

# SC032163

Registered provider:

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is run by a local authority. The home is registered to care for up to nine children who have complex learning difficulties and disabilities. The home provides long-term care for children in accommodation that comprises four distinct living areas located in the main building. The occupancy levels of each living area are determined by the needs and the mix of the children.

The registered manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2007.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

### Inspection dates: 27 to 30 April 2021

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 10 February 2020

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** sustained effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** not applicable

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/02/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/08/2019	Full	Good
15/01/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/11/2017	Full	Good

## **Inspection judgements**

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Staff provide child-centred and consistent care for the children. As a result, the children experience responsive care tailored to their individual needs. This provides the children with security and stability, and, as a result, they grow in their confidence.

The staff offer a wide variety of opportunities and experiences that promote each child's individual development and progress. Staff plan activities that they know children will enjoy. This enables the children to take part in pursuits and experiences, many of which they were unable to do before they joined the home.

Attuned staff use a variety of systems to aid and support the children's communication. This enables the staff to quickly identify and comprehend what the children are communicating. Staff understand the importance of listening to, involving and responding to the children. Consequently, the children have a sense of being known and understood.

Excellent resources offered by the setting mean that the children have a good range of interesting activities to take part in and enjoy, for example a zip wire, outdoor play equipment, a cinema room and a sensory room. The staff and leaders are ambitious for the children and proactive in supporting the children to follow their interests and to have fun.

There has been a huge investment at the home since the last inspection. However, although some areas of the home are extremely well furnished, other parts of the home are poorly maintained. Some unnecessary signage and practice such as the staff carrying keys, the locking of some doors and restricting the children's access to certain areas lead to an institutionalised feel.

Some of the children's wardrobes, cupboards, and some television cabinets are kept locked. While this may be appropriate for some of the children's safety, no assessments for this restrictive practice have been recorded or agreed for each child. This prevents choice and decreases opportunities for the children to learn how to take care of themselves.

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

Feedback from parents and professionals has been unanimous about the high quality of care and help that the children receive. Staff spoke affectionately about the children. Children were observed to be comfortable in the home and relaxed in the presence of the staff. One staff member said that 'everyone is invested' in working together to provide a fun and safe home for the children.

Staff help the children with building their 'life story'. This takes the form of individual albums that contain photos, mementos and monthly summaries. These records increase the understanding that the children have about their histories, background and experiences.

School attendance has been variable for the children during the last year because of COVID-19. For some, school attendance has remained fairly unchanged, and for others there have been periods of part-time attendance. When children have not been at school, resourceful staff have ensured that a range of educational activities have been available. The children have benefited from time spent outdoors enjoying nature and walks on the beach. Staff recognise that this enhances the children's life experiences, enjoyment and well-being.

For one child, who is not attending school, a temporary alternative education package has been commissioned while a full-time education place is being sought. Regular planning meetings with the senior leadership team are in place to prevent drift and to ensure a timely resolution and permanence for the child.

Staff use identified individual strategies that consider the children's communication and learning needs to divert and minimise incidents when children may become anxious or distressed. When a physical intervention has been used, it is in the lowest form possible and for the least amount of time. Records contain all the required details and are clear about what happened.

Staff complete safeguarding training in a wide variety of topics. However, safeguarding is not a running agenda item on the staff supervision records. Moreover, the staff do not routinely consider different scenarios, and the desired responses to these, during staff team meetings. This means that staff may not always be encouraged, or tested, to further develop their skills and knowledge.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The home is run by a longstanding registered manager who is dedicated and passionate about providing high-quality care and support to the children. Contingency planning and risk management in response to COVID-19 have been effective and well managed. One member of staff said that, during the most restrictive periods over the past year, the home felt like a safe place. This is a testament to the senior leaders and managers and the staff's commitment to the children.

The registered manager works closely with other agencies and organisations, involving all relevant parties in care planning and review processes. Feedback from these sources is overwhelmingly positive. The manager is confident to seek out specialist support and solutions, when faced with challenging decisions that in his view are not in the children's best interests. The responsible individual is an active and visible presence in the home and provides excellent support to the manager.

The managers and the staff work exceptionally well with the children's families. Staff understand the importance of supporting the children to maintain their family relationships. This assists the children to develop a positive self-view and increases their ability to form and sustain attachments and build a positive sense of their own identity.

The staff benefit from a broad range of mandatory and child-specific training opportunities. The majority of the staff team hold appropriate qualifications required for their role. However, a cohort of staff has not completed the necessary training within the required time scales. This means that leaders cannot be confident that all the staff hold the core knowledge and practice skills required. The registered manager confirmed that there are plans in place to address this.

# 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 registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—</p> <p>the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ('the Level 3 Diploma'); or</p> <p>a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b))</p>	1 September 2021

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a nurturing and homely, domestic environment. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

In particular leaders and managers must review:

- the amount of health and safety signage around the home
- staff practice such as carrying bunches of keys
- the locking of doors and restricting the children's access to certain areas of the home.

In addition, they must ensure that the environment is consistently maintained and furnished to a high standard.

- The registered person should ensure that children are supported to express themselves as individuals and should be given an appropriate degree of freedom and choice in relation to day-to-day arrangements for their care, depending on their individual needs and the setting in which they are cared for. This is in relation to activities and personal items such as clothing and technology. Children's reasonable preferences in relation to day-to-day arrangements should be met with consideration given to safeguarding. Where a child's preferences are unreasonable or cannot be met for safeguarding reasons, staff should discuss this with the child to help them understand why. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.21)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that the staff consistently:

- record any reason for restricting a child's access to facilities and items
  - agree such restrictions with significant people in children's lives
  - detail such restrictions in a child's care plan
  - ensure that this practice does not have a negative impact on another child's freedom unnecessarily
  - ensure that any restrictions are regularly reviewed.
- The registered person should ensure that staff hold the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert for any signs that might indicate a child is in any way at risk of harm. The registered person should ensure that skills in safeguarding are gained and regularly refreshed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.12)

In particular, ensure that all opportunities are utilised to explore and develop the staff's knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and the expected responses to concerns.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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:** SC032163

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider address:** Dorset Council, County Hall, Colliton Park,  
Dorchester DT1 1XJ

**Responsible individual:** Paula Bates

**Registered manager:** James Collins

## Inspectors

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector  
Alphie Khumalo, Social Care Inspector



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