

SC035352

Registered provider: Northamptonshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home. It is registered to care for up to eight children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 July 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: 25 January 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:

- Children are making good progress from their starting points. Staff support children to be socially aware by helping them to engage in charitable and voluntary work.

- Good structures and routines are in place. These enable children to do well in all aspects of their lives.
- Staff are aspirational and ambitious for each child.
- Staff work well with partner agencies to keep children safe. Robust risk-management plans enable staff to respond effectively to known and emerging risks.
- Children are developing independence skills. This supports a positive transition to independence.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Managers should ensure that staff capture information about children's views following a physical restraint.
- Managers should ensure that children are provided with information that demonstrates how their views have been listened to and acted on. Children should receive a response if they have made a complaint or allegation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
23/08/2016	Full	Good
23/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/10/2015	Full	Good

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>Fitness of manager</p> <p>A manager may only manage a children's home if – the person has by the relevant date (1st April 2017) attained the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare. (Regulation 28(1) and (2) (c) (i))</p>	31/01/2018
<p>The leadership and management standard</p> <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that helps children aspire to fulfil their potential and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular the standard requires the registered manager to-</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of quality of care within the home. (Regulation 13 (2)(f))</p> <p>This is in relation to improving the evaluation of planned and unplanned endings to children's placements, to inform practice within the home and partnership working.</p>	31/10/2017

Recommendations

- Records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- Any child who has been restrained should be given the opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable,

ideally within 24 hours of the restraint incident. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraphs 9.59 and 9.60)

- Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

This is in relation to the registered manager ensuring that children receive a response, if they have made a complaint or allegation.

- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children in this home receive good quality care and they are making good progress. Staff build positive relationships because they are experienced and skilled in engaging children. Staff encourage and enable children to undertake voluntary and charitable work in the community.

Children have comprehensive placement care plans, which include health plans. Children have good and improving health. They benefit from preventative health appointments and referrals to specialist services where appropriate. They receive information about healthy diet and lifestyle. They are encouraged to develop structured daily routines.

Staff understand and promote children's emotional well-being. They provide consistent and nurturing care. Children grow in self-esteem and resilience. One social worker reported that staff have been very helpful in supporting a child following a significant bereavement. They were sensitive but tenacious in ensuring that contact arrangements were in place with family and friends. A member of staff takes a lead in liaising with families and promoting contact arrangements. Sometimes this involves mediating, and helping to repair relationships. Social workers report that staff are effective advocates for the children in this regard.

Education and training placements are prioritised. Children who have previously had a history of poor attendance engage in training and education. Staff work with education and training providers to identify children's interests and support routes into further education and employment. All children have education plans or pathway plans in place. If there is a period of non-engagement, staff request a planning meeting to agree a way forward. Staff are aspirational for children and celebrate their achievements. Children make progress because of consistent staff encouragement and positive reinforcement.

Children are encouraged to develop age-appropriate independence skills by helping staff with cooking, cleaning and laundry tasks. For children who are over 16, there is an

independence skills programme. This provides detailed information to support and test out children's understanding of independent living. The home has an independence flat where children can get a taste of independent living in a supportive environment. There is also a children's kitchen that supports the development of independence skills. Children report that one of their favourite activities is learning to cook with the home chef. They have individual sessions, and keep photographs of preparation and the finished dish in their own recipe book.

Staff work closely with personal assistants and social workers to support transition plans for children. One child who has recently moved into supported living accommodation was visiting the home during the inspection. She explained that she has a college placement and has high aspirations for the future. She said: 'Staff here have been amazing. I learned a lot whilst living here in the flat and I was ready to move into my own place.'

There are regular residents' meetings that children generally contribute to. The manager tracks and responds to any requests, concerns or complaints arising from the meetings. Children have access to independent advocates and they know how to make a complaint. However, managers do not always ensure that children are given a clear response to their complaints.

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

Some children have talked about difficult experiences in the home, due to disruptive behaviour by peers. There is a robust, updated anti-bullying procedure. Any bullying incidents have been addressed appropriately by staff. Currently there are no concerns about bullying. Children report that they are able to talk to staff and that they feel listened to. Sanctions and rewards are used well to address or positively reinforce behaviours.

Children living in the home have a range of complex needs. Some demonstrate risk-taking behaviours. Staff work closely with partner agencies to ensure that there are multi-agency plans in place to continuously assess and reduce risks. Children have individual risk-assessment and risk-management plans. Staff respond to emerging risks quickly. Staff are experienced in, and knowledgeable about, helping children who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and other risks in the community.

When it is assessed that risks are not reducing or that needs cannot be met in this home, the manager is confident in working with social workers to revisit care plans. The safety and welfare of the children is prioritised.

When children go missing from the home, staff conscientiously follow procedures, and report concerns to partner agencies in a timely way. Other agencies report that staff are proactive in looking for children and ensuring that they have the opportunity for an independent return interview. Risks associated with missing behaviours are robustly assessed and addressed in multi-agency meetings. Children's views are considered in these meetings. As a result, children become safer.

There are a low number of physical restraints, given the needs of the children. Staff de-escalate behaviours, and use distraction techniques where possible to defuse incidents. This means that restraint is used only as a last resort to prevent children from harming themselves, a peer, or staff. However, restraint records do not consistently evidence that managers carry out a debrief with staff, or that the views of children are sought.

Staff undertake individual key-work sessions to raise awareness of particular issues or address concerns. Some children find it difficult to cope in these sessions but staff persevere and find creative ways to engage them. As a result, children have a better understanding of the consequences of their behaviours and make better choices.

The manager has made a small number of referrals to the local authority designated officer for safeguarding. There are no concerns about the safety or well-being of children as a result of these referrals. However, it is recommended that children receive a formal response about the outcomes.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is experienced and holds a social work qualification. He is also undertaking the mandatory management qualification, but has not completed this within the agreed timescales. A requirement is made. The manager has spent some time providing management cover of another home. This has not impacted on the management of this home, but it is recognised that it has had an impact on time for personal development.

There is an up-to-date, detailed statement of purpose that sets out the ethos of the home. The managers prioritise education and training and ensure that there are good structures and routines to support educational achievement. Managers encourage staff to be aspirational and ambitious for each child. Staff are experienced and skilled in supporting children to develop independence skills and to experience a positive transition into independent living.

Managers also ensure that they have all of the relevant information to inform pre-admission risk assessments. Before a new child is admitted, managers give full consideration to the needs of the children already living in the home. However, they recognise that, in one case, a child who moved into the home had a negative impact on the other children. The managers liaised closely with the allocated social worker and a statutory review recommended a change of placement in order to better meet this child's needs. Managers have not yet undertaken a detailed review of this issue to inform future practice and partnership working when placements come to an end.

Managers are addressing areas for development and have an action plan in place. They are aware of the strengths and areas for development in their service. They ensure that any recommendations made by the independent visitor are addressed and responded to promptly. This supports continual improvement.

Staff were very positive about the support and development opportunities they receive. One member of staff reported that she is being given the opportunity to spend time with the leaving care team so that she learns more about transition processes for children. Levels of supervision are good and improving; however, one member of staff has not received regular supervision.

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: SC035352

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Northamptonshire County Council

Registered provider address: John Dryden House, 8-10 The Lakes, Northampton NN4 7YD

Responsible individual: Helen Middleton

Registered manager: Timothy Morrison

Inspector(s)

Cathey Moriarty, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017