

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 is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 October 2017

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: 3 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 outstanding because:

- Children and young people are making significant progress in all areas of their development. Because of the stability and longevity of their placements, this progress has been sustained over time.
- Children and young people take part in a wide range of positive experiences that enhance the quality of their lives and provide them with opportunities to develop their skills and their self-confidence.
- Children and young people have extremely positive relationships with staff. Children and young people feel listened to and know that their views are important. This is enhanced and enriched through the social pedagogy model of care that is well embedded in the staff's practice.
- Transitions into and out of the home are exceptionally well planned and are taken at the child's or young person's pace. This gives the new placement every chance of success.
- Children and young people are safe. They are currently not engaging in any risk-taking behaviour.
- Children's and young people's complex and individual needs are supported exceptionally well. Of particular note is the significant reduction in incidents of aggression. Children and young people are much calmer and more settled.
- Partnership working is highly effective. Exceptionally positive relationships and good communication with other stakeholders lead to positive outcomes for the children and young people at this home.
- Work with families is a real strength. This is effective in improving the quality of the time that children and young people spend with their families, and increases the potential for a child or young person to return home.
- Staff are enthusiastic, committed, child focused and very skilled. They are supported well through regular, reflective supervision, access to a wide range of training and good team working.
- The manager is an aspirational and child-focused leader who has an excellent understanding of the strengths of the home and the areas for development.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
08/08/2016	Full	Outstanding
09/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/11/2015	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people benefit enormously from living at this home. They have all made significant progress in all areas of their development, and this progress has been sustained over time. Placement stability is excellent, and all of the current children and young people have lived here for between one and four years. Stakeholders comment very positively about the progress that children and young people have made. An independent reviewing officer (IRO) said: 'He has done incredibly well. He could not have done any better.' Another IRO said: 'She has come on in leaps and bounds.' A social worker commented: 'She has made massive progress. It is the best placement ever. She is cared for to an exceptional standard and she is thriving.'

All the children and young people have educational placements, and their attendance is excellent. For some, this is a remarkable achievement. A representative from a school, commenting about a child, said: 'There has been a marked improvement. There were significant gaps in their educational and emotional needs, and these gaps have closed significantly.' Another education provider said: 'She has made so much progress. She is thriving and is meeting all her targets.'

Children's and young people's health improves, in terms of both their physical and their emotional well-being. This has a positive impact on children's and young people's behaviour. They are much calmer, more settled and happier. Regular visits from the nurse responsible for children looked after have a positive impact, because the nurse monitors the children's and young people's health. She engages well with the children and young people, and she gives staff advice, which they act upon.

Children and young people have very positive experiences. One young person said: 'I really like it here. I do activities like horse riding, and it is fun.' A child said: 'It is fun here. I go into town and spend my pocket money.' Children and young people benefit from new experiences that enhance the quality of their lives significantly. For example, two young people (separately) went on holiday to Spain this summer. Other children went to Wales on an activity holiday. Children and young people engage very positively with a wide variety of activities, such as football training, Army Cadets, Girlguides, gymnastics, Race for Life and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. These activities enable them to make friends, socialise and develop their skills, and provide them with opportunities to make a positive contribution to the community. They also enjoy playing games at home, and the garden is well used. An example of creative practice, based on social pedagogy, is the forest school. Part of the garden is used for this purpose to enable children and young people to develop a range of skills such as the safe use of tools and the care of small creatures, and learn about nature. This has a massive impact on children's and young people's self-esteem and confidence, as well as their enjoyment.

Relationships between the staff and the children and young people are excellent. Staff know the children and young people exceptionally well, and they understand their

individual needs. Staff are enthusiastic and committed. They speak very positively about the children and young people, and the children and young people respond well to this as they feel genuinely cared for. A child's social worker reflected this, saying: 'He has done so amazingly. He has never been so happy; he loves it and they love him. They enjoy him and speak positively about him. He feeds off that and responds.'

Social pedagogy is a well-established model of care in this home. Its implementation permeates throughout the home. This has enhanced children's and young people's outcomes, experiences and progress, because it places a major emphasis on positive relationships and purposeful, focused work. Children and young people feel listened to and know that their opinions are valued. Participation is promoted through regular 'chill and chat' meetings, monthly independent advocacy, daily recording of the children's and young people's wishes and feelings, and a monthly journal.

A real strength of this home is the work undertaken with families. The manager and staff are committed to supporting children and young people to return to their families, if this is in their best interests. A parent said: 'We are working well together and they encourage me.' Children's social workers speak highly of the commitment and the joint work that takes place to facilitate positive contact. One stakeholder said: 'Staff are working amazingly well with the family.' This enables children and young people to develop a positive sense of self, as well as maintain their heritage. For example, one member of staff is working with a parent to develop a 'words and pictures' story to help the parent to explain a difficult situation to her child. This is over and above what would usually be expected of a residential service.

Transitions are exceptionally well managed. One young person recently left the home in a planned way. The transition and introductions took place over a three-month period to ensure that it went at the young person's pace. This gives the transition every chance of success. Similarly, moving into the home is well planned and taken at the pace of the child or young person. For example, a child who is about to move to the home has had a visit and an overnight stay. There has also been good information sharing between the child's current care provider, the parent and this home, including visits and professionals' meetings. The manager is committed to ensuring that any new admission is a good match for the current group, and that the home can meet the child's or young person's needs.

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

Children and young people are safe in this home and they feel safe. One child said: 'I feel safe, because staff keep us safe.' Children and young people are protected from harm, because the staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding procedures and they place the well-being of children and young people at the centre of their practice. Good staffing levels, comprehensive, up-to-date risk management plans and multi-agency working are additional factors in the home's effective safeguarding practice. The 'Signs of safety' model of social work underpins the practice and is highly effective in highlighting clearly what the risks and protective factors are. This supports proportionate risk management by enabling age-appropriate risk taking within a protective framework.

Currently, no children or young people go missing from this home, and it has been some time since this was an issue. Similarly, no children or young people are misusing drugs or alcohol, or engaging in self-harming or other risk-taking behaviour. However, the children and young people are vulnerable, due to their complex needs and histories, and staff demonstrate a robust understanding of the children's and young people's risk factors. All staff have had comprehensive training in all aspects of safeguarding.

Safeguarding incidents are responded to very promptly and appropriately. Effective safety plans are informed by multi-agency meetings. Staff and other professionals carry out individual work with children and young people in order to develop children's and young people's understanding of safe and appropriate relationships and internet safety.

Behaviour is very well managed. Many of the children and young people had difficulties in managing their emotions and behaviour when they first came to this home. This has significantly improved for all the children and young people. One child said: 'Staff help us with our behaviour. I talk it through and figure it out before it becomes a big deal.' A social worker said: 'She has really worked on controlling her anger. Staff have given her strategies using social pedagogy, and she has responded well. It has been a long time since there were any incidents.' One result of children and young people becoming calmer and less destructive is the impact that this has had on promoting positive contact with families. A social worker said: 'This is massive.' The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the small number of sanctions and physical interventions used. The manager monitors and evaluates all incidents, including those that result in sanctions or physical intervention. If there is any learning, this is discussed with the staff so that they can develop and improve their practice in the future.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led and managed by a highly effective manager, who is experienced, qualified and child focused. She is aspirational for children and young people to have the best outcomes possible, and she inspires the staff team to provide the very best care and support. Staff describe her as: 'firm but fair', 'the best manager I have ever had' and 'awesome'. Stakeholders also recognise the important role that the manager plays in the home, and one said: 'The manager in particular leads the team.'

The impact of this leadership is evident in the quality of the staff, as the supportive environment enables staff to thrive and flourish. Stakeholders comment on the consistency and enthusiasm of staff. One stakeholder said: 'Staff are child centred and focused. They show great skill in meeting potentially complex needs.' An IRO commented: 'The commitment is impressive, and staff are up for the challenge.' The competency and commitment of staff are enhanced by the availability and access to good-quality training. This includes non-mandatory training, such as Theraplay, an arts diploma and a diploma in social pedagogy. Staff are also well supported by regular and reflective supervision and team meetings. Staff's morale is good, and they work well together. This has a significant positive impact on the outcomes for the children and young people at the home.

Monitoring is rigorous and robust. The reports from the independent visitor are always welcomed and responded to. Children and young people have regular 'chill and chat' meetings to share their views. Stakeholders and parents are regularly canvassed for any feedback, and any concerns are followed up. Internal monitoring, including file audits, is also effective in driving improvements. This informs the ambitious yet realistic development plan for the home.

Partnership working is excellent. There are many examples of working together to promote positive outcomes in education, health, emotional well-being and safeguarding. A social worker said: 'I can't talk highly enough about this home. My relationship with the staff is brilliant. We have fantastic communication. We are on the same page.' An education provider reiterated this, saying: 'We work closely together, with joint boundary setting. This is instrumental in moving forward with the children's emotional and behavioural development and feeling safe.'

Communication is really good. Staff provide good-quality reports for meetings and reviews, and they always attend. Monthly multi-agency meetings are a highly effective mechanism for ensuring that information is shared with all professionals involved in the child's or young person's network, and that agencies are held to account in providing the necessary and identified support. The manager and staff are open to criticism, and want to continue to develop and improve. Similarly, the manager and staff are good advocates for the children and young people, and will provide appropriate challenge if they see any deficits in service provision.

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 difference 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: Cynthia Mountcastle

Inspector

Ros Chapman: social care inspector

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