

1257065

Registered provider: Hampshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and run by the local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Young people and staff have relocated to a new property since the last inspection. This is a result of the local authority's revision of its residential care options across the county. This is the first inspection in the new location.

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 December 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: Not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Young people make phenomenal progress in all areas of their lives. They learn how to be responsible members of society, for example through caring for others and doing voluntary work in the community.
- Young people show an extraordinary attitude to their education. They are highly motivated in their learning and have excellent attendance at school or college, some from a starting point of non-attendance.
- Young people respond to the love and care around them. They feel like they are part of a family, making secure attachments to the adults supporting them.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Young people have access to other professionals to help them explore their difficult and painful feelings. They make excellent progress in their emotional well-being, and behaviours such as self-harm diminish.
- The management team provides exceptional leadership. Managers and leaders are ambitious to provide the highest level of care and are always seeking to improve, using the quality standards as a tool to do so.
- The staff team is first class. Staff are experienced, competent and highly motivated. Morale is high, and the staff's enthusiasm and positivity are infectious. They love the work they do, seeing it as their vocation.
- Staff place young people first. They centre their care and approach on the individual needs of the young people. They listen to, and act on, young people's views, wishes and feelings.
- Staff challenge other professionals when they deem the quality of care to fall anywhere below excellent. They advocate for young people, for example by finding a therapist with whom each young person feels comfortable.
- Young people are safe. They say they feel safe and secure. Staff ensure young people's safety in all areas of their lives, including physical and mental health, friendships and the cyberworld.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

A particular strength of the home is the relationships that young people form with the staff. Young people regard staff as their family, referring to some as father figures and others as uncles or aunts. Young people are confident that staff truly care for them and put their needs first. They know their relationships with staff will continue long after they have left the care system. Adults who were once in the care of this service stay in touch and, on occasion, visit the home. A young person said, 'I really love living here. The staff have always shown me love, affection, emotional stability and positive attention. They are always doing all they can to help.' Young people show a concern for each other, for example by making cards or giving presents at key anniversaries.

Young people make excellent progress in all areas of their lives. They develop a mature and responsible attitude, especially in regard to their education. Some young people, from a starting point of refusing school, now attend full time. Other young people have made a successful transition to mainstream college. Young people demonstrate a concern for wider society, for example by doing voluntary work in the local community. A professional said, 'The all-round progress is phenomenal. The change is just amazing.'

Staff support young people to see others who are important to them, such as their immediate and extended families. They work with young people and their families to make visits as successful as possible. Relationships improve and visit times are extended to include overnight stays and the celebration of key events such as Christmas. Young people see relatives who they have not seen in many years, such as grandparents. A placing social worker said, 'Staff have gone above and beyond their call of duty. They have managed contact well. It has been difficult at times and they have been on hand to provide a break.'

Young people describe a range of meaningful and stimulating activities they enjoy in the home, such as computer gaming, music and cooking. They also appreciate many other activities outside the home, such as horse riding, attending girl guides and being part of a chamber orchestra.

Young people develop many independence skills, such as managing their personal care, cooking and travelling on their own. A member of staff described how she was 'thrilled' that a young person was able to get a bus pass and now travels to school independently.

Staff have been successful in forming relationships with other professionals and advocating for young people to get the right help. This means that young people have ready access to a range of professionals with whom they feel comfortable. They are able to express and explore their painful and difficult feelings and find alternative ways to cope. As a result, behaviours such as self-harm diminish.

Staff are innovative and creative in obtaining young people's views, wishes and feelings. For example, they use a jigsaw concept to help young people explore their thinking patterns. Young people think about their lives using the 'house of worries', 'house of good things' and 'house of dreams' as a framework. Staff help young people who are struggling to express how they are feeling. For example, staff provide emojis that young

people can hang on their door to show their current mood. Young people have a voice and do not feel the need to complain. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

Staff prioritise young people's health, and they advocate for them to ensure that they get the specialist support they need, such as a clinical psychologist with whom they feel comfortable. Staff follow the succinct healthcare plans, ensuring that young people have the necessary appointments and immunisations. They work with a nutritionist to provide a healthy diet in conjunction with an exercise programme to help young people who are overweight. They support young people whose self-esteem is low and want to comfort eat. Some staff are trained to the appropriate level in sexual health, and young people are able to get advice about sensitive issues from adults they trust and are familiar with. Staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of mental health issues. For example, working with other professionals to provide a high quality of care for a young person, they concluded there was a need for additional mental health professionals to be in the home 24 hours per day.

A member of staff with a background in healthcare has the necessary systems in place to manage medication, including controlled drugs. Staff trained in medication administration ensure that young people get the correct medication at the right time.

Staff and young people welcome those who are new to the home. Young people begin to form relationships through their carefully planned transition. They look forward to their move into the home and say they feel welcomed by the others. They are able to join in activities immediately, such as a celebratory meal in a local restaurant. A young person spoke enthusiastically about her placement at a new school.

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

Young people are safe and secure. Staff keep them safe without being risk-averse. For example, young people are able to use smart phones and other electronic devices safely. They understand the risks and the boundaries in place, talking to staff about any messages they receive that give the, rise for concern. Young people are able to play games online with their peers. Staff show an excellent knowledge of the risks in the cyberworld and how to keep young people safe.

Staff assess the appropriateness of relationships, encouraging young people to make friends at school and in the wider community, such as through joining a local girl guides group. Young people enjoy the social contact, and feel emotionally secure. They are able to express themselves, confident that staff will respond appropriately and not stereotype them. A young person said, 'I was very troubled, well out of control. When I struggle with getting on with staff we work through it and see what is going wrong.' Another young person said, 'I love spending time with [staff name]. He helps me talk about my feelings and helped me find a solution to my anger.' Another young person said, 'With staff support I can get through all my emotional difficulties.'

Young people behave exceptionally well, some from a starting point of being an extreme risk to others due to violent behaviour. Staff use an 'anger volcano' to help young people understand when their emotions are building and about to erupt. They use a positive reward system to promote positive behaviour. For example, 'house vouchers' are used to encourage young people to read or do their homework, leading to a golden ticket for an

additional reward. Strategies are successful, and young people are highly motivated in their reading and learning.

Young people do not go missing, misuse substances regularly or commit offences in the community. Staff rarely have to use any form of physical intervention. Staff have worked with therapists to design 'grab bags' that contain sensory items that a young person may use at a time of high distress. When staff do physically intervene, it is at a low level, such as guiding them away from a situation. Staff are diligent at recording such interventions, and their documentation is an exemplar of keeping records above and beyond what the standards require. The documentation includes subsequent conversations with the young person. The management team reviews the incident reports, ensuring that appropriate intervention and support have taken place. Managers reflect on incidents in order to learn lessons and inform future practice.

The registered manager ensures that staff are trained in child protection and safeguarding. Staff are clear about what to do in the event of any concern or disclosure, although they have not had to implement the procedures since the last inspection. Staff have excellent relationships with other safeguarding professionals, including the local authority designated officer and the police. They are able to discuss issues in the local community, including the risks that other known individuals may present to the young people if they come into contact with them. Young people show staff anything that concerns them in the social media world, and staff respond appropriately and proportionately. In one case staff involved the police, who were able to offer further advice to the young person on how to keep themselves safe.

The local authority adopts safer recruitment practice. The registered manager assures himself that all necessary checks are in place before employing anyone in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is qualified to the correct level and very experienced. He shows exceptional leadership, and has put into place a staff structure that works extremely well. A competent and experienced deputy manager supports him to manage 'parental care teams'. Young people identify with a small number of staff as their close family, with the wider staff team being like aunts and uncles. This means that young people form strong attachments and feel safe and secure.

The strong management team has made extraordinary use of the quality standards, embedding them in the planning, structure and implementation of the care that staff provide. Key staff take responsibility for each quality standard. There is meticulous examination and monitoring of how well the standards are being met. Staff create charts that measure progress against the quality standards. There is a culture of continual reflection, development and improvement.

Individual placement plans are excellent, and formatted around the quality standards. They give a clear picture of how to care for each young person and the young people's individual goals. Effective systems are in place for communication between staff on different shifts. Pertinent information is readily available to staff, minimising the time they spend reading documents and maximising the time they spend with young people. A placing social worker said, 'I can only give positive feedback. The communication and support is excellent.'

A strength of this home is the staff team. Staff are qualified, experienced and highly motivated, with most of the team having an extraordinary length of service. The staff team has been successful in managing the transition to the new location, helping young people celebrate the good times in the old home, while looking forward to fresh experiences in the new home. Staff put young people at the centre of their practice. For example, a staff member ensured that she was on duty at the right time so she was to attend an important professional planning meeting. Staff go to extraordinary lengths to promote parental involvement in young people's lives, for example by providing transport to personal education planning meetings. A placing social worker said, 'They are an amazing team there.'

New staff and student social workers speak positively of their induction. Succinct placement plans, risk assessments and behaviour support plans underpin their training in supporting young people.

The registered manager supports staff through regular and meaningful supervision, from which staff are able to reflect on practice. He ensures that staff have regular access to a clinical psychologist to discuss the individual needs of the young people in their care. The psychologist helps them to understand the underlying psychological reasons for behaviour. Staff say they feel very well supported. Morale is high. The drive to deliver first-class quality of care is infectious, and staff have high expectations of themselves and other professionals. They challenge the performance of other professionals if they consider it falls below a standard of excellence. For example, a staff member challenged the lethargy in implementing action points agreed in a personal education plan.

Staff undertake professional development in the therapeutic model the home adopts. They demonstrate a thorough understanding of the principles of care for young people who feel rejected or traumatised. There is shared ownership about practice, with staff reporting they are well led when young people present with particular difficulties.

The monitoring of the service is of great importance to the registered manager. He is a visible presence in the home, available to both staff and young people, and makes a daily assessment of the quality of care. In addition, he considers carefully the views of an independent visitor who comes to the home every month. This is a manager who is open to constructive criticism and professional dialogue as he strives to continually improve the quality of care. The registered manager also uses the six-monthly statutory report to Ofsted to reflect critically on performance and drive forward improvement.

The registered manager is dedicated to improving the lives of young people who live at the home. He is committed to ensuring that there is a stable staff team and stable placements. Consequently, he is meticulous in his approach to considering referrals to the home and the impact on the dynamics of the existing group of young people. He is confident in turning down referrals when his professional judgement indicates that there would be potential conflict.

The new home is custom-built to a very high standard. Young people in the care of the local authority have contributed to its design. Of particular note is the location of the office which does not intrude on the young people's personal living space. The result is a pleasant, homely domestic environment that looks and feels like a family home. A young person said, 'It is a homely, cosy house and warm company.'

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: 1257065

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Hampshire County Council, The Castle, Winchester
SO23 8UG

Responsible individual: Susan Lomax

Registered manager: Paul Thomas

Inspector:

Keith Riley, social care inspector

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