff are not complacent and are always considering ways in which they can improve further. For example, they are currently making arrangements for a specialist social worker to be based at the home at least one day a week, and are introducing exit interviews for children and their families when they make the transition to adult services.

Monitoring and review systems at the home are very thorough and they assist the manager in identifying the strengths and areas for improvement. The rigorous management oversight of records and practice helps to maintain high standards of care. Regular case-file audits ensure that all paperwork is completed to a high standard and demonstrates the journey each child has made. The manager's quality of care review includes detailed information about the outstanding quality of care children receive during their stays at the home. However, the external monthly monitoring visits would be even more rigorous if they included regular consultation with children, their parents, social workers and other professionals. Furthermore, the reports would benefit from providing more specific examples of how the home has safeguarded and promoted the

welfare of children during the month that they are reporting on.

The manager leads a strong, settled and cohesive team. The staffing arrangements ensure that enough suitable staff are always available to meet the needs of the children and to achieve a high level of continuity of care. All staff working at the home now have permanent contracts. This has helped to improve staff morale and consistency in rotas at 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: SC035971

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Children & Young People's Services, Atlas House, 2 Corporation Street, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 1LD

Responsible individual: Pauline McGrath

Registered manager: Paul Spencer

Inspector

Lisa Mulcahy: social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018