

SC398253

Registered provider: North Lakes Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to five boys who may have social and emotional difficulties following early childhood trauma or periods of disrupted care. The home is part of a private organisation.

The registered manager has been in post since May 2019 but is currently absent from the home due to injury. The home is currently led by an acting manager with the support of the home's head of care and responsible individual.

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: 12 to 13 May 2021

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: 9 May 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/05/2019	Full	Good
15/05/2018	Full	Good
10/05/2017	Full	Good
08/02/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children's complex needs and difficulties are well understood by staff who benefit from in-house training in childhood trauma and attachment issues. A consultant psychotherapist commissioned by the organisation also provides staff with further advice and guidance to enhance the quality of care they can provide.

Children enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff. Three of the four children currently living at the home have developed very positive attachments with staff and have a clear sense of belonging at this home. One child, who has recently moved to live at the home, is settling in well and appears to be really enjoying the company of staff as well as the other children.

Children have a voice in this home and know that staff listen to them. Since the last inspection, the home has converted an outbuilding in the garden to provide a sensory area, which children enjoy using. One child said, 'I asked for a ball pool with a slide and that's what we got. I love the ball pool.'

Children's health needs are prioritised and consistently well dealt with. The organisation's registered nurse liaises closely with community health professionals and specialist services to ensure that staff have a good understanding and the necessary support to manage children's physical, mental and emotional health needs.

Children attend the organisation's independent school that is within reasonable travelling distance from the home. Despite some children finding the structure and rules of school more difficult than those of the home, all are making continuous good progress.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, children were tutored at home by staff when the school was closed. Children very successfully completed schoolwork online, with staff and children at times requesting extra work as children were completing tasks well and more quickly than usual. This has worked positively for some children, raising their self-esteem, and enabling them to achieve greater maturity.

Children missed spending time with their family members during the pandemic when government restrictions prevented households from meeting each other. This was an unsettling period for them. However, staff made sure that children were able to regularly make telephone and video calls to family members and, as restrictions eased, staff facilitated visits where possible.

Social workers and other professionals share confidence in the care and support children receive. One social worker commented, 'They know him very well. Their communication with me is excellent. I receive weekly reports keeping me up to

date.' Another social worker commented, 'He does have a voice in this home. He will speak up; he has good relationships with staff.'

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

Staff have good knowledge and understanding of children's risks and behaviours that may compromise their safety. Children said that they feel safe and know that staff care about keeping them safe. One professional commented, 'All the children I see have moved on from their starting points. They have a growing sense of safety and secure attachments.'

Children, appropriate to their age and understanding, are helped to learn about risks and dangers that exist. For instance, all have been made aware of how to lessen the likelihood of infection by social distancing and washing hands. Children's individual risk assessments ensure that staff are fully informed of children's individual vulnerabilities and the strategies and actions needed to minimise and mitigate these.

The positive relationships shared with staff are central to why children said they feel 'happy' and very settled in this home. Consequently, children have not felt the need to go missing or run away from this home.

Staff are trained to understand how children's behaviours can result from their early childhood experiences and how these link to a variety of difficult feelings and emotions. Children respond positively to the in-house therapy that is available to them, supported by the patience, nurture and empathy shown by staff.

Children understand the house rules and generally respond well to the consistent boundaries promoted by staff. Sanctions are rarely given but, when these occur, they are appropriately recorded, and their effectiveness is evaluated to ensure that they are meaningful and fair to children.

Children's behaviour at times requires staff to physically intervene to keep them safe. However, these times are becoming less frequent, and the minimum intervention is always used. Records are comprehensive and are effectively used to reflect with staff and children on incidents that have occurred.

Medication is safely stored, managed and administered as prescribed. Medication administration records are appropriately completed to monitor the safety of the process. No errors in administration have occurred to compromise children's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is currently being managed by a team leader with the support of the company head of service and the home's responsible individual. This interim arrangement is providing staff and children with continuity during the temporary absence of the registered manager.

Despite a recent injury, the registered manager was eager to contribute to this inspection and did so with the assistance of video calling technology. The manager is passionate about her role and missing her daily routine, including spending time with the children. She is kept up to date at her request by calls from staff at the home and from the home's head of care.

The manager and staff team have a clear understanding of children's needs and how these should be met. They are ambitious for children and ensure that they work effectively together with other professionals and clinicians to ensure that children receive the support they require.

The home is running well in the absence of its registered manager, with tasks being appropriately delegated to the acting manager and staff team. The acting manager described the current situation as 'empowering' and viewed this as a positive opportunity to progress his learning.

Staff spoke highly of their manager and said that they feel exceptionally well supported in this home. Examples given have included the manager undertaking additional tasks for them, allowing staff to focus their time and energy solely on the children. However, the usual support mechanisms of professional supervision and staff meetings have not been maintained at regular intervals to ensure that all staff have the professional support and guidance they require.

Although staff have continued to access a considerable amount of online training during the pandemic, a planned training day led by senior managers has been scheduled to deal with any immediate gaps in staff knowledge or understanding that ordinarily would have been captured in supervision or team meetings.

The home has kept Ofsted appropriately notified of matters of concern as required, maintaining their usual transparency with inspectors. Overall, the manager's internal monitoring processes have been effective and contributed to the six-monthly quality of care review and update of the home's development plan.

The home's external monitoring has appeared less than robust, and at times reports have been inaccurate and lacking in detail. This was identified and escalated by the manager as a weakness. The home has since planned for an alternative independent person to carry out monthly monitoring visits.

The requirements made at the last inspection were all successfully met.

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 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 promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate. (Regulation 13 (1)(a) (2)(b))</p> <p>This relates specifically to ensuring that staff meetings are arranged to give staff the opportunity to share and discuss issues concerning the children and other work matters.</p>	21 June 2021
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p>	21 June 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home’s safeguarding arrangements and activity that promotes the welfare of children living in the home. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 65, paragraph 15.5)

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: SC398253

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: North Lakes Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: Malvern View Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior,
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 4AD

Responsible individual: Paul Jenkinson

Registered manager: Jeanette Wilson

Inspector

Gillian Walters, Social Care Inspector

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