

## Children's homes inspection - Full

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| <b>Inspection date</b>           | <b>08/07/2015</b>   |
| <b>Unique reference number</b>   | <b>SC032154</b>   |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>        | <b>Full</b>   |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>         | <b>Residential special school</b>                                     |
| <b>Registered person</b>         | <b>National Autistic Society</b>                                      |
| <b>Registered person address</b> | <b>National Autistic Society, 391-393 City Road, LONDON, EC1V 1NG</b> |

|                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Responsible individual</b> | <b>Miss Helen Eyers</b> |
| <b>Registered manager</b>     | <b>Mrs Lynne Taylor</b> |
| <b>Inspector</b>              | <b>Mr Morley</b>        |

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|---|--------------------|
| <b>Inspection date</b>  | <b>08/07/2015</b>  |
| <b>Previous inspection judgement</b>  | <b>Good</b>        |
| <b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>   | <b>None</b>        |
| <b>This inspection</b>  |                    |
| <b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>   | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceeds the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care. |                    |
| <b>how well children and young people are helped and protected</b>  | <b>Good</b>        |
| <b>the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>   | <b>Good</b>        |

**SC032154**

## **Summary of findings**

### **The children's home provision is outstanding because:**

- Children and young people experience a high quality of care that takes account of their autism and individual needs. Care planning is excellent and promotes the holistic needs of children and young people.
- Staff implement a well-developed autism framework that ensures children and young people make progress across all aspects of their development. This progress is significant and sustained.
- Children and young people benefit from comprehensive transition planning and the support from other agencies and professionals.
- The home is well led and managed. Staff have a strong commitment to children and young people and implement the aims, objective and values of the service in practice. The positive impact of the leadership arrangements is clearly evident in the exceptional progress and experiences of children and young people.
- Safeguarding practice is good and responsive to the needs of children and young people with autism.

## **What does the children's home need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendations**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Have regard to the relevant aspects of the statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 45, paragraph 9.25).
- The independent person must make a rigorous assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 65, paragraph 15.5).

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

The children's home is registered to provide accommodation and care for up to 12 children with learning difficulties. This is a service that is for children with autism. It is part of a larger residential special school that provides education on site for the children and residential care in other premises. Children in the home may have other associated difficulties such as sensory impairment and physical disabilities. The home is owned and managed by a charitable organisation.

### Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 14/01/2015      | Interim         | Sustained Effectiveness |
| 07/08/2014      | Full            | Good                    |
| 10/02/2014      | Interim         | Satisfactory Progress   |
| 25/09/2013      | Full            | Good                    |

## Inspection Judgements

|  | Judgement grade    |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>  | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| <p>Children and young people thrive in this home where their individual and complex needs are totally supported with sensitivity, planning and encouragement. Care practice follows a well-developed framework, specifically for promoting the unique needs of children and young people with autism.</p> <p>Careful and thoughtful planning builds on children and young people's strengths and reduces the disabling effects of autism as they make excellent progress in their development. Children and young people live in a safe stable environment where they have valued experiences on a day-to-day basis enhanced from the empathy given by staff. Parents commented, 'Staff have a very good understanding of autism and complex needs, they are observant and intelligent.'</p> <p>The exceptional quality of care and attention to detail in highly individualised care plans facilitates progress in all aspects of life. Children and young people move from living alone to group living, become tolerant of others, learn to wait and take turns, develop their communication skills and manage daily transitions for example from school to home with less anxiety. Staff are very effective in using visual timetables, social stories along with verbal communication and reassurance. This helps children and young people develop flexibility, manage change and become more resilient. For example a young person accepting one of his favourite DVDs had broken whereas in the past this would lead to challenging behaviour.</p> <p>Children and young people learn an extensive range of new skills such as using a knife and fork, sitting at a table to eat, pouring their own drinks, use a computer, wash-up, and shave. New experiences include going to the barbers, having their nails cut, eating out, trips to museums and the countryside, bowling, cinema and a weekly karaoke club.</p> <p>There is comprehensive planning for new admissions and for young people to move into adult services in a planned and sensitive way. The skills and development children and young people achieve at this home contribute enormously to their future life outcomes.</p> <p>All children and young people are fit and healthy. They enjoy and benefit from regular exercise such as country walks, swimming and playing in the sports hall</p> |                    |

after school. Staff promote individual needs such as moisturising dry skin and regulating body temperature; important for children when heat may trigger an epileptic seizure. Children and young people make significant improvement in visiting the dentist and having their teeth examined, which previously induced high anxiety. One young person has now accepted wearing a coat outdoors in the cold when previously he would only wear a t-shirt.

Children and young people also benefit from on-site speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and psychological help. These professionals contribute significantly to individual care plans and practice. For example in developing communication or behaviour strategies to support specific needs.

All children and young people have excellent attendance at school and progress well in academic subjects. This is in addition to their wider learning with regard to independence, self-care, communication, relationships and social development.

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|---|-----------------|
|   | Judgement grade |
| <b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>  | <b>Good</b>     |
| <p>The manager and staff are good at keeping children and young people safe. Parents and professional comment the home is a safe place, where children and young people feel settled and emotionally secure.</p> <p>Staff effectively implement care plans and risk assessments that take account of individual needs and risks. Specific individual risks such as self-harming, aggression, epilepsy, diet, social media and road safety are all assessed. Staff know and understand the care strategies to use with individual children and young people to protect them from harm.</p> <p>Children and young people experience positive structure and boundaries that facilitates the reduction in anxiety that autism can cause from changes in routine. Within this structured and safe environment children and young people still try out new experiences that are sensitively introduced to promote learning and development. One parent commented, 'It is refreshing that staff take him out to try new experiences despite his autism and are prepared to accept this challenge, he thrives on this.'</p> <p>High staffing levels allow for effective supervision of children and young people so</p> |                 |

there whereabouts are known at all times. There are no missing from home incidents and staff know the procedures to follow should this occur. The policy on missing from home does not include relevant and up-to-date statutory guidance. Given the the current good practice of support and supervision of children and young people this shortfall has not directly impacted on their safety but may do so should a missing from home incident occur.

The safe, autism specific environment that staff create, reduces the levels of challenging behaviour from children and young people. Staff are also trained, with regular refreshers, in a specific model for managing challenging behaviour that is appropriate to the needs of children and young people. As a last resort and only to keep people safe, staff will physically intervene. The methods used are minimal to resolve the particular incident. There is good management monitoring and oversight that ensures practice is safe and appropriate. Parents commented positively about the impact of the setting, 'Incidents are very rare now, he (young person) is helped to manage himself and he now interacts with others.'

Children and young people do complain and make their views known to staff and the manager. They trust staff to be able to talk about their concerns, wishes and feelings and receive the appropriate help and response in return. For those individuals with non-verbal communication, staff use a variety of strategies to assist them. Along with the attention to mood, different sounds and body language this ensures all children and young people have a voice and feel safe with the adults who look after them.

Senior managers have developed good relationships with the local authority's safeguarding team. They are open in sharing concerns relating to staff practice which may impact on children and young people. Allegations about staff are promptly notified to the appropriate authorities and the Registered Manager ensures prompt action to keep children and young people safe. Practice is reviewed and developed as a result of concerns raised. For example the e-safety policy has been updated and staff have attended additional training about promoting on-line safety for young people.

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
|   | Judgement grade |
| <b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b> | <b>Good</b>     |



The Registered Manager has been in post for eight years, she has a social work qualification, a Level 4 qualification in management and lots of experience caring for children and young people with autism. She continues to develop and is exploring the need to achieve a Level 5 qualification.

She uses her skills, knowledge and experience effectively to put children and young people first and promote their needs. Care provided is in line with the Statement of Purpose which aims to provide, 'A positive caring environment that promotes the development of the whole child and offers individual care.'

Staff are well trained to provide the structure, positivity, empathy and low-arousal environment that children and young people need. They have positive experiences out in the community and staff maintain strong links with school and parents. There is ongoing, effective supervision, support and training. This equips staff with important communication skills. As a result they use the right communication methods, give children and young people the right level of one-to-one support, and allow them time to process information. This makes communication a positive experience for children and young people who use alternative methods. Staff develop a respectful, non-judgemental attitude that promotes the uniqueness of each individual regardless of how their autism manifests itself. A parent commented, 'The staff are well led by the seniors who guide the other.'

The impact of leadership in delivering a high quality of care means that children and young people make excellent progress taking into account their backgrounds and previous experiences. These may be small steps but are significant and sustained given their challenging and complex needs.

The Registered Manager has a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. Both her internal and the external monitoring from an Independent Visitor (IV) aim to continually improve the care and support. For example there has been a recent review of; medication arrangements, children's plans, how their progress is tracked, and a plan to improve the sensory room. The monthly IV reports are not rigorous which may miss opportunities for a more comprehensive and robust challenge of the service.

The home works in close partnership with families, other agencies and has strong links with the school that all the children attend. This was highlighted by an external professional, 'There is very good matching between home, school and the children's home and understanding of children is very good.' Parents also commented very positively about the quality of partnership working, 'Communication is excellent, we are able to work very closely with the staff and

manager.'

## What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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*.

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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