

SC035409

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority manages this secure children's home. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict children's liberty. The children's home can accommodate up to 12 children who are aged between 10 and 17 years. It provides care for children accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who are placed by local authorities. Admission of any child under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who is under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State. Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities.

The current manager registered with Ofsted on 30 September 2014.

Inspection dates: 3 to 4 July 2018

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**

Outcomes in education and related learning activities **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 13 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/02/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
19/09/2017	Full	Good
06/12/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/07/2016	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>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child.</p> <p>(Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i))</p>	31/07/2018
<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—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.</p> <p>This is with particular regard to ensuring that all staff complete their mandatory training within the home's required timescales.</p> <p>(Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(c))</p>	30/08/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)

Specifically, ensure that recruitment to vacant staffing posts, including higher-level teaching assistants, is addressed urgently so that the school can continue to improve, building on the good progress already made.

- Ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)

Specifically, continue to focus attention on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that standards can be sustained during and beyond transition to the new building and to a full staffing establishment.

- A record should be made and kept of all uses of single separation in secure children's homes. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.65)

This is with particular regard to ensuring that the record made for managing children away and single separation includes the evaluation of the manager's review of why the criteria continues to be met.

- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on public holidays. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)

- The review of the premises should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The quality of individualised care and support that children receive enables many to make remarkable progress based on their starting points. However, the home's overall grading has remained as good, which is due to other issues. Although the areas identified for improvement do not have a direct impact on the progress that children make, continued development is needed.

All staff, from the most senior through to ancillary staff, share the home's ethos and culture, and all work in a child-focused way. Positive energy cascades through the home and underpins the calm and relaxed atmosphere generated in each living unit. The non-judgemental attitude of staff fosters strong and trusting relationships between themselves and children. No matter what the reason is for a child's admission, they are seen and treated as a child in crisis. Children and staff develop great respect for and like each other.

The experiences of living at the home for many are often life changing. Children in despair and crisis experience respite from their troubled past and environment. This respite allows them to re-adjust, take stock and make positive decisions about their future. A child said, 'If it wasn't for the staff, I don't know where I would be now. Being in here has really helped me to turn my life around.'

Staff recognise children's individual needs early. As a result, clear plans and strategies are drawn up and put in place. Regular revision and update keep them current. A highly skilled staff group works individually with children. Children's previous life-styles are reviewed and skills and strategies, designed to serve them well following discharge, are developed.

The fantastic working and supportive relationship between the healthcare team and care staff helps improve children's outcomes and enhances their mental and physical well-being. A psychologist leads formulation meetings with staff about individual children, providing staff with clear work plans. This enables the children to gain skills to reduce the issues that they face and increase their protection. As a result, children's concerning behaviour reduces, their confidence increases and they feel a sense of achievement.

The children access all primary healthcare services without delay, through a consistent part-time school nurse. A multi-disciplinary health team provide a wide range of bespoke interventions. The health team delivers these interventions to improve children's emotional well-being. The team can attend swiftly to support a child in crisis.

The substance misuse worker increases the children's and care staff's knowledge and awareness about the misuse of illicit substances. All children are offered group work through a programme that concentrates on alcohol, aerosol and drug misuse and sexual

health awareness. Some children receive individual support if required. This has a positive impact on the children's lives.

Children have a voice at this home. The strong, trusting relationships allow for excellent levels of communication between staff and children. This facilitates high levels of consultation. Children make a significant contribution towards their own futures and to life at the home. For example, they participate in the staff recruitment process.

The arrangements for transition and re-settlement are excellent. Adventurous mobility programmes promote independence and are designed to prepare children for life beyond transition. Continued support from staff after a child leaves is a real area of strength. Staff are prepared to go that extra mile to ensure that plans go smoothly, and examples were noted of staff giving their own time to support children at crucial times.

Work has been ongoing to make the environment more warm and welcoming. The living areas are bright and colourful, set off by artwork, murals on walls and decorations in place celebrating the world cup. The home is clean, tidy and fit for purpose.

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

Children are kept safe while they live at this home. Staff are conscientious in ensuring that risks are known and controlled and they have a very good understanding of each child's vulnerabilities and behaviours.

Written risk assessments outline the risks to each child, but the strategies outlined are not explicit on how the risks are to be managed. This is a recording shortfall, as staff practice in managing risks is diligent, and no child has had their safety or well-being compromised as a result of this shortfall.

Multi-disciplinary teams working at the home implement detailed and structured interventions plans. Consequently, children receive very well planned and carefully thought-through care. This helps them to develop insight, understand their feelings and implement strategies that help them to regulate their behaviours, such as displaying anger and engaging in self-harm.

All members of staff are trained to recognise signs and symptoms of abuse and receive training in other subjects related to safeguarding, such as managing child sexual abuse and radicalisation. All the staff know what to do and whom to inform if they have concerns about a child's well-being.

Any issues of a safeguarding nature are shared promptly and effectively with the relevant agencies. Managers advocate strongly on behalf of the children with the relevant professionals. This ensures that there is a response that will promote the safety of the child involved as well as others in the community.

External safeguarding professionals speak highly of the staff's approach. The staff welcome external scrutiny and advice. Professionals said that the management team is very aware of any issues, and that staff's attitudes and approaches ensure that there is

no risk of complacency.

Children have a number of external advocates whom they can approach if they wish to complain or raise an issue. Due to the strengths of the relationships that develop with staff and the levels of trust and respect, issues are resolved at a low level. Consequently, there have been no formal complaints raised by children since the last inspection.

Children understand and use the rewards system. They are able to earn extra privileges for positive behaviour, and this helps to keep them motivated. Single separation and managing children away from the group are used if needed. The use is appropriate and monitored by managers to ensure fairness and proportionality. Managers endorse the records to confirm whether the continued use of these measures is justified and the criteria met. However, written records of why managers have endorsed the continued use and why the criteria continue to be met at review are lacking in detail.

Incidents of physical intervention are scrutinised by internal and external managers. The designated officer checks both the written records and closed-circuit television (CCTV) records if needed. This approach ensures that the use has been justified and that the children are being kept safe.

Staff manage children's behaviours very well, and an emphasis is placed on developing trusting and supporting relationships. Consequently, the use of physical interventions or disciplinary measures is low.

Searches of children are only carried out if absolutely necessary and if there are concerns about their safety or the safety of others. Staff are very aware that these searches are sensitive and that children may find them frightening and intrusive.

While members of staff ensure the children's safety in the community, the local area risk assessment that outlines risks in the locality is lacking in detail. Although members of staff may be aware of the local risks, the information should be available in a formal recorded version to evidence that the risks have been assessed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is qualified and experienced and has a strong commitment to improving the outcomes for children. She leads staff who have an in-depth understanding of the children's needs and are motivated, enthusiastic and passionate in their work with children. Staff speak highly of the support from the manager.

The manager has gained a level 5 qualification in leadership and management, and the vast majority of staff have gained a relevant level 3 qualification. In addition, staff gain certificates in specialist areas, such as that of a climbing wall facilitator, and cardio qualification. This ensures that children receive good-quality care from skilled and qualified staff.

Robust internal and external monitoring of the home support the manager to drive improvement. This monitoring, along with effective partnership working with internal and

external multi-disciplinary staff, has improved the quality of care and outcomes for children. One professional said, 'They [the staff] are so supportive. They can facilitate most things at short notice. I have an excellent working partnership with them as we are on the same page.'

The staff said that the management of the home supports them very well. The staff receive effective supervisions and appraisals that focus on children and staff development. The staff receive debriefings following significant incidents to identify areas that worked well and what could have been better, and to identify further support that they may need. It is this support, along with accessible support services from the organisation that leads to a stable, dedicated and happy staff team that enjoys its work with children.

The staff access a wide range of training that is swiftly sourced if identified as a need to support a child, for example, in understanding 'county lines'. As a result, staff develop and extend their knowledge to provide effective support to children. However, not all staff have completed mandatory or refresher training within the home's timescales. While there is minimal impact on children due to the majority of trained staff, lack of timely training does not ensure that all staff are developing or refreshing their knowledge in all required areas.

The manager notifies all appropriate agencies of significant events that have occurred at the home. However, on occasion some notifications have not been received by Ofsted in a timely manner. There is minimal impact on children, as the staff have taken appropriate action. However, lack of timely notification means that Ofsted cannot ensure, within reasonable timescales, that the provider has taken all required action to keep children safe.

Outcomes in education and related learning activities: good

Children make good progress from their starting points. They all obtain at least one level higher in English and mathematics functional skills, and most are working towards an information communication technology (ICT) award. Initial assessments accurately identify levels of ability in literacy and numeracy, and more complex learning needs such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works diligently to improve outcomes for children, including urging host local authorities to provide the resources necessary to help children achieve their potential.

The curriculum provides a good balance between academic subjects and practical activities. Children work safely in activities and understand the importance of keeping safe. An increased focus on employability skills and careers education has improved the vocational offer. Three boys have recently achieved a level 1 qualification in building construction with an external training provider. Further training partnerships are being developed to improve opportunities for children at transition.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Clear learning objectives and interesting resources effectively promote learning and stimulate participation. Each child has an individualised programme with bespoke learning targets. They enjoy time in education,

take pride in their work and said that they learn from the feedback that they receive. Learning observations and walks undertaken by senior staff and external partners provide clear and evaluative assessments, identifying good and weaker practice. How progress is monitored to ensure improvement following these activities is less clear.

Managers and leaders have taken effective action to address the areas identified for improvement from the previous inspection. The permanent appointment of the acting headteacher and recruitment to senior posts ensure that significant progress is made across the main areas of performance.

Teaching assistants support children and teachers very well. They are multi-skilled, leading activities such as ICT and physical education (PE) competently as well as providing focused learning interventions with individual children. Care staff provide helpful support at school, intervening sensitively when children struggle to engage. Good relationships between staff and children ensure high levels of participation. Attendance has improved and is now consistently high.

Staff enjoy working at the school and receive good training and support. The advisory board is proactive and provides sufficient challenge and scrutiny. There is still work to do, not least in achieving a full complement of staff over the next few months, but the headteacher and staff team are not complacent, and they have high expectations for the children and the school's future development.

Information about this inspection

For inspections of secure children's homes, Ofsted is assisted by an inspector from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in Ofsted's evaluation of health services provided for children (authorised by HMCI under section 31 of the Care Standards Act 2000).

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: SC035409

Provision sub-type: Secure unit

Registered provider address: Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF

Responsible individual: John Young

Registered manager: Julie Tinkler

Inspectors

Natalie Burton: lead social care inspector

Graham Robinson: social care inspector

Paul Taylor: social care inspector

Stella Butler: social care inspector

Gary Turney: health and justice inspector, Care Quality Commission (CQC)

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