

SC036917

Registered provider: Royal Borough of Greenwich

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides short- and medium-term care for up to five children aged between 11 and 18 years who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The registered manager is suitably qualified and has been registered since 31 March 2007.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 October 2021

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	good
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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: 27 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
26/02/2019	Full	Outstanding
10/10/2017	Full	Outstanding
28/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

This inspection was conducted on site and involved meetings with children and staff. Feedback was received from social care and education professionals, parents, and children who have lived in the home previously. A staff questionnaire was also shared for those staff who were not on site but wished to contribute their views.

This is an outstanding home. Highly skilled and committed staff offer consistent services that improve children's life experiences. Staff believe that children should experience care which is beyond their discrete time in the home. One child who has left the home stated, 'Staff have improved my life, every step of the way. I would not be where I am without them.' Staff ensure that children grow in confidence, build self-esteem and are well prepared for their future.

Children are actively included in the decisions affecting their home. Children's views are pivotal in informing both the location risk assessment and the children's guide. Children's wishes on decor and furnishings have influenced the recent refurbishments to the home. Children who previously lived in the home are on interview panels for staff recruitment and take an active part in this inspection. This demonstrates that children's views and opinions are considered and are central to the quality of care they receive.

Children are provided with extremely ambitious standards of individualised care. They are encouraged to consider their behaviours and the impact of these on others. Staff follow up discussions they have with children in a written letter to them. They sensitively ensure that children are aware of staff concerns, what needs to change and what is going well. This provides a supportive and non-judgemental environment in which children can learn from their mistakes.

Staff are tenacious in supporting children with their education. They take children to school and listen to their worries. They lead on discussions with other professionals and family members to consider different measures to help children to learn and be educationally stimulated. For example, soft undergarments were bought for a child who has a skin sensitivity to their school uniform. Staff have high expectations for children and work with them towards developing better life choices and achieving suitably ambitious goals.

Innovative staff use creative methods to understand children's needs. Staff understand that children may find pre-arranged conversations uncomfortable and difficult. Therefore, they use different approaches to discuss children's specific risks and concerns with them, such as when decorating children's bedrooms, driving in the car together and while sitting in a cafe. This facilitates opportunities for discussions with children, including on how to be safe.

Staff form long-lasting relationships with children. There are pictures on the wall of children who have previously lived in the home. These children attend parties in the home for various occasions and continue to receive staff advice and guidance. Consequently, children see staff as people who care and are invested in them.

Most significantly, children are provided with a safe, secure and nurturing home environment. Staff understand the importance of normal, everyday interactions for children. Children's friends are invited to the home for meals. Staff show children appropriate affection, which they value. One child reported that when they feel upset, stressed or angry, staff will give them a hug and to talk to them.

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

Leaders and managers recognise that the safeguarding of children is paramount and is a team responsibility. Staff are involved in decisions regarding children who come to live in the home. They ensure that decisions about children new to the home are considered against the needs of the children already living there. However, it is not consistently recorded which member of staff makes the decision and when. This does not prevent staff from having a clear understanding of children's needs as reflected in their care plans.

Leaders and managers use their comprehensive knowledge of children to manage any specific risks to them. These are clearly documented. However, not all records consistently make clear the strategies for staff to use when responding to children. Additionally, the frequency of fire drills at night does not sufficiently address staff concerns about some children's behaviours. This minimises the effectiveness of otherwise thorough plans for children.

Leaders and managers view physical intervention as a 'last resort'. Staff are encouraged to see children's behaviours as a form of communication and, as such, they respond with care, attention and nurture. Consequently, incidents of physical intervention are extremely rare.

The frequency and length of time that children go missing from the home have reduced. Staff work proactively with other professionals to understand risks to children. When children return after being missing from home, staff welcome them back and seek information about where they may have been. However, staff do not routinely challenge the local authority to ensure that independent return home interviews take place for all children. This is a missed opportunity to gather more information about potential risks to children.

Children have clear and consistent boundaries when staying at this home. Team meetings are held regularly and are used to agree staff practice. A reward and sanction book specifies the types of behaviours that are unacceptable and corresponding staff actions. These are not always compatible and recorded as such. This means that the staff work together to give children a powerful and consistent sense of stability and security.

Leaders and managers consider safeguarding arrangements well. Information regarding potential safeguarding matters is openly and routinely shared with each child's professional network and family. Appropriate referrals are made to the designated safeguarding lead and Ofsted as required. This enables strong partnership working, which helps to minimise the risks to children.

Leaders and managers ensure that the physical environment of the home is suitable for children. They have led on a lengthy demand for much-needed repairs and building refurbishments to the home. The registered manager ensured that a team member completed an extremely thorough risk assessment. Consequently, the risk of potential harm to children was significantly reduced.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The highly effective and dedicated staff team is led by an experienced, enthusiastic and confident manager. The manager is an active member of children's groups and forums where opportunities for learning and improving care for children are discussed. For example, the manager is the vice-chair of the local authority fostering panel and is part of a regional consortium of leaders and senior managers. This allows staff to feel knowledgeable, supported and safe when working with any challenges presented in the home.

Leaders and managers advocate strongly for a continued and clear focus on each child and their needs. They actively encourage staff to understand the journey of the child and the responsibility that staff have for the children in their care. Reports, daily logs and monthly summaries are written as if to each child. One member of staff reported that she advises newer members of staff to 'write as if the child is looking over your shoulder'.

Leaders and managers have exceptional oversight of all activities in the home. There are clear recording systems in place to update information about children. This allows leaders and managers to efficiently monitor the quality of care given to children and proactively respond to individual and broader identified areas for continuous improvement.

Leaders, managers and staff are instrumental in helping children to make positive changes. Staff understand that children's life histories are complex and that children may have barriers to making and sustaining positive decisions. Staff persevere in offering consistent messages to children. They measure progress in small, yet achievable, steps. Therefore, children are not overwhelmed by their plans, and all their successes are recognised and celebrated.

Leaders and managers lead and share innovative practice. Children are offered additional support from the local authority use of a model with a linked foster carer, that offers the children a sense of continuity, stability and an extended family environment. This provides further opportunities to reinforce life skills with children. Staff create and provide training to other professionals on topics such as 'the effects

of trauma on children's behaviours' and 'understanding attachment'. Staff feel trusted and have the knowledge to care for children.

Leaders and managers recognise the value and importance of staff's professional development. Staff new to the home have a thorough and clear induction programme, while more-experienced staff have annual development meetings to set strong targets and objectives. Team meetings and staff supervision sessions occur regularly. A high number of staff completed the Ofsted annual survey and spoke positively about the family ethos of the team and management support.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders and managers have worked particularly hard to avoid the need to employ agency staff. They have focused on using their skilled and experienced permanent and bank staff. Consequently, children are cared for consistently by familiar people who know them well.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and, so far as reasonably practicable, children are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 25 (1)(d)) This specifically relates to the need for regular fire drills at night for children.	27 October 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff consistently challenge the placing authority to conduct return home interviews. Staff can then incorporate any information from these interviews to assess risks and protect children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- The registered person should ensure that case records are kept up to date and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a link between the sanction used to address poor behaviour and the behaviour itself. Although, staff outline tiers for sanctions and rewards which bring consistency for children, some practice is not clearly documented. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)

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: SC036917

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Royal Borough of Greenwich, The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, London, Greenwich SE18 6HQ

Responsible individual: Ishara Tewary

Registered manager: Deborah Forde

Inspector

Tolulope Sawyerr, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

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