

SC356907

Registered provider: North Lakes Children's Service Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care for up to nine children who are likely to have experienced early childhood trauma and/or disruption in their care.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2021. She is suitably qualified and experienced in working with children in residential care.

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.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 January 2022

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: 3 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/03/2020	Full	Outstanding
13/12/2018	Full	Outstanding
13/12/2017	Full	Outstanding
27/02/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are happy and settled in this home. Some have lived at the home for several years and have developed a strong sense of belonging at the home and in the local community. One child commented, 'I want to stay on here until I'm 25; my whole life if I could. I have friends here and I love [name of manager] and staff. I want to stay in this village, go to college and be a joiner.'

Children enjoy their friendships with each other, and they share meaningful and trusting relationships with staff. There is a clear mutual respect that exists, and children are confident that staff genuinely care for them and only want what is best for them.

Children feel valued and know that they have a voice in this home. They say staff listen to them and consistently take their views and wishes into consideration. Children are fully involved in their care planning and know that they influence the care and support they receive.

Staff have a firm grasp of the home's therapeutic parenting model, PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) model of care, and how this underpins the care and support provided. Consequently, staff consistently provide a high standard of care that is highly nurturing and focuses on children's primary needs that have not been fully met in their early years. This helps build children's understanding of themselves and makes them more resilient.

Children make significant progress in all areas of their development, enhancing their future opportunities and life chances. For instance, all children attend the provider's independent school and benefit from bespoke learning arrangements and support. Children's emotional health and well-being are prioritised and professionally supported by a contracted therapeutic service that works closely with staff and the home's professionally qualified nurse. This ensures children's physical, emotional and mental health needs are well-coordinated.

The home provides a warm and welcoming environment. It is furnished and maintained to a high standard. Children are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms to reflect their identity, culture and their personal interests. Children feel proud of their home and are confident to invite and bring their friends to the home.

Children speak enthusiastically about the range of activities and opportunities that they have access to and enjoyed. For some, this has included day trips, holidays, opportunities to play for local football clubs and the opportunity to join staff in taking part in local challenges, including a mud-running obstacle event.

Staff encourage children's growing independence in accordance with their age and abilities. This successfully promotes their confidence and self-esteem and ultimately prepares them for when they move on from the home.

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

Staff understand children's individual vulnerabilities, and they are proactive in promoting children's safety. Because of this, children have a strong sense of safety living at this home, and this is endorsed by social workers spoken to during this inspection.

The quality of relationships staff achieve with children is instrumental in enabling children to talk about their past and, often very difficult, experiences. Staff are skilled and knowledgeable in helping children to make sense of past events and express the feelings that they prompt.

Staff are confident and extensively trained in using the home's therapeutic parenting model. Because of this, staff can help children learn alternative ways of naming and dealing with their feelings. Consequently, this helps children manage their behaviour and makes them feel more secure, significantly reducing feelings of fear, anger and frustration.

Children's individual risk assessments are highly detailed and focus on the use of consistent strategies that are known to be successful in reducing and minimising risks. The use of physical intervention is infrequent and reducing, and only occurs when it is necessary. For most children, the decline is significant from arriving at the home.

This home has had a good track record and, until recently, has not experienced incidents of children going missing from the home. However, there have been a few recent incidents prior to a child moving on from the home. These were very unexpected but nonetheless were well managed by staff and resulted in children being returned quickly to the safety of the home. The motivation for these incidents were well understood by staff, and preventative measures were successfully implemented. There have been no further incidents since.

Staff have been proactive in implementing infection control measures to keep children protected from COVID-19. Children have been well informed throughout the pandemic, have coped well with government restrictions and have been helped to understand the need for these. Following a recent COVID-19 infection outbreak at school, all children have now had the virus and been cared for by staff also isolating at the home and supported by the home's registered nurse. Staff creatively used children's walkie-talkies to relieve boredom and provide reassurance for some children isolating in their bedrooms.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home's new manager clearly has a good understanding of all the children and their needs. Despite working in the home for many years in various care and supervisory roles, she is still relatively inexperienced as a registered manager. However, she is passionate and eager to ensure that children living at the home receive a high standard of care and support.

Staff feel well supported by their manager and confident in her abilities, particularly her knowledge and understanding of the children, having worked closely with them and staff for many years. Staff are supervised regularly and have participated in consultations and annual appraisals.

The home has been taken over by another company since the last inspection. The responsible individual has remained in post, providing continuity through this period of change. This takeover appears to have gone smoothly and been managed well. Staff are positive about any changes that have occurred and do not feel that they have affected the children or the good working practices established.

There has been some staff turnover, but this does not appear to have significantly affected the children. Staff have been introduced to the home and supported by colleagues and managers in such a way that children have quickly formed appropriate bonds and attachments.

Managers have recognised that the quality of external monitoring reports has, at times, fallen below the home's expected standard. This has been addressed with a change in the independent person, ensuring that external monitoring is again sufficiently robust.

The manager's internal monitoring and audit arrangements are comprehensive and promote the home's continued improvement. However, these reports are not readily accessible to staff within the home to ensure that they share with the manager a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses.

The home has some very productive relationships with local authorities and other professionals. The manager is not afraid to challenge professionals when deemed appropriate and is clearly a strong advocate for the children living at the home. However, on the few occasion's children have been missing from the home, children have not always received an independent return home interview arranged by the placing authority despite the manager's request. This is identified as an area for improvement from this inspection.

Professionals speak highly of the home, staff practice and, consequently, the outstanding quality of care children receive. One social worker commented, 'I really can't fault the service. Staff are excellent; they have gone above and beyond for [child's name]. Staff made Christmas very special for him and the other children. [Childs' name] is confident to ring me and he fully understands his rights. He is encouraged to speak to me which, as a social worker, is what we all want.'

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 the following items, which may be kept in electronic form, are kept in an accessible manner—</p> <p>the independent person's reports; and</p> <p>quality of care reviews. (Regulation 38(m)(n))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all staff working in the home have access to read these reports.</p>	25 February 2022

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provide an opportunity for the child to have an interview with an independent person. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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: SC356907

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: North Lakes Children's Service Limited

Registered provider address: Malvern View, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior,
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 4AD

Responsible individual: Paul Jenkinson

Registered manager: Kerry Friel

Inspector

Gillian Walters, 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 children looked after, 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 <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 2022