

Lansdowne Secure Unit

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council
Lansdowne Children's Centre, Hawks Road, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 1NP

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this secure children's home

This secure children's home is operated by a local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to restrict children's liberty. The home can care for up to seven children aged between 10 and 17 years. There were four children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The home provides care for children accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989, who are placed by local authorities. Admission of any child who is under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State, under section 25 of the Children Act 1989.

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 in dedicated facilities.

The home was temporarily closed in February 2023 and reopened in February 2024. The manager has been registered with Ofsted since January 2024.

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 September 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
Children's education and learning	good
Children's health	good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good

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

Date of last inspection: 15 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/11/2022	Full	Good
14/12/2021	Full	Good
03/08/2021	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/02/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are encouraged and supported to explore their interests. They enjoy many positive experiences and take part in a variety of activities. Children are assisted to take carefully considered risks and benefit from having new experiences. In one example, a child was able to take part in horse riding lessons out in the community. Children recognise their achievements and staff support them wholeheartedly. This assists children to grow in confidence and self-belief.

Children feel able to express their views openly with staff, who offer open and honest responses when children raise concerns. Children speak positively about the care they receive. Staff treat children with respect. They use their professional curiosity to better understand children's behaviours and to devise plans to support them. This further promotes positive interactions and positive relationships between children and staff.

Children's care plans are informed by children's views and aspirations. Children meaningfully contribute to their plans and understand what support they will receive. For example, 'Understanding My Story' is one of several innovative methods that help children to formulate their own care plans that can also be used to inform future placements. This means that children take ownership of the records that belong to them and request changes or review them when they wish to. Plans and practice also take account of children's diverse needs and preferences. This empowers children to feel valued and influential in the care they receive while at the home and when they move on.

Staff have purposeful conversations with children that are well targeted and focused on addressing the reasons for their admission. Children feel safe and able to share pertinent information that helps them to progress in areas such as managing their emotions and developing greater awareness of safer relationships. One external professional commented on the effectiveness of the staff team's relationship-building, which forms the basis of this work. The work staff do helps children to change their thinking, attitudes and behaviours and to develop a positive outlook for their futures. When children are preparing to leave the home, their moves are planned thoughtfully.

Children's education and learning: good

Leaders have designed ambitious curriculums that they implement innovatively to encourage children who have not been in school for some considerable time to participate in learning. Leaders have established an appropriate strategy to develop children's reading skills and to promote reading for pleasure. Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision and are improving the quality of education.

Teachers assess what children already know and can do on their arrival at the home, including their reading skills. However, there are times when teachers are unable to fully engage all children in the assessment process. Teachers use well-crafted activities to gather further information about the children and to identify what they enjoy learning. Children who express an interest in other topics access lessons such as music or subjects related to a specific career. Consequently, children follow highly personalised curriculums that reinforce their knowledge and skills in core subjects, such as English, mathematics and science.

Leaders and teachers monitor children's attendance and progress rigorously. They use attendance information to identify trends and to make reasonable adjustments to the curriculum to help children to engage and achieve. When children attend their lessons, they make considerable progress and rapidly develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours that will help them to be successful in their next steps.

Children follow an effective and individualised personal development curriculum. They discuss pertinent issues around topics such as healthy relationships, consent, substance misuse and finance, which helps to broaden their understanding and to support them in their recovery.

Leaders and teachers are well qualified, with wide experiences of working in a variety of relevant educational settings. They benefit from a well-planned professional development programme that includes training to support the specific needs of children at the home.

Children's health: good

Children admitted to the home with specific health needs have these clearly identified using the Community Health Assessment Tool (CHAT), which informs continued dynamic care planning and positive interventions. For example, children's goals for both their short-term and long-term health needs are considered with the child and strategies put in place that are achievable considering the length of time that they will spend at the home. This means that children have realistic goals in place that best meet their individual needs.

Children experience a collaborative approach to their health needs. They have access to an appropriate range of health services. Children are able to attend health appointments and a visiting general practitioner (GP) visits the home regularly. They make themselves available to children even if children have not made a request to be seen. This supports children to build positive relationships with other external health professionals. Processes are in place for children to receive the appropriate care and support following any incidents, including a robust pathway with the local children's emergency hospital department when required.

Healthcare staff make timely referrals to identified services, who then visit the child at the home. Health staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the potential impact of a

child leaving the home without having completed specific therapeutic interventions. Healthcare plans highlight proactive care and support that can be completed prior to leaving. As a result, meeting children's urgent health needs is well planned and tailored according to a child's length of stay. This means children have achievable goals in place, which helps reduce their risks for when they move on.

The healthcare team is focused on improving health outcomes for each child. Timely health plans are undertaken and reviewed regularly. This helps to ensure that children's existing and emerging health needs are identified and improved upon, such as improving oral hygiene or ensuring that sensory needs are catered for by specially considered diet and the use of the specially appointed sensory room. Responses to changing health needs are fluid and child-centred. As a result, any new or emerging needs are identified and met.

The recently appointed health operations manager is in the process of implementing improvement plans to address some shortfalls that they have identified. For example, they are seeking to ensure that health staff are fully integrated into the wider staff team.

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

Children told inspectors that they feel safe and always have someone that they can talk to if they are worried about something.

Staff complete the mandatory training required by the organisation. They also receive bespoke training that is tailored to the needs of the children. Staff discuss safeguarding issues in team and one-to-one meetings. This provides opportunities for staff to discuss and reflect further about specific safeguarding issues. As a result, training is focused on care, support and the safeguarding needs of children.

Incidents where physical restraint is used are closely scrutinised to ensure that the measure was appropriate and proportionate. Children are seen by a nurse at the earliest opportunity following an incident to ensure they are well supported. The manager and the leadership team scrutinise records closely and provide robust oversight. A debrief and evaluation takes place to consider how to prevent recurrence. As a result, learning and reflection ensure that staff practice is safe and that children are cared for.

The multidisciplinary 'Safeguarding Huddle' meetings provide an opportunity for leaders, managers, health team members and staff to regularly assess the care and risks that exist for each child. These discussions inform each child's individual risk assessments and safety plans. This helps to ensure that staff are aware of each child's vulnerabilities and what they need to do to help keep children safe. As a result, children have their individual needs met in a way that best helps to keep them and staff supporting them safe.

Single separation (where children are locked in an area when they meet the legal criteria of being a significant risk to themselves or others) and managing away (where children

are with staff but are kept apart from their peers due to risk) are used minimally and appropriately. Children receive the support and care they need from staff during and following these times. When a restriction is used, there is clear rationale for the decision-making. There is robust management oversight and regular review to ensure appropriate practice and the least amount of time is used.

When safeguarding incidents or concerns occur, these are reported swiftly to the appropriate professionals, including the local authority designated officer. Records are comprehensively completed, and management oversight is robust with clear communication, expectations and learning outcomes. This helps to safeguard children and protect them from future harm.

Effective and safe recruitment processes are in place that ensure that the right people are employed to work with vulnerable children. The registered manager ensures that agency staff are also subject to recruitment checks and processes. This ensures sufficient staff are always on duty to safely care for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is a dedicated and passionate leader. She is highly ambitious for children and staff. Leadership is effective. The registered manager has established a positive working culture that is open and encourages everyone to contribute ideas and solutions, and safely challenge. She has a clear oversight of the strengths and areas for improvement of the service alongside a vision for the future that has the best care for children at its core. When there are difficulties or challenges, she ensures that these are addressed and resolved in a timely manner. This supports continuous development and progress.

Staff feel well supported, including in their day-to-day practice. The registered manager is visible and approachable. Staff work well together, and morale is good. There are some inconsistencies in staff practice. For example, children and staff highlighted to inspectors that messages to children about daily routines are sometimes variable. Leaders are aware of this and are seeking to ensure that children have predictable structures and routines.

Monitoring systems are effective in ensuring positive practice and any learning is identified, shared and acted upon. Children's needs are highlighted, there is reflection and thinking, and then revised practices to help and support children. The result is an environment that supports staff to be reflective.

A strength of the home is the way the manager and leadership team promote learning and development of the team. Staff are supported to develop and grow. There is a staff training assessment tool and plan that is being delivered. This ensures that staff have the qualifications, skills and knowledge to apply practice that helps support and care effectively for children and helps to keep them safe.

Staff have regular team meetings that focus on children’s safety, strengths and abilities and how staff can ensure children receive the best possible care. This supports staff to learn from any incidents and address any shortfalls. The meetings are also used to develop staff skills and knowledge. This ensures staff continue to learn and develop so that children benefit from a reflective and knowledgeable team.

The one requirement and three recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed. The school reopened in March 2024 with a new team and head of learning. The previous education recommendation was no longer valid.

What does the secure children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. Everyone working at the home must understand their roles and responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)
- The registered manager should ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. Specifically, all leaders and staff must continue to promote attendance at education consistently so that attendance improves as quickly as possible for all children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards, page 29, paragraph 5.18)

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: SC031490

Provision sub-type: Secure unit

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex
BN7 1UE

Responsible individual: Kathy Marriott

Registered manager: Beverly Scott

Inspectors

Thirza Smith, Social Care Inspector
Tash Williams, Social Care Inspector
Suzanne Wainwright HIM, FES
Daniel Carrick, Care Quality Commission (CQC)

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