

# SC036804

Registered provider: Gateshead Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is operated and managed by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to six children who may have learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2017.

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 3 December 2019 to carry out a full inspection. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

### Inspection dates: 13 to 14 July 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:** 3 December 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
03/12/2019	Full	Outstanding
04/12/2018	Full	Outstanding
30/01/2018	Full	Outstanding
22/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

## Inspection judgements

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

Children are cared for by staff who have an in-depth knowledge of each child's needs and their individualised package of care. Staff enjoy spending time with the children and are creative in engaging them in activities. This has included making paper daffodils for all the downstairs windows in the home, building a bug house for the garden, and themed months. One parent described her child coming to the home as, 'Like them being with family.' Another parent commented that she only needs to mention the home and her child is running to the door ready to go. This supports children to make strong, meaningful relationships with staff.

Staff use a range of communication aids to ensure that they are listening to and acting on children's views. Staff ask children their views about what theme they would like in their bedrooms as well as what outdoor play equipment they want. Staff give children symbols and pictures to enable this process to take place. The children's forum, chaired by a child who accesses short-break stays, has recently been re-established. This meeting focuses on the things that matter most to the children. Staff ask children and parents to complete an annual survey about their short-break stays. This means that children know that their views are listened to, valued and acted on.

The home is bright and welcoming and is decorated and maintained to a high standard. There are photographs of the children displayed throughout the home and lots of board games, toys, DVDs and books for them to enjoy. The children's bedrooms have recently been decorated and are all now individually themed. While the home has all the necessary equipment to meet the individual needs of each child, there is a focus throughout the home on the sensory needs of the children. Lights and music enhance every situation including bath-time and playtime. There is a large outdoor space and garden, which has a range of play equipment for children to enjoy. The care that staff give supports children to feel valued and to develop a sense of belonging.

The home has continued to provide short-break stays throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. For those children who were not able to attend education during this time, this provided a much-needed break for children and their families. Play equipment was bought for the garden to ensure that the children continued to have outdoor experiences and stimulus during this time.

Children attend school and are making good progress. Staff attend education meetings and advocate for children. When children are having short-break stays, staff communicate with schools daily by using the education communication book. One education professional described children having a 'triangle of support' in their education from school, parents and staff. This approach to working collaboratively supports children with continued education progression.

Staff meet the children's complex needs while they enjoy their short-break stay. There are close working relationships with health professionals who visit the home to provide training and advice to staff, and help with regards to children's specific health needs and equipment needs. One parent described how staff contacted health professionals to ensure that her child had the correctly sized equipment in place and kept her updated throughout. Staff working in partnership ensures that children's health and physical needs are met.

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

Children say they feel safe and secure in this home, which is attributable to the level of care and consistent approach taken by staff in managing the children's complex needs. Staff know the children well and understand the triggers for their behaviours. As a result, there are no incidents of missing from home, physical interventions, complaints, or sanctions. This approach further enhances children's relationships with staff, thus keeping them safe.

All children's records, including risk assessments and 'About Me' documents, are clear and easy to read. They include a detailed plan explaining how staff will manage risks. Staff consistently follow these plans and know what action should be taken to respond appropriately.

Staff manage introductions to the home carefully and sensitively in partnership with parents, health professionals and school. Parents are offered a visit before a tea visit to the home is arranged for the child. The introductions are planned taking account of each child's individual needs, and an overnight visit is offered once everyone agrees. One education professional said that staff will often come into school to look at the child's behaviour support plan and observe them in class as part of the introduction process. Prior to each visit, staff will contact parents to ensure that there have been no changes to the child's routine or medication. The attention to detail in planning introductions and getting to know each child's specific needs ensures a happy and settled stay.

There is an effective system in place to ensure the safe storage and administration of medication. Staff understand how each child's medication should be administered and are creative in the ways they achieve this, particularly with children who are reluctant to take their medication. This approach ensures that staff continue to meet children's health needs as safely as possible.

The record of visitors to the home is not accurate. On one occasion, staff did not ensure that parents visiting the home signed in or completed the COVID-19 track and trace system. The daily log also does not accurately reflect visitors to the home. This shortfall places children at risk.

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

The leadership of the home is effective. The manager is passionate about her role and has a clear vision for developing the service. She is supported by two assistant

managers and a large, stable staff team. The manager has a strong presence in the home and makes sure that she can spend time with the children. This arrangement means that children benefit from consistent staffing arrangements, which helps to provide them with stability and security.

The manager ensures that new staff receive an induction and training programme that is relevant to the individual needs of the children. Staff are not able to undertake specific tasks, for example moving and handling and first aid, until they have completed their training. There is always an appropriately trained member of staff on shift with new staff. Training records are up to date and show when training needs to be renewed. Safer recruitment processes are followed, which provides assurance that staff are suitably vetted and qualified to provide care.

Staff undertake the role of champion and have specific areas of focus, such as children's mental health needs or transition planning. Information is then shared at the monthly team meetings. The manager invites professionals from other disciplines to the team meetings to provide specific training, thus increasing staff knowledge and awareness. More recently, this has included community nurses, a transition worker and a worker from the special educational needs department. This practice of collaborative working and sharing knowledge ensures positive outcomes for children.

Staff do not receive supervision regularly. When staff raise an issue with the manager, there is drift in reviewing this within supervision. This lack of consistency in supervision and management oversight means that children could experience inconsistent levels of care.

Staff do not ensure that children are given consistent opportunities to engage with the independent visitor about their experiences of their short breaks. The independent visitor has not consulted children and parents on four occasions, with three of the visits taking place while the children have been at school. This limits opportunities for children and parents to feel listened to and valued.

## 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, the 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</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(h))</p>	<p>13 August 2021</p>
<p>Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children’s home.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4;</p> <p>ensure that the records are kept up to date; and</p> <p>retain the records for at least 15 years from the date of the last entry. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to a record of all visitors to the home.</p>	<p>13 August 2021</p>

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that systems are in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive regular supervision so that they can reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered provider should ensure that the independent person they appoint consults with children and parents on a regular basis to inform their judgement

about the quality of the care offered. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.8)

## **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:** SC036804

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

**Registered provider:** Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council

**Registered provider address:** Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead NE8 1HH

**Responsible individual:** Caroline O'Neill

**Registered manager:** Laura McNeill

## Inspector

Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector



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