

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. The home provides short-break care for up to six children with learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2017.

The inspector observed and interacted with the three children who were staying at the home during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 April 2024

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 30 May 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/05/2023	Full	Good
04/01/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
13/07/2021	Full	Good
03/12/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children experience a very thorough and planned introduction into the home. As they start their short break, the staff have the knowledge and plans about the children to provide safe and consistent care. The manager is tenacious in making sure that professionals provide full information about children. Furthermore, the staff receive specialist training and are highly competent in meeting the children's individual complex health and care needs. As a result, children settle quickly for their short break stays.

Children are welcomed by the friendly and exuberant staff who make sure that children have fun from the minute they arrive until they leave. Friendships are made, resulting in improved social skills. The children benefit from spending time with their friends and having sleepovers together. When describing their experience of this home one child said, 'Love.' Another child indicated through their body language that they feel happy.

Staff support children to make exceptional progress. For some children this is the development of their self-care or other independent skills. The staff support the children to make their dreams become a reality. One child is now confidently using public transport and travelling to and from school independently.

The staff ensure that the children's short breaks are fulfilling and full of enjoyment. The staff's active engagement with the children sees them happily singing and dancing, filling the home with joy and laughter. The children enjoy a range of activities and have new experiences. Children's lives are enriched because of their time at the home. One parent said, 'My child is not missing out because when at the home he is involved in activities that I cannot safely provide for him.'

The staff ensure that the children are visible within the community and are not excluded. This means that, with meticulous planning, the children routinely can do things that other children take for granted. For example, eating at restaurants, using public transport, and going to the beach. A professional said, 'The staff transform the children's lives. [Child's name] has had so many new experiences. The future is now bright.'

Children's achievements are immediately recognised, praised and rewarded. The manager and staff celebrate children's successes. This helps children to recognise the progress they make and children are reminded how proud the adults are of their successes.

Staff persistently promote good health and use creative experiences to encourage children to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. The children enjoy theme nights which often involve exploring foods from around the world. Because of this, children can try new foods. Children enjoy plenty of healthy and nutritious meals provided by the home's cook, who is an integral part of the care team. Regular exposure to new tastes, smells and textures supports the development of children's sensory processing systems.

The staff team meets the complex health needs of children well. Parents trust the staff to care for their child even when their medical condition means that the child could become seriously unwell. Staff's ability to meet the children's needs is a testament to the guidance and training that they routinely receive.

The children are encouraged to participate fully at the home. The staff clearly understand children's preferred methods of communication and continually adapt their practice and promote individual communication systems. The staff understand the children's subtle cues and respond appropriately to children's requests, excitement, feelings of unhappiness, pain or discomfort.

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

Staff are nurturing, caring and have well-established relationships with the children, especially those who have been coming to the home for many years. Families speak of the trust and confidence that they have in the staff to care for their children. One parent said, 'I used to think nobody would be able to care for my child the way I do, but honestly they know my child inside out, upside down and love him like he was their own.'

The staff team has excellent insight into the different risks and vulnerabilities that the children face. These are highlighted in the individualised and detailed risk management plans. The proactive communication with parents, carers and professionals before, during and after the children's short break stays contributes to children feeling safe and secure.

Children need staff to help with their personal care and children are treated with dignity and respect. The staff actively engage and talk to children when they are delivering any form of care. This provides the children with clear reasoning and reassurance. The staff are aware of each child's abilities and they enable them to have choice and control over their care.

The manager invites external scrutiny of the service, including medicine competency assessments. She uses any findings to help her to implement improvements. The manager helps staff to view external scrutiny as a safety measure. This demonstrates a transparent approach to raising the standards of children's care.

The skilled staff comply with the administration and recording of medication procedures. The staff work and communicate closely and effectively with parents to ensure medication is correct prior to any short break stays. Medication errors are quickly identified and addressed, therefore reducing the impact on the children.

Positive behaviour plans provide staff with clear guidance on how to help each child regulate their emotions. Children benefit from the consistent routines and boundaries. Staff's early intervention and excellent de-escalation skills help to restore calm when

situations arise. The monitoring by the manager of any incidents, together with regular discussions in team meetings, provide staff with the opportunity to reflect on practice.

The staff team is enthusiastic about keeping children safe. New and ongoing training has developed staff's safeguarding knowledge, particularly in respect of disabled children. Staff use improved body map forms to carefully record and monitor any unexplained injuries or bruising. They are robust in reporting any concerns to social care colleagues, who speak of excellent communication and sharing of information. Staff participate in children's meetings. This provides important multi-disciplinary working.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is supported by two competent deputy managers, who together work well as a team. This provides excellent and effective leadership and oversight. Managers are committed and enthusiastic and have made many positive changes over the past year.

Managers and staff are professional, competent, warm, empathic and skilled. There is a great level of expertise in the team. The dedicated staff, who comprise of longstanding and newer members, work closely with a range of professionals, such as from health services, education and social care. This provides a consistent care approach across different settings.

The staff are invested in the home's approach to care, and they support children to build resilience, enjoy learning and feel valued. The staff team works cohesively to ensure positive outcomes for children. Staff benefit from regular supervision, training and support, enabling their personal and professional development.

The manager and the staff team are committed to their role and the service they provide to children and their families. The excellent care that children receive is because of the practice development and competencies of the staff team. Furthermore, the manager has systems in place for managing and monitoring staff practices.

The manager is continually looking at ways to develop the service. For example, the manager is in the process of introducing a new system so that she can be sure that staff have read any changes to children's plans. The implementation of new documentation is in its infancy, consequently this has resulted in some inconsistencies within records. The manager recognises this as a continued area of development.

The staff are well supported and enjoy their job. The staff show great resilience and strength during times of challenge, such as vacancies within the team. The staffing structure continues to impact on the team's ability to ensure all administrative tasks are completed in a timely way. While there is no impact on the care provided to children, the manager is addressing this with senior leaders.

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 Local Authority

Registered provider address: Adults, Children and Families, Gateshead Council,
Group Secretariat, 1st Floor, Regent Street, Gateshead NE8 1HH

Responsible individual: Andrea Houlahan

Registered manager: Laura McNeill

Inspector

Claire Webster, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children’s social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024