

SC043255

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 care and accommodation for up to six children. The statement of purpose cites its aims as follows: 'The overall aim of this home is to provide a safe, nurturing, caring and homely environment for each child, where issues and concerns affecting both their past and their future can be positively addressed and supported.'

The home has a registered manager who is currently undertaking the required management qualification.

Inspection dates: 17 to 18 October 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: 4 October 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/10/2017	Full	Outstanding
03/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
08/08/2016	Full	Outstanding
09/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children who have highly complex needs and troubled pasts make exceptional progress as a result of the high standard of nurturing care and individualised, focused support provided by the staff. In particular, children who have lived at this home for a number of years are now thriving, self-confident, secure and settled. One social worker commented: 'The progress is amazing.' Another social worker said: 'Staff have a real insight into my child's needs and how to manage those needs.' Staff take great pride in children's achievements and want the very best for them.

Social pedagogy underpins the care practice in this home. This theoretical model ensures that positive relationships with children and the voice of the child are promoted at all times. Consequently, children are happy and feel cared for. One child gave the home 10 out of 10 when asked for a score. Another child said the best thing was 'all the different activities'. Children's individual needs and interests are met extremely well. Children are encouraged to access the community. They engage in football, tennis and horse riding. Children also enjoy playing in the garden and using the Forest School, which is a facility in the garden, designed to enhance their awareness of nature and the environment. All the children are encouraged to develop age-appropriate independence skills, such as self-care, cooking and keeping their bedrooms tidy.

Staff develop very positive and supportive relationships with family members and this enables children to have safe and meaningful contact. This not only ensures that children maintain these important relationships, but they also retain their sense of identity. Of particular note is the excellent work that staff do to work towards children moving out of the home to live with family members. This is a really positive outcome for the children concerned, particularly as they have spent a number of years as children looked after.

Education is exceptionally well promoted. All the children attend school on a full-time basis and their attendance is excellent. Staff attend all meetings and school events and they are fully aware of children's progress towards targets. The focus on education is such that children have chosen the function of the new conservatory to be a homework and technology room, naming it 'The Technospace'.

Health is similarly well promoted. All health appointments are up to date and the regular involvement of a nurse ensures that specific health needs, such as sexual health, are addressed. Healthy eating has had a particular focus in the last few months. Children have been involved in this change and they now snack on fruit rather than crisps, biscuits and cakes. The nurse commented: 'The healthy eating has been really brilliant and has had a good impact.' Staff have had recent training in medication and managing epilepsy to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the needs of specific children.

Transitions into and out of the home are very well planned. The two children who have left the home recently have done so in a very planned and positive way. Staff continue to provide some support after children leave to ensure that the move is successful. The manager considers requests for new placements very carefully and children have a phased introduction to the home. A social worker said: 'There is the right mix of children and that is why it works.'

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

Children are safe at this home. They do not engage in any risk-taking behaviour such as going missing from the home or drug and alcohol misuse. However, staff are very mindful of the children's vulnerabilities due to their age and previous experiences. Staff have used creative and age-appropriate methods of engaging children to understand about keeping safe online. This included members of the family for one child in order to help the family understand the dangers too.

The Signs of Safety theoretical model underpins risk management and safeguarding practice. This not only ensures that decision making is clear and consistent, but it also promotes a less risk-averse approach. All known risks are assessed comprehensively, and they are re-evaluated at a multi-agency monthly meeting to ensure that relevant partner agencies are kept informed, fully involved and able to take responsibility for their areas of expertise.

Behaviour is managed exceptionally well by giving children clear boundaries in a consistent way. Staff use their knowledge of the children to anticipate triggers and implement diversionary tactics. Children's behaviour is improving over time as they learn to understand and regulate their emotions. The frequency of physical intervention and incidents is reducing.

Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and will challenge their colleagues if they have any concerns. Reflective practice is used to good effect in team meetings to consider incidents and how they could have been managed differently. This is done in a supportive way so that all staff can contribute their views honestly and without fear of blame.

Allegations against staff are taken seriously, the social worker and designated officer are involved immediately, and investigations are carried out thoroughly and objectively. Any lessons learned are implemented promptly, for example through further training. This approach is symptomatic of a learning organisation that wants to continue to improve and develop.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led and managed by an experienced, child-focused manager who promotes a culture of high aspirations and positivity within the staff team. Staff love working at this home because they can see the difference that they are making to the lives of the children. They spoke enthusiastically and warmly about the children and are committed

to them. They are always thinking of ways to engage them and help them progress and have great experiences.

Staff are very well supported. They have regular, reflective supervision, helpful team meetings and access to a wide range of relevant training. The manager encourages staff to develop their skills and interests by taking a lead in an area of their choice. Less experienced staff have also been developing their skills and knowledge of social pedagogy and they have embraced this with enthusiasm. Children benefit enormously from this competent and committed staff team.

Partnership working is a real strength. Social workers spoke enthusiastically about working with the staff in this home, using words such as 'brilliant' and 'amazing'. Communication and information-sharing are excellent. Similarly, representatives from schools made reference to really good support and communication, which enables them to work together consistently and deliver the same message.

Highly effective monitoring and review systems, together with feedback from stakeholders and children, ensure that the manager is fully aware of how children are progressing and any shortfalls in practice. This is enhanced through regular discussion of placement plans at team meetings as well as monthly multi-agency meetings. The monitoring links in to the home's development plan, which is a live document under constant review and used to improve practice.

The manager is very well thought of and some of the practices in the home have been deemed worthy of dissemination within the local authority and beyond. For example, the manager has given a presentation to another local authority about social pedagogy in residential care, she delivers training to other professionals in conjunction with a social pedagogue, and two staff gave a Signs of Safety presentation to another organisation. This ensures that the very positive practices in this home reach a wider audience for the benefit of other children.

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: SC043255

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Janice Spencer

Registered manager: Maria Cowan

Inspector

Ros Chapman: social care regulatory inspector

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