

# 1159884

Registered provider: Spark of Genius Llp

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up to five children who may have social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 23 March 2020.

Due to COVID-19 at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 14 October 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

### Inspection dates: 25 and 26 January 2022

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<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:** 4 December 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** Two compliance notices were issued following the assurance visit on 9 September 2020. A monitoring visit on 14 October 2020 identified that the compliance notices issued had been met.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/12/2019	Full	Good
06/06/2017	Full	Good

## Inspection judgements

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

Children make good progress in the home. Professionals say that the staff are 'very supportive' and that the children are 'making good progress'. One professional commented that one child's progress since living at the home has 'exceeded expectations' and was 'incredible'.

Children trust the staff and say that they feel listened to. The children feel valued and are treated with respect. The children feel able to talk about their lives to the staff. The staff get to know the children well and help them when they need reassurance. This supports the children to explore their identity in a safe environment.

The staff advocate well on behalf of the children. This ensures that children's views are represented, and their aspirations are promoted. Although the children know how to complain, they do not understand the role of an advocate. This oversight prevents the children from seeking out someone independent of the home to advocate for them and represent their views.

The home is furnished and decorated to a good standard. The children have been involved in choosing the new decor throughout the home, and they have personalised their bedrooms. However, the children are unable to keep their personal possessions safe in their bedroom as they do not have any lockable storage. In addition, the outdoor space lacks seating areas for the children to sit and relax while they enjoy the outdoors.

Children do well with their education. Some of the children's attendance at school has improved, and for those children who do attend school, they are meeting their expected targets. Although the manager has advocated strongly to ensure that one child has an alternative education provision, the manager has not challenged a headteacher who has informally excluded the child.

The children are supported to be healthy. The manager and his team make full use of the therapeutic services available to them to support the children's mental health. This, and the specialist help that the children receive for their individual needs, has helped some children to stop smoking.

The children have been supported well throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff provided the children with creative activities, which were devised to keep the children occupied when community-based activities were not available. Children are now supported to take part in more community activities with the staff. These positive experiences are captured in photos, which are displayed throughout the home and in the children's life story books. These photo books provide the children with an opportunity to recapture their experiences in later life.

The staff have developed good relationships with some of the children's family members, while respecting the children's right to privacy. The staff support the children's relationships with their family members during regular family time. During these meetings, families share background information and photos, which contribute to the children's life story work.

Children are supported well when they move into and out of the home. The children are involved in writing their own plans with the staff. This helps the children to understand how they will be supported. For those children who move out of the home, these plans help the children to develop their independence skills so that they are prepared well for living independently.

The staff are skilled at developing and sustaining positive relationships with the children. Many of the children who have moved out of the home remain in touch with the staff and visit the home regularly. These young adults provide the children with positive role models.

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

Children say they feel safe in the home. Staff have a good understanding of how to support the children in times of crisis. The staff seek input from other professionals about how to safely manage difficult situations. Children's risk assessments and safety plans are unique to each child. These are reviewed when the children's risks change. Staff seek contributions from other professionals to inform these revisions. This coordinated approach helps some of the children to manage their emotions and behaviours more appropriately.

The staff provide clear and consistent boundaries for the children. When the manager has recognised that the boundaries have been ineffective in safeguarding the children, immediate steps have been taken. This ensures that the children's needs can be better met.

The staff use a restorative and supportive approach towards the children. Children's positive behaviour is reinforced using rewards and praise. Consequently, the use of sanctions has reduced.

Room searches take place only when a specific risk is identified. These searches have proven to be effective in reducing the risks to children who misuse drugs and alcohol.

Physical restraint is only used when it is necessary to protect the children or the staff from harm. The number of times that the children need to be held has reduced. However, the records from these incidents do not consistently identify if the hold has been reviewed by the manager or if the child has been spoken to after being held. This oversight prevents the manager from evaluating whether the practice is safe, proportionate and effective. This also prevents the child from sharing their experience of this practice, so that the practice can be developed further.

The number of times that the children have gone missing from home has reduced. If a child goes missing from the home, the staff respond appropriately and follow the necessary processes and steps to locate the child quickly. The manager has improved communication with the police. This, and the positive working relationships that the staff have with the police, have helped the children to become increasingly safe.

The children are supported and listened to when they raise any concerns or make any disclosures. The manager takes immediate action and uses the organisation's protocol to safeguard the children. This ensures that the children feel believed, and that appropriate action is taken to keep the children safe.

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

The manager is experienced and committed. He has recognised the need to further improve and develop his practice and has identified additional training and qualifications to support this.

The children and staff speak highly of the manager. He has taken significant steps to improve the home and the quality of care that the children receive. The manager is supported in his role by the assistant manager and a dedicated staff team who respect him. Together, they have a diverse range of knowledge, skills and experience.

The manager is dedicated to ensuring that only individuals with a good understanding of the diverse needs of children look after them. The manager has developed a robust recruitment process to support this. In addition, all of the staff receive a thorough induction. This ensures that the children receive a good level of safe care from staff who understand their needs.

The staff have completed all of their basic training. The manager has identified additional training to promote the staff's development and to enable the staff to better meet the needs of the children. When the staff have not completed their refresher training within the timescales, an audit process quickly identifies this. When this occurs, steps such as performance management plans are put in place to support the staff to complete this.

The staff receive good-quality supervision, which is reflective and focused on the needs of the children. The manager delegates the supervision of the staff to his assistant manager and senior staff members. Management oversight means that any gaps in the staff's knowledge or practice are swiftly addressed by the manager. However, the manager does not always record practice discussions on the staff's supervision document. This oversight limits the manager's ability to hold the staff to account if agreed actions are not followed up.

A new streamlined method for record-keeping, introduced by the manager, has helped to improve the audit process. However, the manager acknowledges that this

could be improved further as it has not helped him to identify inconsistencies in the physical restraint recording.

The manager has failed to provide Ofsted with an up-to-date copy of the home's amended statement of purpose. In addition, the children's guide is not kept up to date. This oversight prevents the children from having the correct information.

## 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 ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>the date, time and location of the use of the measure;</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record the confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure.</p> <p>(Regulation 35 (3)(a)(iii)(b)(ii)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to physical intervention records.</p>	<p>4 March 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision.</p> <p>(Regulation 16 (1) (3)(b))</p>	<p>15 March 2022</p>

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that an accurate record of the discussion in supervision is kept for the staff, including the manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- The registered provider should ensure that the home is a homely and domestic environment. In particular that the children are able to make full use of the garden. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered provider should ensure that the children understand the role of an advocate and that they can have an advocate to communicate their views, wishes and feelings. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 21, paragraph 4.4)
- The registered provider should ensure that the children are provided with a lockable cabinet or drawers in their bedrooms to store personal items, including any personal information. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.19)
- The registered manager should challenge professionals if the children are informally excluded from school without the correct process being followed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)

## 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:** 1159884

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

**Registered provider:** Spark of Genius North East Llp

**Registered provider address:** King Edwin School, Mill Lane, Stockton on Tees,  
Cleveland TS20 1LG

**Responsible individual:** Stephen McGhee

**Registered manager:** Paul Owens

## Inspectors

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector  
Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector

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