

SC037281

Registered provider: Suffolk County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care and accommodation for up to seven children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 September 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 14 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The children have formed strong attachments to the staff. They benefit from long-term placements in a family-type environment.
- The staff share an approach that strongly supports the children's progress and enhances their personal growth.
- The staff team is established and experienced, providing the children with a consistent approach and continuity of care.
- The manager has used training and monitoring and review of the quality of care successfully to inform the staff's practice. Consequently, the care is bespoke to the children's individual needs.
- There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. The manager has addressed all of the shortfalls that were identified at the last inspection.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The decor in the bedrooms is dated and worn.
- The risk assessment of the outdoor play equipment is not effective.
- The records that support behaviour management are not written clearly, and care planning does not include enough detail of the children's therapeutic support.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
14/09/2016	Full	Requires improvement
10/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29/09/2015	Full	Good

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
The health and well-being standard is that the health and well-being needs of children are met. (Regulation 10(1)(a)) In particular, incorporate the identified therapeutic support required and record the outcome of this.	30/11/2017
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(d)) This is with particular regard to ensuring that the risk assessment of the home identifies potential hazards in the garden.	30/11/2017

Recommendations

- Provide a nurturing and supportive environment that is homely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
In particular, maintain the upkeep of the bedrooms to provide a consistent standard.
- Maintain records for each child that represent a significant contribution to their life history. Children and parents should be supported to understand the nature of the records kept by the home and how to access them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)
In particular, ensure that handwriting in records is legible.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home successfully provides a safe and nurturing environment in which the children experience stability and family-style care. Two children have successfully moved on from the home and been reunified with their family or moved on to foster care. The staff keep in touch with these children, and their initial progress looks promising. The majority of the children have turned their lives around significantly. They benefit from education and regular activities in the community. An established routine and strong relationships with the staff have enabled them to thrive.

The established staff team provides a stable environment. As the staff arrive on shift, the children are happy to see them. The staff know the children very well and take pride in their achievements. A social worker said, '[The staff] are tuned to the children's needs.' The predictable routine and consistent staff team generate structure and security for the children, who are happy and upbeat. A social worker said of a child, 'He is safe, he is happy and he is really settled.' The social worker said that the child's only concern is that his age means that he will need to move on. The children are positive and enthusiastic about the home. They talk animatedly about roller-skating, badminton and play dates with friends. They enjoy the benefits of living with peers of the same age who have similar interests.

The staff work with a number of professionals, parents and carers. Feedback from professionals is good. Two professionals spoken to during the inspection said that the staff are always available. Another said, 'The staff are excellent at communicating; they always email about the children's positives and negatives.' These professionals say that living at the home has made an exceptional difference to the children's lives.

A number of new initiatives have helped the staff to look at the emotions behind the children's behaviours, with the aim to reduce incidents. The children were allocated a summer activity allowance for quality one-to-one time with their key worker. The staff used this time to specifically evidence the children's positive attributes. This solution work focuses on skills for the road ahead instead of the negatives that may have previously defined the children.

The children receive therapeutic support, such as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), and counselling. A consultancy service provided by CAMHS guides staff in the children's care. However, the children's records do not include the detail of some of the discussions with mental health professionals, or specify whether the suggested support has been provided to help the children with issues around eating disorders and bereavement. The failure to record these discussions means that, at times, the extent of the support that the children have received is unclear.

Education for the children is a priority. All of the established children attend school, and several have reintegrated into local mainstream provisions. The staff ensure that the children are ready for school and supported with reading and homework. The staff liaise

with the teaching staff and have provided on-site support for children whose behaviours have created barriers to learning. There is a good uptake of extra-curricular activities, and the children are supported to see school friends outside school. Feedback from social workers regarding education is extremely positive. The children have all made good progress in relation to their initial starting points.

The children benefit from links to the local community and enjoy weekly sports clubs. The staff and children raise money for local charities and put on an annual garden party at the home for families, friends and local people. The staff organised a number of exciting trips in the summer, including a London trip, a visit to a theme park and a woodland camping trip. These trips have provided the children with opportunities and new experiences that build positive childhood memories.

The home is a detached, large residence in a pleasant area on the edge of a town with good amenities. A large contained rear garden provides ample outdoor play space. The garden is established with trees and shrubs and has a good range of play equipment. The children love a tree that has been carved into a seat by woodcarving artists. The range of equipment encourages the children to be active outside in the fresh air. The ground floor of the home is partly refurbished and the lounge area and hall are warm and inviting. There are some areas of the house that would benefit from new decor, in particular the children's bedrooms. These are not all decorated to a good standard or to the children's tastes. This does not encourage the children to develop a strong sense of permanence and belonging.

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

The staff are guided by concise risk assessments for each child, based on the child's history and presenting behaviours. These assessments detail individual risks and specify the actions required to ensure the children's safety. Individual incidents are added and influence the analysis of risk levels. The children also have 'danger statements' that detail in a non-confrontational way each child's behaviour and targets to reduce triggers. These are illustrated and undertaken with the children, who score the level of the risk with the staff. This involves the children in decision-making about restrictions and safety rules. Devising these plans with the children helps them to develop self-awareness and take responsibility for their behaviours.

The majority of the children are not old enough to have unsupervised time away from the home. There are a large garden and local parks that they use with staff supervision. The staff educate the children in personal safety awareness, and the police visit regularly and talk to the children about staying safe. There have been no incidents of children going missing for several years. The children understand the risks and dangers of leaving the home alone.

The children in this home are not currently at risk or subject to being sexually exploited. There are no concerns about extremism or radicalisation. Despite this, staff have a good awareness and remain vigilant through regular training.

There is a highly proactive approach to bullying and, as a result, very few incidents. The two recorded incidents amount to conflict between the children as a result of group living. There are no targeted or persistent behaviours directed at any child. Group workshops improve relationships at the home. The children participate well and are learning to recognise their feelings and frustrations before they escalate. There are several forums for the children to discuss their feelings. The children have enjoyed a summer holiday topic called 'Challenge our Gremlins'. This originated from a child's idea following previous topics. This targeted approach has helped the children to develop their emotional literacy and has reduced the levels of conflict at the home. There continues to be a number of arguments, disagreements and name calling that are relatively low-level. The children are learning to consider the impact of their actions and to empathise with others. They feel relaxed in the house and know that they have a right to feel equally safe and respected.

The manager inspires the staff to build on their knowledge of the children. She routinely uses research and training to upskill the team members in their behaviour management strategies. Research has helped the staff team to develop consistent strategies that are preventative. The staff encourage the children to reflect. This is evident from the records that show the child's feelings and their reflections. This reflection work helps the children to consider the impact of their behaviours on others.

The number of incidents and subsequent physically restrictive interventions has increased significantly since the last inspection. The analysis of data follows several recent changes. Three children have left the home and two new children have been admitted in quick succession. The placement changes resulted in an unsettled period and increased intensity due to the school holidays. The number of incidents led to the manager providing breakfast meetings to build in a concept of expectation and look at ways to reduce incidents with the children. The meetings have been successful and there are fewer incidents.

The records that provide the chronology and evidence of the behaviour management interventions are not all legible. There are passages of text that are difficult to decipher. This does not make clear reading for the staff or the children who may wish to access them now or later in their adult lives.

The home does not have risk assessments for the environment but uses a compliance report held by the organisation's maintenance department. This does not work properly as it is not shared with the staff and does not include the garden. There is no assessment of the play apparatus, the climbing equipment and the metal fire escape. These are not assessed for risk of accident, wear or improper use. There is no way of categorising the potential risk to children, and this could result in accidental injury.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has been associated with this home for two decades and registered as the home's manager for nine years. She is a qualified social worker and holds the registered manager's level 4 award. She has a hands-on involvement in the daily running of the

home and monitors each child's progress with tenacity. Her active involvement with the children has previously left management tasks overdue. Following a number of shortfalls raised at the last inspection, the balance between management tasks and direct work with the children has been addressed. The quality of care has improved. The manager has successfully built a family home culture that is based on good parenting and fully reflects the aims in the home's statement of purpose.

At the last full inspection, a number of shortfalls were raised in regard to the leadership and management of the home that had an impact on the care provided to the children. The manager has been responsive. New systems have been devised and embedded. The staff are more accountable, and managerial monitoring systems are working well. For example, following a review of children's files, a staff development day was provided to help staff order the files. The staff reviewed files that they had not contributed to. The audited files are easy to reference and not overburdened with historical information. The records are detailed and chronological, making monitoring and the progress of children easier to track.

Following consequences imposed by the staff, the children record their views and each record is signed off by the manager. The monitoring of these records has highlighted trends. The manager has addressed patterns by introducing new behaviour initiatives that are in direct response to the behavioural patterns identified through informed monitoring and expert knowledge of each child.

The long-serving manager has maintained a positive and energised team. There are no changes to the team. The staff enjoy the collective effort of working together towards shared goals. The staff always feel that they can ask for support, and there is usually a manager or deputy manager on duty. The responsibility of supervision is shared with the staff and linked to performance and development review. The staff are jointly accountable for making sure that they are available, and supervision for all staff has taken place regularly. Regular support ensures that the staff are supported and the emotional impact of the role is recognised.

The manager is forward thinking and open to new ideas. She makes excellent use of literature, research and training to upskill the staff and increase their understanding of the children's needs. There have been several new initiatives that the manager has shared with the team. Increased knowledge has helped the staff to use a consistent approach that has supported the children's emotional resilience.

The staff work in partnership with schools, social workers and other professionals. Joined-up working is seamless and established. The manager challenges responses that add to the barriers which the children face. She has worked tenaciously to secure a meeting with a number of professionals to challenge a school that will not provide a place for a child, despite making no assessment of the individual. This unfailing advocacy for the child ensures that the children receive equality of opportunity in line with their peers.

There is an abundance of meeting forums with the children. The forums include 'get togethers', breakfast meetings and social meal times. All of these opportunities to hold

discussions with the children form part of the daily running of the home. The staff support and encourage the children to share their views. Regular forums have given the children the confidence to voice their opinions.

There have been two external complaints in the last year in regard to noise. The manager has responded to these quickly, and actions have been taken to avoid any recurrence. The children were actively involved in sending an apology letter, which helped them to learn about acceptable behaviours.

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: SC037281

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, Russell Road, Ipswich IP1 2BX

Responsible individual: Clifford James

Registered manager: Serena Emberley

Inspector

Deirdra Keating, social care inspector

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