

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 manager has been registered since 2018.

Inspection dates: 27 to 28 January 2020

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: 17 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/10/2018	Full	Outstanding
04/10/2017	Full	Outstanding
03/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
08/08/2016	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make outstanding progress in all areas of their lives. They feel part of a family, making strong and positive relationships with each other and the staff team. They receive personalised and excellent care. As one child said, when asked what they would say to other children moving to this home: 'I would score this home 10/10. There is nothing that could be done to make it better.'

Parents and carers also feel involved in the care provided. This has led to several children either returning to live with family members or resuming contact with them. This is attributable to the total commitment of the staff team. They show commendable tenacity in engaging family members. This provides children with a real sense of being valued and important. A term used by more than one placing social worker is: 'This is the best place for them.' The home is seen as a beacon for transforming children's lives and potential. Multi-agency risk management meetings take place every month. This enables all involved agencies to consider the changing needs and issues for each child.

Placement matching is excellent. The manager only takes planned admissions. She considers all referrals and the needs of other children living in the home. She visits children prior to admission, to observe them and meet their carers. The members of the staff team are skilled and consistent in the approaches they use to support children. They focus on the strengths of each child at all times. This has led to children making progress which was previously not felt possible. Placement stability is excellent. Several children have lived in this home for many years.

The engagement of children in education and training is excellent. One child had not attended education for over two years before moving to this home. They now attend every day and enjoy learning. One staff member managed to secure a college placement for another child, showing real commitment and dedication. Health needs of children are also given commendable attention. Staff act as powerful and vocal advocates. They identify areas of concern and ensure that children have assessments. They then ensure that specialist toys and aids are sourced. One placing social worker said: 'Not only were they key in identifying the need for a sensory assessment, they then bought the recommended sensory toys and equipment to help the child.' Another child came to the home with serious concerns about their weight. Staff worked with nursing staff and implemented food diaries and monitoring, leading to a significant improvement. The nurse who was involved in this work stated: 'I have nothing but admiration for the staff in this home. The progress the children make is fabulous.'

The social activities and opportunities offered to children are inspirational. Aside from holidays, children take part in the home's forest school. Trained staff provide children with opportunities to learn and practise skills relating to forestry. They learn to make fires, climb, make wildlife areas and carvings in the garden. They attend adventure holidays with qualified staff from the home. This teaches them about team working,

consideration for others and healthy lifestyles. Children have worked with staff to make a BMX park in the garden. A garage at the home is now used for children to learn to repair their bikes and other equipment. This all promotes a very healthy and active lifestyle. Children love spending time with staff outdoors and learning new skills. Their confidence flourishes because of such activities and experiences.

Research-informed practice continues to develop and benefits children. Staff use social pedagogy and other research-informed methods in all their work. Children also understand the methods used and engage with them. Staff use research-informed practices to set achievable targets for children. They regularly review and monitor progress. It is clear that children's lives and potential are improved by receiving care and support from staff who are so well trained and competent. A recent development relates to life-story work. Trained staff have started to complete life-story books for every child. This work is of high quality. Children will benefit from having such well-planned and detailed accounts of their family history and experiences.

Another key strength of this home is in how well it prepares children to move on. The manager and staff advocate for early assessments and transition plans. They recognise the complex needs of the children, and the need for forward planning. This has led to very positive transitions for children. They learn independence skills over time. Staff know what children can, cannot and will not do. They use this to advocate for the most appropriate and safe adult accommodation provision for them. They ensure that transitions are done at the child's pace. The success rate for children leaving this home is excellent. The manager is also leading on a new provision of supported accommodation within the local authority. This reflects her skills and expertise in knowing what care leavers need and the value of planning and matching.

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

Staff understand the risks posed to and by children extremely well. Over time, children learn how to identify and manage any concerning or potentially risky behaviours. This is attributable to the excellent skills staff possess and in how they apply research-informed practice in their daily work with children.

Children do not go missing. This is due to them feeling safe, listened to and well supported by staff. The manager is fully aware of the need to enable children to take age-appropriate risks over time. This includes supporting them to make independent trips into the local town. Staff monitor this closely. The sense of security children feel in this home enables them to consider situations and make good decisions about their own personal safety. The staff team is not complacent. Its members regularly refresh their training and knowledge of risk factors. They invite the police and involved agencies to visit the home to support staff and children. There is a strong learning culture in this home.

Significant work has been done to support and educate children around the use of social media, the internet, bullying, self-harm and radicalisation. Safety measures are put in place when needed, but also work undertaken to educate and reduce risks with children.

There is a clear understanding of the need to prepare children for the time when they will not have such high levels of staff support and supervision. There is a zero-tolerance policy in relation to bullying. If concerns are identified, staff act quickly to eradicate such behaviours. Children learn to accept and appreciate each other, their differences and issues. Children use their 'chill and chat' meetings with staff to consider and discuss relevant issues. Sessions on bullying, respecting each other and use of language are just some of the areas covered.

A key strength of this home is how well staff understand and support children's behaviours. From the point of admission, children are supported to consider their behaviours and the impact on others. Exceptionally clear and consistent boundaries enable children to learn to manage conflicting behaviours well. This leads to them feeling increasingly safe and secure. Monitoring and tracking systems are excellent. They enable staff to fully understand the potential triggers for changes in a child's behaviours and emotional state. Staff then adapt and respond accordingly. This reflects a staff team that is highly confident and competent in supporting children at times of crisis. Staff also place a high value on rewarding and praising children for positive behaviours. This is embedded into the culture and practices of the home and staff. Children feel central to the care and support they receive. They take great pride in their progress and achievements.

There is excellent work being done with the local designated officer and placing social workers. The manager has implemented a clear and transparent process for responding to any allegations made about staff by children. Staff record all incidents and events in detail. The use of restraint is seen as a last resort. When used, staff take great care to support each other and the child. A staff member not involved in the restraint meets with the child following the incident, to elicit their wishes, views and feelings. Any allegations are taken very seriously. The monitoring of the use of restraint is excellent. Managers and staff work with children to reduce such incidents. There is clear and positive evidence of children learning how to manage their anger and frustration in a safer and more effective way over time.

The management monitoring and oversight of all incidents is excellent. Staff and managers use supervisions, team meetings and multi-agency meetings to consider risks posed to and by children. They adapt their practices accordingly to support the child. They amend and review risk assessments. There is a clear and commendable sense of staff consistently reflecting and considering the changing needs of children. This is underpinned by their use of social pedagogy and other research-informed methods.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led and managed by a truly inspirational and child-focused manager. She sets very high expectations and aspirations for both children and staff. She is held in very high regard by children, staff, parents and carers and involved professionals. Her enthusiasm is infectious and has led to outstanding outcomes and experiences for children and staff. She is held in very high regard within the local authority and has led on several initiatives and projects. The home also received an award recently for its work

in supporting children looked after and education. This reflects the commitment of the manager and staff team in working to improve the educational outcomes for children.

The manager is supported by an equally committed and competent assistant manager and staff team. They work as a team to ensure that children make significant progress. It is apparent how well they know the children and their complex needs. They speak with passion and great insight about their aspirations for children. The manager and assistant manager value their staff. Staff respond extremely well to this. Involved agencies report how well new staff are integrated into the ethos and value-base of the home. One professional commented: 'I have been really impressed with how well new staff have been inducted into the home and supported in their roles.' New staff feel very well prepared for their roles. They see a career path, excellent training and development opportunities. Their views and opinions are valued by managers all the time. They feel part of a team which is totally committed to improving the life chances of children.

Staff receive regular supervision, annual appraisals and training opportunities. Some have been involved in forest school leadership training and now use this with children in the dedicated area in the home's garden. Others have been involved in adventure/mountain training. Those staff now take children on regular breaks to places such as Snowdonia. It is commendable that staff not only receive mandatory training but are encouraged and able to gain qualifications which enable them to provide outstanding experiences for children. This reflects a management team whose members value their staff, want them to feel valued and who have additional skills and qualifications.

The manager produces extremely detailed and comprehensive reports and data. The reports clearly reflect the journey of each child and the amazing progress they have made. Staff members contribute to these reports. Reports include photographs of the children, and profiles from staff about how children are becoming increasingly safe, happy and settled. There is a clear and commendable focus on including the staff team in celebrating the success of children. As one staff member said: 'I love coming into work, this is like my second family and I just want to support the children to do the very best they can. The whole staff team has the same goal, which is great.'

Excellent systems are in place to regularly seek feedback from children, placing social workers, parents and carers and involved agencies. The manager sees this as integral to what they do. She continually strives to learn from feedback and to ensure that all involved in the care of children feel they have a voice and a say in how this home is run. There have been no complaints made from children or others. This reflects the open and transparent relationship the staff team has nurtured. Children are encouraged to attend the local children-in-care meetings. This provides them with a chance to express their wishes, views and feelings as children looked after. It also further promotes their sense of engagement and being valued.

The manager is extremely skilled in considering and embedding tolerance, equality and diversity within the home. She engenders a culture with staff and children which enables them to accept and value difference. Children learn to share, they learn to accept each other's differences and appreciate them. This prepares them well for adult life and also

leads to a home where respect for others is central. There is a commendable feeling of 'family' in this home, where children and staff like, respect and trust each other.

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: Lincolnshire County Council

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

Responsible individual: Janice Spencer

Registered manager: Maria Cowan

Inspector

Tracy Murty, social care inspector

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