

SC012021

Registered provider: The Loddon Foundation Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides education and care for up to 31 children, from eight to 19 years of age, who have an autism spectrum disorder, severe learning disabilities and/or associated complex restrictive behaviours. The school operates as a charitable trust and is registered with the Department for Education.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since March 2018.

Inspection dates: 24 to 25 May 2022

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **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: 21 April 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/04/2021	Full	Outstanding
10/10/2019	Full	Outstanding
11/07/2018	Full	Outstanding
13/12/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff have a clear understanding of the needs of every child in their care.

Staff are familiar with each child's preferred method of communication. This enables children who are mostly non-verbal to be able to express their feelings and wishes daily. Some children have developed their language skills through engagement in 'listen and tell' storytelling sessions.

The care and education of children are integrated. Teaching and therapeutic staff work with children both in school and at the home. The model ensures that there is a consistent approach that supports children to develop their life skills and reach their full potential.

Children make excellent progress across all aspects of their lives. This is notable in children's individual achievements. For example, a child became a finalist in an art competition, children have taken part in a film competition and children have been able to join a cycling club. As a result, children develop confidence and are thriving physically, emotionally and socially.

The home is exceptionally well resourced. Children benefit from having access to an on-site indoor swimming pool, a horticultural centre, paddocks and a 'leisure barn' for group social activities. There are also well-planned and resourced trips into the local community for shopping and leisure. Excellent partnership working results in the children being able to enjoy new experiences. For example, a partnership with a reputable rugby club has resulted in sessions being delivered to some of the children.

The home has access to a wide range of specialist workers who work collaboratively to ensure that the children's needs are fully assessed. These include speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and forest school practitioners. The children's physical health needs are overseen by a nurse and a nursing assistant. Clear medical records are kept and there is an effective system in place for the safe administration and recording of medication.

There is some variation in the standard of accommodation. Four of the residential houses are relatively new builds and are specifically designed to meet the needs of the children. The three remaining houses are in an older building on site, and these are clearly harder to maintain. Some of the toilets in this accommodation were observed to be stained and mould was found in one of the bathrooms. There are plans to replace this accommodation with purpose-built houses, but this will not be completed within the next year.

During this inspection, the staff were observed always treating the children with dignity and respect. The staff are committed to providing the children with high-quality care and positive experiences despite the complex challenges they can face when meeting the needs of the children.

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

Staff have a comprehensive knowledge of why the children's specific needs make them some of the most vulnerable children in society. They know the children well and can quickly identify when a child is becoming distressed and anxious. This enables staff to promptly intervene and de-escalate situations when there is the potential for the child to engage in unsafe behaviour.

The assessment and management of risk is well developed. Detailed information regarding a child's needs is obtained prior to the child moving into the home, and this is used to develop strategies for minimising the possibility of the child coming to harm. These strategies are clear, well recorded and provide practical guidance for the staff caring for the child. They are regularly reviewed and updated as the child's circumstances change over time.

Despite this general good practice, the inspectors identified two occasions when timely and effective action was not taken to address emerging safeguarding concerns. Both incidents related to the practice and behaviour of members of staff. Leaders and managers had identified concerns in both cases but the action they took did not prevent the welfare of children becoming compromised.

Leaders and managers have overseen a comprehensive 'lessons learned' exercise regarding these shortfalls. They have clearly identified the circumstances which allowed the standard of practice to fall and where practice could have been more robust. The members of the leadership team have identified the actions that need to be taken to address the recent shortfalls and these are being implemented into practice. In one case, a member of staff had not reported a safeguarding matter in a timely way. Action has recently been taken to address this shortfall. The timing of this inspection meant that it was too early for the inspectors to assess how effective these actions have been in practice.

Behaviour management practice at the home is exceptional. Children's behaviour support plans benefit from having professional input from the specialist therapeutic team at the home. Consequently, children's individual plans identify the triggers for any unwanted behaviours and how the staff should respond to a variety of challenging situations.

A positive working relationship has developed with the local authority designated officer, who confirms that the leaders and managers consult appropriately and act on any advice that is given. However, it was identified that in a minority of cases, leaders and managers have initiated an investigation process when an allegation against a member of staff has been made, before consulting the designated officer.

Generally, the relevant external agencies are kept informed when a serious incident takes place. However, there has been one occasion when there was a failure to report a notifiable event to Ofsted.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is effectively managed by an experienced registered manager. He is exceptionally well supported by the principal, who is committed to delivering a high standard of care and support to children. There is also an effective deputy manager and service manager team. They work collaboratively and have a shared vision for the development of the service.

A highly developed learning culture has become embedded at the home. Senior managers are committed to learning from mistakes, and the staff confidently use the whistle-blowing procedures whenever they have doubts about the practice they may have observed. There is a strong emphasis on both learning from and undertaking research. This helps to ensure that the outcomes for children with special educational needs improve. Research undertaken by the principal has been influential in terms of recognising and developing best practice.

There are well-established systems for monitoring the quality of care being provided. Members of the management team conduct safeguarding audits which have a strong focus on assessing the safeguarding competency of the staff team. All serious incidents are reviewed by senior members of staff in order to identify any shortfalls in how the situation was managed.

There are highly effective systems for monitoring children's progress. For example, a recently introduced system for reporting children's behaviour ensures that the children's individual support needs, and the collective needs of the group, can be quickly identified. The data that is collected is carefully analysed so that changes to support strategies can be implemented in a timely way.

There is a committed independent person undertaking monthly visits to the home. However, there are seven accommodation units at the home and the independent person has not been able to visit each of these on her visits. Consequently, there are often several months between the independent person reviewing the quality of care in a particular residential house. It also means that some of the information provided in the independent person's report is several months out of date.

A good standard of care planning is maintained at the home. The children's plans are sensitive to the needs of the child as their circumstances change. For example, the plan for a child who has recently moved into the home takes account of the child feeling homesick and the impact this will have on his welfare. The plans contain clearly defined short- and long-term goals for the child and provide guidance for the staff on how they can support the child to achieve the goals.

Leaders and managers have struggled to recruit and retain a full complement of permanent staff. This situation is being managed by block booking agency staff so

that consistency of care is maintained for the children. These staff have access to the home's training programme and regular supervision is provided. There are still occasions when short-term agency staff are used, and this can result in the permanent staff having to undertake additional duties. An innovative approach is being taken to ensure that the right staff are recruited in the future.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(vi))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to ensuring that staff report safeguarding concerns in a timely way and that the designated officer is consulted prior to investigating allegations made against members of staff.</p>	<p>31 August 2022</p>
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to taking prompt action when it becomes apparent that the practice and behaviour of a member of staff has the potential to impact negatively on the welfare of the children.</p>	<p>31 August 2022</p>

<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children’s home at least once each month.</p> <p>When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person—</p> <p>to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home’s records (except for a child’s case records, unless the child and the child’s placing authority consent) as the independent person requires.</p> <p>The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person’s report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person’s opinion as to whether—</p> <p>children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>the conduct of the home promotes children’s well-being. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(b) (4)(a)(b))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to ensuring that the independent person inspects all of the children’s accommodation on each visit and that the information provided in the associated report is current.</p>	<p>31 August 2022</p>
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Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that the home provides a homely, domestic environment. This is with specific reference to maintaining the older parts of the home to a high standard. ('Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person must notify Ofsted and other relevant persons if one of the situations specified in regulation 40(4)(a)-(d) occurs, or if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious (40(4)(e)). ('Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

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: SC012021

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: The Loddon Foundation Ltd

Registered provider address:

Responsible individual: Marion Cornick

Registered manager: Timothy Clark

Inspectors

Stephen Collett, Social Care Inspector

Ruth Coler, Social Care Inspector

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