

SC416599

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 experience social and emotional difficulties following early childhood trauma or periods of disrupted care. The home is part of a private organisation.

The home's permanent registered manager is currently on maternity leave. A temporary manager registered with Ofsted in May 2021 to lead the home until the permanent manager's return.

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: 7 and 8 June 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: 23 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/10/2019	Full	Outstanding
25/04/2018	Full	Outstanding
13/06/2017	Full	Good
29/03/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home currently cares for four boys, who are very settled and making measurable progress from their individual starting points. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, children have coped remarkably well and have responded positively to the guidance and support provided by staff to keep themselves safe and well.

Overall, care planning is highly detailed and designed to ensure that staff have a thorough understanding of children's individual needs and how these should be met. However, plans for two children make no reference whatsoever to their culture or identity. This significant part of who they are should be clearly expressed in planning.

Children have a voice in this home and enjoy spending time with staff. They know staff will listen to their views and wishes and act on these. Children have regular opportunities to voice their opinions and influence what happens in the home. For example, children were not overly keen to have individual canvass pictures of themselves displayed in the home. Their views were respected and instead these were sent as gifts for Mother's Day.

All children have excellent attendance at the company's local independent school and generally make significant progress during their time there. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were periods when it was necessary for children to be home educated. Children were provided with laptops and had virtual and online lessons. These were successfully supported by staff. One social worker commented: 'School is a real strength, [name of child] is thriving there. He has a sense of pride in his achievements in school and often comes home and shows the staff his work, as well as bringing home many certificates.'

Children's health and well-being are closely monitored, both by staff and the company's registered nurse. The nurse works closely with an established network of healthcare providers and practitioners to ensure that children's routines and more complex healthcare needs are met.

Children's emotional well-being is prioritised and supported by therapists commissioned by the company. Most children benefit from play therapy sessions, which aim to increase their confidence and self-esteem and help them make sense of past events.

Despite the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, children enjoy regular exercise within their community and are encouraged to spend time outdoors. Although they have missed activities such as trampolining and swimming, they have enjoyed getting out on bikes when the weather has permitted. One child has particularly enjoyed creating plays and performing these for children and staff. With the easing

of government restrictions, children have been able to return to some of their favourite activities.

Staff understand the importance of family time for children and they are very proactive in facilitating home visits and visits to the home. Children missed face-to-face contact with their family members during periods of lockdown but they understand that this was to keep them and their families safe. Staff ensured that children were able to telephone and video call their families regularly to keep in touch.

Generally, the home is decorated and furnished to a high standard. However, during this inspection, wardrobes in two of the children's bedrooms were seen to be damaged and have doors missing. The manager and staff were uncertain about how long ago this damage had occurred. Although immediate steps were taken to order and obtain new wardrobes during the inspection, this undermined the homeliness of the environment and raised concern that the damage had not been rectified sooner.

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

Children have very trusting relationships with staff and feel confident that they will always keep them safe from harm. Children view their home as a safe place, and they enjoy spending time there and with staff. Children are confident that they could talk to staff if they had a concern.

Staff are all suitably trained in child protection and have a strong safeguarding ethos. Children's risks are well understood and documented, which ensures that staff know what action to take to minimise those risks.

Children feel very settled and secure and have built strong attachments to staff. As a result, children do not go missing from this home, and the need for physical intervention has significantly declined and is now rare. Records of such events fairly represent the need for such intervention and the outcome. In some records reviewed by the inspector, it was identified that a little more detail, particularly concerning how minor injuries were sustained, would help the readers to understand how these occurred.

Sanctions are also very rare in this home but, when they do occur, they are appropriately recorded and their effectiveness is evaluated. Staff promote positive behaviour and relationships with encouragement and praise. Staff understand the value of the home's therapeutic model of care and their role in providing this. Consequently, children feel that staff genuinely care for them and they know that staff are invested in helping them to understand their thoughts and feelings.

The recruitment of staff is rigorous and is successful in preventing unsuitable adults from being able to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home has recently appointed an interim manager to provide cover while the permanent registered manager is on maternity leave. The decision to promptly appoint and register another manager was taken to ensure that leadership of the home remains strong and effective.

The home's substantive registered manager was appointed in April 2020. However, her application to register with Ofsted was significantly delayed until December 2020, in part for several administrative reasons. The responsible individual kept Ofsted aware of difficulties associated with registration to ensure transparency with Ofsted. Despite this delay, the home's leadership and management were not significantly affected.

The home's interim registered manager has a proven record of managing outstanding homes. She has worked previously for many years as a registered manager at another home run by this company. She is a confident and effective leader, who is well respected by the staff team.

Staff report feeling extremely well supported throughout the period since the home's last inspection. Supervision has been regularly maintained. Staff say that they have had regular meetings and that information has frequently been shared by managers to support them to feel confident throughout a very difficult time. Ongoing training opportunities have mostly been online, but staff have embraced these.

Although the home recognises that staff turnover has increased in the last year, this has been for a variety of legitimate personal reasons and is not a reflection on the support offered to staff at the home. This staff turnover does not appear to have significantly affected the children or disrupted their progress.

Managers have continued to successfully monitor and report on the quality of care provided in the home. However, external reports received by Ofsted from the home's independent person have generally been of poor quality and have not reflected a rigorous scrutiny of the home. The responsible individual also recognises that the reports were of limited value and has recently dealt with this by making alternative arrangements to secure a new independent person.

Two requirements and two recommendations are made to address the shortfalls identified during this inspection.

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 care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(ii))</p> <p>This relates specifically to ensuring that the home's care plans are sufficiently detailed and take into account the child's gender, religion, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic background, sexual identity, mental health, any disability, their assessed needs, previous experiences and any relevant plans.</p>	28 July 2021
<p>The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—</p> <p>children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.</p> <p>The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b) (5))</p>	28 July 2021

<p>This relates specifically to ensuring that reports reflect rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting children's well-being.</p>	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are provided with appropriate furniture in their bedrooms. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.19)
- The registered person should ensure that case records are kept up to date and are signed and dated by the author. In addition, staff should be guided to understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, 14.3 to 14.4)

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: SC416599

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: North Lakes Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: Malvern View, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove B60 4AD

Responsible individual: Paul Jenkinson

Registered managers: Sally Reed / Shirley Jenkinson

Inspector

Gillian Walters, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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