

SC042978

Registered provider: Lincolnshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides short breaks for up to five children who have learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities.

There is a well-established, suitably qualified and experienced registered manager in post.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 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: 9 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/10/2018	Full	Outstanding
20/09/2017	Full	Outstanding
28/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
15/11/2016	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are happy and safe during their short breaks. They have opportunities for new experiences, they develop their skills and they make excellent progress. Staff know the children exceptionally well, and their knowledge and skills contribute significantly to the extremely positive time that the children spend at this home. One child commented in a survey that the best things were 'to have fun and play, meet people, do new things and feel safe.' A parent said: 'My son has a whale of a time.'

Children's short breaks are extremely well planned, and this is a significant factor in their enjoyment and success. Short breaks are planned to take into account the mix of children, friendship groups and staff skills, and the need for specialist beds. Detailed shift and care planning, supported by excellent communication, ensures that the children's varied and complex needs are fully met, their targets are addressed, interactions are safe and positive, and they have a great time. One parent said: 'The staff go out of their way to make sure that they do the stuff that my child likes.'

Before a child starts to use the service, staff ensure that they have a thorough understanding of the child's needs and routines. Parents and other involved stakeholders contribute fully to information sharing and detailed, individualised care planning. Visits are taken at the child's pace and their voice is very important. For example, one child did not want to use the service, and the staff at the home listened to this and responded to these expressed views.

Activities are very well planned. A member of staff has oversight of this area and she is extremely enthusiastic and committed to ensuring that children have the best possible experiences. She is always looking for new opportunities for children to expand their horizons, particularly within the community. For example, she responded to an advertisement asking for Christmas cards to be sent to residents of a local nursing home. The children embraced this creative task with enthusiasm and produced individual cards for named residents at the home. Each child was enabled to use their individual skills and abilities to produce a card, such as fingerprint and foot painting. Children have also been able to use a sensory bus. They go bowling, they go for walks and they go shopping, and any individual requests are responded to as far as possible. Photographs of activities are displayed around the home as a reminder of the good times that have been had.

Children also have a fun time in the home. A community arts company provides specialist creative opportunities, such as music and arts and crafts. The home has recently been refurbished and now has a Jacuzzi bath with lights. Children really love this experience, which is enhanced by music. One child said: 'I like the new bath because it is relaxing.'

Social pedagogy is fully embedded into practice and underpins all the work that is carried out, ensuring that it is focused, purposeful and evaluated. Children have clear targets that are consistent with the targets in their education, health and care plans. Targets are regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that children are making the best progress possible. Children become more independent, they develop their skills and they improve their socialisation and social inclusion. One parent commented that their child now

makes his bed at home because he does it when he has his short break. All achievements are celebrated. There is an achievement tree in the dining room, and each leaf represents a child's achievement. These are updated regularly. This provides a visual reminder to children about the progress they are making and helps to build their self-esteem and confidence.

The child's voice is extremely important, and their wishes and feelings are paramount in the care and support provided. Staff make every effort to offer choices, whatever the communication needs of a child are. For example, one child has recently left the service and there was excellent attention to detail in ensuring that his expressed wishes for his last short break were fully met. This included favourite activities, a party, the food chosen and the music played.

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

Children are safe when they come to this home for their short breaks. Highly effective safeguarding practice, in conjunction with good staffing levels, means that the most vulnerable children are afforded the highest standard of help and protection.

The preferred model of practice is embedded and underpins the safeguarding practice in this home. Staff are very attuned to the particular vulnerabilities of the children they care for, many of whom are non-verbal. Their exceptional knowledge and understanding of the children's needs enable them to recognise subtle changes in the children's presentation and behaviour. Any concerns are managed through a structured decision-making process, using a safeguarding checklist that has managerial oversight. This enables an informed decision to be made about how to address the concerns in a way that is both appropriate and proportionate.

Staff respond proactively to situations that may lead to a child being at risk of harm. For example, if parents appear to be under more stress than usual, staff will seek further advice and alert children's social care so that additional support can be provided to prevent an escalation.

Behaviour is managed exceptionally well. Highly detailed behaviour management plans provide staff with a significant amount of relevant information that enables them to prevent situations from escalating. Given the challenging behaviour of many of the children, the extremely low number of physical interventions is testament to the success of this positive behaviour management. Staff have also implemented the use of restorative conversations for those children who have an understanding of consequences. This has proved successful in helping children manage their emotions and behaviour.

There is a regular analysis of incidents. This has led to improved practice and a reduction of these events, through highlighting issues that may have contributed to the situation.

There is a very robust approach to ensuring that the environment is safe and that children are protected from accidents. The handyperson has strong and effective systems that ensure that all checks are carried out at the required frequency and any faults are rectified swiftly. Fire safety is given a high priority. While each child has a personal emergency evacuation plan, staff also practise night-time scenarios, which are scrutinised to see if any fire safety improvements are required.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led and managed by a knowledgeable, experienced, inspirational child-focused manager. She is determined to provide the best possible service for the children in her care, and this ambition permeates throughout the staff team. Leaders and managers continually evaluate the effectiveness of the service and seek ways to improve and develop further. The manager empowers the staff by involving them and utilising their skills to deliver the improvements. Staff have designated responsibilities for particular areas, and this sense of ownership ensures that everyone works together for the benefit of the children. The home's development plan is a living document that is constantly referred to and updated to ensure that the home continues to improve.

Staff are very well supported. New staff receive a very thorough and detailed induction that gives them a real understanding of the work and the service. This is supplemented by regular, reflective supervision, good access to relevant training and excellent communication. This ensures that staff are highly competent and knowledgeable about how to meet the children's needs to a high standard. If there are deficits in practice, these are addressed in a constructive way. Staff are proud of the work they do, and they speak knowledgeably and with great affection about the children they support.

Partnership working is embedded, and this is a real strength of the service. Staff members attend all the multidisciplinary meetings that are held for the children who use the service. Staff provide reports of an exceptionally high quality, which are used to inform the decision-making. These reports are child-focused and include photographs of the child in action. One stakeholder commented that the reports 'bring the child to the meeting', and are helpful in keeping the child at the centre of the discussions.

The high degree of professionalism means that the manager and staff are respected by other professionals, and their views and observations are important. For example, the manager, working in partnership with a social worker, has been instrumental in ensuring that a child's safety plan, family contact and transition were child-focused, safe and appropriate. On another occasion, staff were able to provide a health professional with detailed information that resulted in a change to a medication that had been having a negative impact on the child's behaviour and well-being. One social worker said: 'They have done some amazing work and they always go above and beyond.'

Other professionals also value the creativity and 'can-do' attitude of the manager and her staff team. For example, the summer house has been used as a venue to provide education to a child when the school felt unable to continue the provision. The manager also advocated successfully for this new provision to be on a full-time basis rather than the proposed shortened timetable. This has enabled the child to continue to benefit from improved educational outcomes.

Communication is excellent. Children's social workers comment that 'the feedback is amazing', and 'the level of detail is brilliant'. Social workers appreciate the welcome they receive, and one social worker new to the service was able to complete a shift at the home to support her understanding and knowledge of the short breaks service. She has found that invaluable.

Parents are also extremely positive about the service. One parent said: 'The communication is brilliant. The care and understanding is amazing. Staff are excellent,

and they give me some ideas about how to care for my child.' Another parent said: 'We know he will be well looked after.'

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: SC042978

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YL

Responsible individual: Janice Spencer

Registered manager: Margaret Nowland

Inspector

Ros Chapman, Social Care Inspector

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