

SC032154

Registered provider: National Autistic Society

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is part of a charitable trust. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to eight children or young people who may have an autism spectrum disorder. Children or young people may have associated difficulties, such as sensory impairment and/or physical disabilities. The home is divided into two houses, with a communal hub and garden. The home is part of a special school that provides education on site.

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 January 2020

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: 8 January 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/01/2019	Full	Outstanding
18/01/2018	Full	Outstanding
15/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/01/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The home provides a very high level of individualised care which meets the complex care needs of the children and young people. Children and young people have made significant progress since living in the home and have sustained their progress, despite having significantly complex needs which can impact on their emotional well-being.

The staff have an excellent understanding of the children and young people, and this enables them to help them to achieve high levels of emotional stability and positive developmental progression. The staff understand the changes in behaviours which can lead to challenging or difficult situations. They respond to any changes sensitively to meet the needs of the children and young people.

Staff help children and young people to develop positive relationships with them, their peers and their families, and aspire to them developing a high level of independence. Staff are passionate about ensuring that the children and young people experience positive activities, both in the home and in the wider community. These activities help them to learn new skills which will support them in their transition into adulthood.

Staff focus on building the independence of the children and young people. They are ambitious for the children and young people and set them goals which are testing yet achievable. Staff enthusiastically engage with the children and young people, working with parents, school, social workers and other agencies so that they have every opportunity to achieve their goals. For example, children and young people access medical appointments, have their hair cut and begin to attend to some of their personal needs independently.

The children and young people are supported to celebrate their success, as they are able to gain qualifications which enable them to achieve, both in their home environment and at school. All the children and young people have gained awards, and this supports their development of social and independence skills. For some, these achievements are significant.

Parents say that the home provides exceptional levels of consistent care and that this supports the development and emotional well-being of their child, and that the children and young people develop self-confidence and access new experiences as a result of living here.

The staff are resilient and consistent in their care. They remain focused and determined to meet the needs of the children and young people, even when the children and young people are unable to manage their behaviours. They use regular consultations and reflections to identify changes in behaviours and are able to work with specialist services, such as the child and adolescent mental health services and other health professionals, to provide the required interventions to support the children and young people's needs.

The staff work in partnership with professionals effectively and respond to the evolving care needs of the children and young people. They are able to use information and guidance alongside research to help them to modify their practice for the benefit of the children and young people. This enables the children and young people to have stability, security and consistent care from a team which fully understands their needs.

Children and young people have well-planned transitions and positive endings when moving on from the home. Staff ensure that the children and young people move on to placements which can meet their needs both now and in the future.

The manager and the staff have significantly improved their levels of consultation and communication with the children and young people. There is substantial evidence of how they work daily to give the children and young people positive choices, as well as communicating with them verbally and by using pictorial symbols, objects of reference and other communication tools to enable them to have a voice in the home.

All the staff access specialist training on meeting the needs of children and young people with autism spectrum disorders, and this enriches their care and understanding of the needs of the children and the young people.

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

The staff focus on providing the children and young people with an environment that keeps them safer and makes them able to take part in activities despite their complex needs. The staff carry out robust risk assessments on all activities, including paying visits to venues to ascertain that they can ensure the children and young people's safety during an activity. The staff are flexible in their approach, and the number of staff can increase to ensure that all the children and young people can access an activity safely.

The staff provide the children and young people with a high level of supervision to provide a safer environment. There are effective systems in place to help to reduce the risk of incidents of children going missing from home or being exploited due to their vulnerabilities. The home works in partnership with the police and partner agencies to help to update the location risk assessment to safeguard the children and young people in the home and the wider community.

The staff's excellent knowledge and understanding of the individual children and young people's behaviours enable them to implement robust risk assessments and reduce any identified risks. This is achieved by managing the children and young people's environments sensitively to enable them to continue to enjoy and engage safely.

The staff are trained in specific restraint reduction techniques, and this is regularly reviewed. The training enables staff to support the children and young people, primarily by using de-escalation strategies and, as a last resort, physical interventions to help them to become safer. When incidents happen, the recording is effective and clear, and reflection and debriefings take place to help the staff to reflect on their practice and

explore the triggers for the incidents, including how they could respond differently in the future.

The staff are consistent in their approach and response when the children and young people present with negative behaviours. This has enabled the staff to significantly reduce the number of physical interventions, as the children and young people develop an understanding of their behaviours, and are able to redirect themselves effectively.

The home has a clear policy and procedure on medication storage and administration, and the senior staff have training to ensure that they are suitably qualified to administer medication safely. Medicine is well audited and safely disposed of when no longer required. The children and young people have individual health plans, and this supports the staff to ensure that they administer medication both safely and with sensitivity and promote the health needs of the children and young people.

The staff communicate with the children and young people routinely using their preferred method of communication to enable them to have their rights and dignity promoted and respected during the delivery of personal care. The staff provide communicate clearly and provide the children and young people with consistent help and explanation to enable them to develop a sense of safety and express their voice in relation to their care plans.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager leads very much by excellent example. She brings a high level of skill and experience, which is reflected throughout the care provided by the staff and helps to enrich that which the children and young people experience.

The manager knows the strengths and weaknesses of the home. She strives to continually improve and raise standards by working with other partner agencies and providers to explore ways of improving and developing the home and providing the best outcomes for the children and young people.

The manager has helped the staff to become more effective in supporting the children and young people to communicate, using communication tools in the home and in the wider community during their many activities. This ability to communicate better enriches the children and young people's experiences and helps them grow in confidence when out in the wider community.

The manager's attention to detail and excellent oversight of arrangements to meet each child and young person's care and devolvement needs mean that the care is of a very high standard. The manager is passionate and aspirational for the children and young people, and this is evident in staff's practice. Staff show that they have high aspirations and feel that they are helping the children and young people to have opportunities and develop new skills in a supported and safe way.

The manager ensures that the staff have access to regular supervision, appraisals and regular meetings. These allow them to discuss and reflect on the children and young people's care plans, the health and safety of the home and any practice and development concerns. If development opportunities are identified, swift action is taken to ensure that there is little adverse effect on the children and young people.

The manager is robust and will make the difficult decision to end a placement if needs cannot be met in the home or if there are staff deficiencies which could lead to poor practice. The manager uses disciplinary procedures effectively to reinforce her high standard of care practice and promote consistent delivery.

The manager is proud of the home's reputation and ethos of supporting complex children and young people to make positive and sustained progress. She is also proud of the home's ability to retain a core, experienced staff team. She welcomes new team members and supports them with a clear development pathway for their personal development.

The home has robust safer recruitment procedure in place, and this ensures that the home employs only staff who are motivated and have an understanding of the needs of the children and young people. The staff are resilient and motivated, enjoy their work and have access to positive management support. The manager supports them to access specialist support services to maintain their own emotional and physical well-being.

Parents and professionals say that the manager and the staff sincerely care about the children and young people and 'go above and beyond'. The staff support positive family time in the home and in the community, and they will challenge professionals and advocate to ensure that a child or young person's needs are met. For example, the manager challenged a senior official in the local authority when trying to get this authority to agree to implementing a positive plan of transition for one young person, to enable them to move to adult services seamlessly.

The manager takes pride in how she works in partnership with and consults parents, professionals, carers and other agencies to help to progress plans for the young people. The manager fosters excellent relationships, which ensures that the children and young people's plans can progress effectively with no drift or delay and that they receive the best care possible.

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: SC032154

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: National Autistic Society

Registered provider address: 391–393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG

Responsible individual: Helen Evers

Registered manager: Lynne Taylor

Inspector

Noel Cooper: social care inspector

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