

SC064472

Registered provider: Willows (Devon) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a small private organisation, and is registered to provide care for up to four children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The company also runs its own school, located nearby, which young people attend until they start college.

The home operates a smallholding with vegetable and fruit gardens. A number of animals are kept.

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 November 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: 20 March 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:

- Leaders and managers are committed, experienced and dedicated. The registered manager has been in post for over eight years, and consistently achieves good outcomes for children.
- Children understand why they are living here, and they have realistic goals to work towards. The care team is supportive of children and listens to them.

Children make good progress.

- Children take advantage of the many opportunities on offer to them. These enrich their experiences.
- Children attend the company's school, which is located nearby. The care team works closely with the school to provide well-thought-out individual education plans; these support children to achieve at school.
- The care team supports and nurtures children to help them to understand risks. As children begin to trust the care team and build positive relationships, risks such as going missing and self-harm reduce.
- The care team has good knowledge and understanding about how to protect children from harm.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The children's guide meets regulations, but is not engaging for children when they are new to the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
19/12/2016	Full	Good
02/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14/12/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children speak highly of the care they receive. Since the last inspection, a new group of children are now living in the home. The view of these children remains the same as that of the previous group; they believe that they receive outstanding care.

The environment is very homely, with the kitchen being the heart of the home. The care team and children enjoy meals together. Children often help with cooking and baking. The home operates as a small farm. If children choose, they can help to care for the animals.

Members of the care team build positive relationships with children, which are nurturing and caring. There is an element of fun in the home, and children appear happy and comfortable to be there. The care team helps children to identify their strengths, and works on these to build children's confidence and self-esteem. Members of the care team spend time with children, getting to know them.

Children have individual placement plans that provide the care team with a clear purpose and objectives for each child. The care team respects and understands the impact that children's previous experiences may have on them.

The care team supports children to make progress in all aspects of their lives. For some children, progress is swift. One child no longer experiences the high staffing ratios which were a theme in previous residential settings. Children have aspirations and goals for their future, and the care team supports and encourages these.

The children benefit from the company having its own school, and attendance is good. The care team works well with the education team. Both plan the children's education. The home has converted an outbuilding into a tutor room which can be used to help new children integrate back into education.

Children have the opportunity to experience a variety of different activities, from the moment they move into the home. Activities in school holidays included Segways, waterparks and ice-skating. Once children have settled in, there is an opportunity to go on holiday. The care team encourages children to explore their own interests, and signs them up to groups such as girl guides, swimming lessons, army cadets and trampolining. These groups are very much individual to each child, and provide a way for the children to develop friendships with their peers outside of the home.

Leaders and managers give careful consideration when inviting a new child to move into the home. Decisions are made based on the compatibility with children already living at the home, and the care team's ability to meet needs. Before children move in, they visit the home and the school, and leaders and managers explain the ethos of the company.

Children must agree to attend school as part of the package of care, which helps them to understand the expectations placed on them before they move in.

Before children move on from the home, there is a plan in place which details what is going to happen and who will support them. Children and the care team keep in touch with each other, and maintain relationships into the children's adulthood.

The care team helps children to keep in touch with their family and friends. Families are welcome to visit the children at home. Members of the care team supervise visits with families when necessary, and travel long distances to ensure that children maintain and build on their relationships with their families.

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

Members of the care team fully understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to the protection of children. Regular training about protecting children from harm takes place. The training includes information about risks such as child abuse and sexual exploitation, missing, self-harm and drug misuse.

Leaders and managers take effective action when a child makes an allegation. Leaders and managers keep the relevant professionals informed. Outcomes from child protection concerns are clear. Leaders and managers monitor child protection records and identify areas of learning. The supervision process is used appropriately for discussions and follow-ups with staff, following any concerns about practice.

The care team carefully assesses the individual risks to children and develops strategies to minimise these risks. One-to-one discussions detail the support and guidance the care team provides for children, to help them learn about risks and safety. Many of the children who move into the home have previously been at risk of going missing. Predominantly, as children spend more time in the home the risks start to diminish.

When children go missing the care team is proactive. Detailed protocols are in place, and these are fully understood by the care team. Often, members of the care team identify potential triggers and signs that children may be planning to go missing, and try to avert this. The care team actively searches for the children in the local areas, and keeps in touch with them on their mobile phones. When children have left the home without permission, members of the care team follow them and stay with them, encouraging them to come home. On occasions, such incidents have lasted for several hours, but the care team does not give up.

Leaders and managers coordinate the search for missing children, and are central to liaising with other professionals such as the police and social workers to ensure the safety of each child. When children come home, members of the care team welcome them back and ensure they are safe, and make them a warm meal. The care team talks to the children about where they have been, and the reasons why they left. Leaders and managers identified difficulties for children who were not receiving an independent return home interview within the required timescale. As a result, they have

commissioned their own independent person to conduct these interviews.

The care team supports children with their emotional and mental health needs well. Children have access to services such as the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). In addition, leaders and managers commission their own clinical psychologist, with whom children can choose to spend time. The care team manages incidents of self-harm well, and offers children reassurance and support. Leaders and managers monitor incidents of self-harm to identify patterns and trends. Self-harm reduces over time.

Children have targets and goals that are in place to promote positive behaviour. Children can also work towards extra incentives, if they wish. The use of sanctions as a strategy is starting to diminish, with a large reduction since the previous inspection.

Members of the care team use the positive relationships they develop with children to minimise any risks of behaviour that may become challenging. Communication between children and the care team is good. Members of the care team rarely use restraint as a technique to support children with their behaviours. On the occasions restraint did occur, this was due to the imminent risk of harm to the child and other people. Following any incident, the care team talks with children to ascertain their views and establish the cause. Leaders and managers monitor these incidents regularly and effectively.

Leaders and managers recruit new members for the care team by following safer recruitment processes.

Regular fire drills take place in the home, and the care team ensures that anyone new to the home understands the fire evacuation procedure. The care team and the children all attend training for fire, first aid and food hygiene.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are skilled and experienced in providing children with consistently good care. Members of the senior leadership team are reliable, and have been in their roles for a number of years. The registered manager has suitable qualifications. She attends regular training to extend her knowledge and development. A senior member of the care team deputises for the registered manager in her absence, and is undertaking a level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare.

Members of the care team commit to their roles and to children, and the retention of staff is excellent. The handover of information about children from team to team is meticulous. Children receive good-quality, consistent care.

Leaders and managers know the strengths of members of the care team, and match them together to ensure the required skills on each shift. New members of the care team receive an in-depth induction period during which they get to know the children and learn about their new roles. Induction threads into the regular supervisions which leaders and manager provide for the care team.

Children take part in the annual review of the care team's performance and development. Leaders and managers set development goals for members of the care team that link to their skills and children's needs. The workforce development plan sets out the training plan for the team. Leaders and managers identify any new training needs as they arise around the needs of children. Recently, the registered manager, along with the whole team, attended specialist training required to meet the needs of a child before they moved into the home.

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. A home development plan sets out the aims and objectives, which are all centred on providing children with good care and experiences. Leaders and managers strive to continually improve the home. The quality of the interior of the house is good, and very homely. Despite this strength, there is currently a refurbishment plan in place to maintain its high standard.

The children's guide is an area for development. The document is mundane, and while it meets regulations it does not describe well the warm and nurturing care that children experience in the home.

Leaders and managers have positive relationships with families. Families feel involved in decisions they make about their children, and say that communication is good. Work with other professionals to meet the needs of the children is extensive.

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: SC064472

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Willows (Devon) Limited

Registered provider address: The Granary, Hinton Business Park, Tarrant Hinton, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 8JF

Responsible individual: Jennifer Gould

Registered manager: Jayne Hammett

Inspector

Nicola Lownds: social care inspector

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