

SC036740

Registered provider: Nottinghamshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this secure children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict children's liberty. The children's home can accommodate up to 20 children, who are aged between 10 and 17 years.

It provides accommodation for up to 12 children placed by the Youth Custody Service and has up to eight places for children accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989.

Admission of any young person under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who is under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

The commissioning of health services in this home is the statutory responsibility of NHS England under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Education is provided on site.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2018.

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.

We last visited this setting on 7 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 June 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

Children's education and learning requires improvement to be good

Children's health good

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

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

Date of last inspection: 1 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/10/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/06/2019	Full	Inadequate
11/12/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
17/07/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Managers and staff have made every effort to minimise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Care has continued to be delivered in a way that prioritises the needs of the children, while responding to government guidelines.

Admissions to the home are carefully and sensitively managed. Staff make a concerted effort to alleviate children's anxieties about being in secure accommodation, offering them good levels of one-to-one support during their precautionary period of isolation. This time is used purposely to get to know the child, understand their needs and formulate multi-disciplinary informed plans for staff to follow. These plans are implemented in a way that promotes a holistic approach to supporting children to make good progress, relative to their starting points.

Care practice takes into consideration each child's individual and unique needs. Children are supported and encouraged to contribute to their plans, which are shared in a way that the child understands, for example translating care plans, risk assessments and other documents into alternative languages. This has been highly effective in ensuring that the barriers to participation have been reduced for one child who speaks English as an additional language.

A strength of the staff team is members' ability to develop strong, respectful and supportive relationships with the children. Children spoke about feeling safe and trusting staff. Some spoke about how staff have helped them to understand and reflect on their past, develop new strategies and coping mechanisms, and make better decisions going forward. One child said: 'I have come so far, and it is all down to the staff. The help that they have given me has been life-changing. I can now see a positive future when I leave.'

There is a healthy focus on preparing children for their return to the community. This starts at the point of admission and remains on the agenda throughout a child's time at the home. Opportunities to develop basic life skills, such as cooking, doing laundry and keeping bedrooms tidy, are integral to the home's daily routine. In addition, mobility (authorised visits out of the home) has been used to successfully support reintegration into the community and help plan transitions such as visiting future placements.

Children have a strong voice and have lots of opportunities to express their views and opinions, which are considered and acted on where appropriate. All complaints are taken seriously and are subject to in-depth investigation, meaning that children's concerns are taken seriously and acted on. Managers acknowledge and address any emerging themes, such as assumptions around ethnicity, race and culture.

Children have good access to independent advocacy services. This has enabled several children, supported by staff, to challenge decisions made by their placing authority.

Children engage in a wide range of enrichment activities that motivate them to develop new skills, hobbies and interests. This helps children to develop better self-esteem and to grow in confidence. The activity programme also promotes healthy living through exercise.

Some areas of the home are lacking personalisation, such as pictures, displays and soft furnishings. This creates an unnecessarily institutional feel.

Children's education and learning: requires improvement to be good

In the last nine months, there have been changes in the leadership of the education provision and some periods when leaders have been absent. However, the home has secured the support of external advisers and a local headteacher. Current teaching vacancies curtail the delivery of an ambitious education curriculum. For example, children do not access enough lessons in English, mathematics, science and information communication technology (ICT).

The interim leadership team has high ambitions for the new curriculum, establishing a clear focus on what the children can achieve and including additional subjects to ensure that the needs of children are met.

Children's attendance at education has remained high in the last nine months. They undertake enrichment activities in the morning that prepare them well for the day. In the rare instances when children are excluded from education, they receive work to carry out in other parts of the home. However, due to staff shortages, they do not always receive enough support from the education team in these instances.

Most children engage well in learning tasks. Children who speak English as an additional language receive good help through the use of translating technology. Children have respectful relationships with their tutors and they mostly work well with their peers. In the few instances where children become disruptive or demonstrate poor behaviours, staff promptly resolve these issues.

Teachers do not focus sufficiently on the planning for learning. Support assistants are not directed in the lesson to aid those that need the greatest help. In many lessons, children receive too much help too soon from their tutors. Consequently, they are not challenged enough to learn and practise new skills, or even use resources such as dictionaries. At times, children struggle to explain terms that they have covered in recent lessons.

Children speak positively of the advice and guidance that they receive towards planning their future education or employment. They are clear about the importance of achieving their English and mathematics qualifications to meet their career

objectives. Many children expressed an aspiration to join an apprenticeship programme when they leave the centre.

Children achieve qualifications in English and mathematics and many awards and short unit certificates. However, managers are not able to convey the full progress that children make.

Children's health: good

The children's health assessment tool is used effectively to assess children's needs and to inform planning. A 24-hour on-call service enables all children to be seen promptly when they move to the home. There is a highly skilled, experienced and fully staffed multi-disciplinary healthcare team. A part-time occupational therapist has enhanced the range of therapeutic provision. This means that there is an appropriate range of primary care services that are delivered to all children to improve health outcomes.

Improvements in the management and administration of medication are now embedded in practice. These include a rolling training programme for staff, competency-based assessments and regular audits.

The members of the home's mental health team are flexible in their approach and explore all possible avenues to engage children. Staff work to ensure that the ethos of 'Secure Stairs', which is a multi-disciplinary approach to assessment and planning in secure settings, is embraced by all staff across the centre. The service is being improved by the provision of trauma-informed training to care staff to enable them to understand and better meet children's needs.

Children are involved in their healthcare as much or as little as they desire and are provided with opportunities to express their views and wishes. Therapists have developed innovative strategies to help children to understand their health plans.

Most healthcare staff receive regular supervision and guidance from managers. There is good investment in staff development and training. This improves practices and the care of children.

Planning for children to return to the community starts on arrival at the home. Positive engagement with external providers supports children to achieve the best possible outcomes.

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

Trusting relationships enable children to confide in staff, should they have any worries or concerns. The children are confident that the staff take their concerns seriously. They feel safe and well cared for.

Safeguarding practice is underpinned by clear procedures that are fully understood by managers and staff and this helps to keep children safe. Good links with external

safeguarding agencies further promote children's safety. Managers are usually quick to share information when safeguarding concerns arise. This ensures that the right action is taken promptly. However, on one occasion, they failed to inform the designated officer when a child provided additional information about a matter under investigation. This had the potential to reduce the effectiveness of investigations.

The children contribute to their risk management and behaviour management plans by identifying how they would like staff to support them. Staff are creative and adapt routines to meet children's needs. For example, staff have provided opportunities for a child to play away from other children.

Children benefit from a range of well-thought-out interventions that help them to address their risk-taking and offending behaviour. Children talk positively about how they have changed their thinking processes and now make better choices.

The atmosphere in the home is calm. Children respond positively to the incentive and reward programme, enjoying additional privileges as their behaviour improves. When sanctions are given, they are generally restorative in nature.

The use of single separation is proportionate and used in line with regulations. On occasions, it is used appropriately as an alternative to physical restraint. When physical restraint has been used, it has been as a last resort. After each incident, children are encouraged to reflect. Managers scrutinise restraint records and use closed-circuit television to evaluate staff practice.

Several children have been subject to bullying plans. This is when children who display bullying behaviour are kept away from other children until they have completed focused work. However, this approach is not individualised. The time spent away from the group is the same for all children, regardless of how quickly they engage with staff. As a result, there are times when children are being managed away for longer than is necessary.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are focused on improving the quality of care. Areas for development are highlighted in a well-thought-out improvement plan. Senior leaders from the local authority provide oversight and support to help implement the improvement plan.

Vacancies in the care team have significantly reduced and all health posts have been successfully recruited to. This has improved the quality of care overall. Recruiting to vacancies in education is a key priority.

Increasingly, staff are implementing a trauma-informed approach as they continue to embed the Secure Stairs model of care. As a result, children make positive changes to their lives. A social worker said: 'I could go on for ages about the positives. ... Progress is nothing short of miraculous.'

New staff are inducted well, receiving regular and purposeful formal supervision. There is a focus on performance and professional development that benefits the care given to children.

A range of training programmes has been developed and delivered to staff, including role-specific training for middle managers. When additional training needs are identified, managers ensure that this is provided. This assists staff to develop their skills and knowledge in the care of vulnerable children.

A number of systems are used well to quality assure staff practice. In the main, these are effective and have helped to improve practice. However, night-time checks on children who are not high risk were noted to be cursory and not as effective as they could be.

Children's records provide clear information about their needs, experiences and progress. Daily handovers, team meetings and senior management meetings are used effectively to share information. As a result, staff respond well to children's current and emerging needs, behaviours, risks and vulnerabilities.

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>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(h))</p> <p>Specifically, revise the bullying policy to ensure that children are not managed away from other children any longer than necessary, and improve the quality of night-time observations of children on standard checks.</p>	29 July 2021
<p>The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular—</p> <p>provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located. (Regulation 34 (2)(b))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that any additional information relating to an ongoing investigation is shared with the designated officer from the local authority.</p>	29 July 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all communal areas are made as homely and welcoming as safely possible. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that all management and staff vacancies are recruited to so that a full curriculum of education that meets the needs of

learners can be delivered. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 26, paragraph 5.2)

- The registered person should improve the quality of teaching, by ensuring that all teachers and support assistants are able to implement a broad and rich curriculum well, maximising learning for all children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 26, paragraph 5.2)
- The registered person should ensure that teachers identify children's starting points across all subjects and use that information to plan challenging learning activities that enable children to make good progress. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 26, paragraph 5.2)

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'.

Secure children's home details

Unique reference number: SC036740

Provision sub-type: Secure Unit

Registered provider: Nottinghamshire County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Loughborough Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7QP

Responsible individual: Devon Allen

Registered manager: Paul Thomas

Inspectors

Paul Scott, Social Care Inspector

Barnaby Dowell, Social Care Inspector

Natalie Burton, Social Care Inspector

Maria Navarro, HMI Further Education and Skills

Helen Lloyd, Health and Justice Inspector, Care Quality Commission (CQC)

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