SC065071
Registered provider: Hopscotch Solutions Limited

Full inspection
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children’s home

The home provides care and accommodation for 12 young people who may have autistic spectrum disorder, learning difficulties, challenging behaviour, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), epilepsy and dyspraxia. The home also incorporates a registered full-time school. The home is privately owned.

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 May 2018
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account
How well children and young people are helped and protected
The effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

Outstanding

Outstanding

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: 6 February 2018
Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good
Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

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What does the children’s home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are provided with opportunities to sit together and eat with staff as well as their peers. ('Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.8)
- Staff should have access to information that sets out the specialist support children may need to be able to engage positively and achieve in education. ('Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 26, paragraph 5.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make exceptional progress in this home. For example, a child had her hair cut in a salon, having never been able to do this before. This has been achieved by using a multi-agency approach and social stories. The child’s mother said: ‘They’ve given her strategies to cope.’

Children are happy and have positive experiences. A child’s mother said: ‘He giggles at me down the phone.’ This is a child who has been struggling with his anxieties so much that he was no longer able to go out in the community or access education. He is now communicating better, starting to access his education and going swimming, as well as going out for meals. His social worker said that the change in him has been ‘due to the staff team who has remained very committed to him, helping him to feel safe and secure’. The registered manager said: ‘We allow children to be children and allow them to have autism.’

Staff know the children very well. Detailed care plans support their knowledge. These plans include carefully constructed interventions to support children with their anxieties. However, planning documentation does not currently include the support provided for education. This may mean that new staff are not so well informed about the educational support required for children.

Parents really appreciate the commitment shown by staff to their children. They know that staff care for their children and trust staff to look after them. Staff work in partnership with parents, but also offer good support to them. A parent said: ‘There’s always someone there to talk to.’ Parents also appreciate the online photographs of their children. A parent said that they enable her to share the positive experiences her child has had.
Staff are highly skilled at communicating with children who struggle to make their wishes and feelings known. They know each child’s preferred way of communicating. They provide many opportunities for children to express their views, including a Gruffalo-themed suggestion box and a Wish Tree. This means that children are able to communicate more effectively, which reduces their anxiety and frustration.

Children have good attendance at the on-site school. They are provided with a bespoke package of education that is tailored to their individual strengths and needs. The same staff support children throughout the day with their care and education. This helps children to manage their anxieties and therefore access learning.

Mealtimes are sociable occasions. Children choose their preferred meals. They sit together and staff may sit with them or will be standing close by. Staff do not generally eat with the children. This does not allow children to experience family-style dining or enable staff to model social norms and etiquette at the meal table. Nevertheless, children have opportunities to eat with staff when they cook in the life-skills kitchen or go out for meals.

Staff understand that transitions for children who have autistic spectrum disorder can be very difficult. They carefully plan all transitions to help children to move from one place to another easily and settle quickly.

Children are encouraged to practice independent living skills such as cooking, shopping and cleaning. The teaching of personal hygiene skills and toilet training is a strength of this provision. Children are also encouraged to support the local community by participating in litter-picking and volunteering. This helps to prepare children for adulthood and the world of work.

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

Children feel safe and secure. They have warm and supportive relationships with staff. Keeping children safe is central to all practice, but does not stop children having fun and trying new ventures. Risk management plans help to minimise risks to children without limiting their activities.

Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, as well as whistle-blowing procedures. Together with appropriate vetting procedures, these help to protect children from unsuitable adults and keep children safe.

Staff have close working relationships with the local police. Local police officers regularly visit to deliver presentations to children. Recent talks have covered topics such as knife crime, appropriate behaviour and racial issues. A local officer has also spent time in the home getting to know the children. She also delivers training to staff and is currently planning to do a seminar about appropriate and inappropriate conduct.

Children learn to manage their own behaviour. Staff help children to regulate their
behaviour by using strategies such as tokens and counting down to the end of an activity. Strategies ensure that children are clear about when an activity ends, helping them to move on to the next activity.

Incidents of challenging behaviour are few, and reduce as the children settle into the home. Staff are skilled at managing conflict and helping to de-escalate challenging situations. This means that physical intervention is used to a minimum and only when absolutely necessary, to protect children or prevent serious damage to property.

The registered managers have built up good relationships with safeguarding agencies. They are open and transparent, which helps to keep children safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

This home has two full-time registered managers. They are both experienced and qualified. They provide a high level of support for staff, believing that a happy staff team means happy children. They are dedicated to the children, ensuring that children are happy, healthy and safe. They have a ‘can-do’ attitude and often think ‘out of the box’ when it comes to helping children to overcome their anxieties and difficulties. For example, a child who climbed on fences and, on one occasion, the roof, now enjoys rock climbing. They have a good understanding of autistic spectrum disorder and how this impacts on the behaviour of the children. For example, a child who wanted to control access through doors, which caused conflict, was given control of the doors. The child no longer feels the need to control access through doors.

The registered managers have been given more autonomy within the provision. This means that they are able to fully identify the strengths and weaknesses of the home from an informed position. They respond quickly and effectively to identified shortfalls. They continually strive to improve the service, respond quickly to changes in legislation and implement research into practice.

All staff have gained, or are completing, an appropriate qualification. They are passionate about providing exceptional care for children. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of the children. They enjoy their work and feel rewarded when they see children make progress.

Staff receive a good induction that prepares them well for working with children. A strong training programme provides staff with the skills and knowledge they require to ensure the health, safety and well-being of the children.

External professionals are impressed with the knowledge that care staff have about the children. They appreciate the regular communication from staff. Highly effective multi-agency working results in proactive strategies for supporting children in their daily lives and helps to keep them safe.
Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children’s home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC065071

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Hopscotch Solutions Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Merchant Place, River Street, Bolton BL2 1BX

Responsible individual: Charles Tosan

Registered manager: Kirsty Truesdale
Emma Nicholson

Inspector

Joanne Vyas: social care inspector
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