

# 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 care and education for up to 31 children, from eight to 19 years of age, who have autism, severe learning disabilities and/or associated complex restrictive behaviours. Children are accommodated in five houses, and all the children attend the school which is integrated with the home. There were 29 children at the home at the time of the inspection.

The education provision was not inspected during the inspection. 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: 12 to 14 September 2023 and 19 October 2023

**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:** 24 May 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
24/05/2022	Full	Outstanding
21/04/2021	Full	Outstanding
10/10/2019	Full	Outstanding
11/07/2018	Full	Outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children's experiences of living in the home enhance their well-being and provide them with a safe environment in which to learn, play, and grow in confidence. Before moving into the home, the majority of the children had been unable to access local specialist education provision due to their level of needs. In this home, children develop and make exceptional progress across all aspects of their lives. One parent said that the home has 'set the bar' for the care of children with autism.

A unique waking day curriculum approach to the children's care and learning is child-centred and helps them to make incremental steps towards preparation for adult life and greater independence. One parent said that the staff support provided to their child had been life-changing for the child, and in turn, for the family.

Staff are attuned to the children's needs and help them to manage their emotions and behaviours through the development of trusting and secure relationships. Children seek out staff for reassurance and affection and staff respond with kindness, playfulness and empathy. As a result, children learn new and socially appropriate ways to express their anxiety and emotions.

Staff use a range of personalised systems to develop and support children's communication. Child-specific communication plans help to ensure that staff are consistent in their communication and responses with the children. Consequently, children make huge improvements in how they communicate and make choices. This reduces the children's worries and stress.

Staff encourage the children to have a community presence. Children have opportunities to take part in a range of community-based activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and work experience. Trips to the local shops and use of community leisure facilities and public transport help children to develop their social skills and become more confident.

The managers and staff purposefully structure and integrate the children's care across home and education. Children enjoy and benefit from an exceptionally well-resourced and sensory-rich environment. This includes an on-site indoor swimming pool, outdoor gym, woodland area and vegetable gardens. The children particularly enjoy helping to care for the animals on the on-site farm and stables. The outside areas provide plentiful space for the children to play and have fun.

There is extensive management oversight of children's health needs. The combination of school nurses and care managers ensures that children with complex health needs have their needs well met. A comprehensive auditing system

ensures that, if there are any errors in medication, these are picked up and responded to immediately.

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

Staff support all of the children, the majority of whom communicate non-verbally, to make day-to-day choices and they encourage them to express their wishes and views. Staff understand the importance of listening to and involving the children in all aspects of their care. Children develop meaningful relationships and a sense of safety due to the alert and attentive focus of staff.

Children's risk assessments and behaviour management plans are detailed and include clear strategies for staff to follow to reduce levels of risk. Staff focus on each child, noticing small cues, and take time to praise and redirect them when required.

Children have complex needs and can present with behaviours that place themselves or others at risk. Incidents of physical interventions are subject to daily monitoring by a specialist team, who scrutinise restraint practice and examine trends and patterns in forensic detail. Children's behaviour management plans are regularly reviewed and evaluated with a clear and effective focus on restraint reduction.

Staff use a wide range of restraint practices, including holding doors, to maintain children's safety. These incidents are subject to a greater degree of scrutiny than others to ensure that this practice is not commonplace. Staff receive clear guidance that emphasises the last-resort nature of this technique. Following incidents involving the use of door holds, staff complete a separate record to explain their reason for the intervention. This is subject to the same weekly oversight as other safeguarding concerns.

Overall, behaviour management record-keeping is good. Staff say that they receive support and a timely debrief after any incident that they are involved in. However, the records of staff debriefs and reflection, which are handwritten, are not sufficiently comprehensive. This is because they do not document reflection of the incident and any lessons learned.

Staff are clear about what to do and who to tell if they have a concern about a child. They are confident in reporting worries or concerns at an early stage. This enables managers to address issues promptly, preventing them from escalating into more significant practice issues that could harm children.

Investigations into allegations or suspicion of harm are handled fairly and quickly by the managers. Leaders use the harm test to support their decisions as to whether or not to report allegations to external safeguarding professionals, although there is some inconsistency as to what meets the threshold for referral. Allegations which have not met the harm test threshold for external reporting are investigated internally by appropriate leaders and managers. When allegations are

reported to external safeguarding professionals, there is a good level of partnership working. Consistency in reporting allegations to relevant safeguarding professionals was a requirement at the previous inspection. Therefore, this requirement is repeated.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The home is managed effectively by an experienced and qualified registered manager. The manager is supported by a strong leadership team whose members are ambitious and influential in developing practices to sustain the highest quality of care for children.

Leaders and managers place a high priority on staff retention and staff welfare. There are regular staff trips and activities that help build staff morale and cohesion. Leaders recognise that high staff morale has a direct impact on the quality of care and fosters open communication. This, in turn, reduces staff stress levels and improves the well-being of both staff and children.

The school has benefited from some creative recruitment strategies that have seen its vacancy rate halved. Temporary staff are recruited using appropriate levels of scrutiny, with leaders ensuring that staff have suitable skills and experience before joining the team. All temporary staff have a suitable induction and are well supported in their roles. Longer-standing temporary staff receive support via regular supervision, appraisal and further training. The long-standing core staff team, supported by suitably vetted temporary staff, enables children to receive consistent care from staff that they know.

Children from other local mainstream and special schools also use the outside grounds and forest school facilities. This promotes inclusivity by allowing the children to interact with their peers. This open approach helps to reduce stigmatisation, promoting a more accepting and inclusive community.

Staff make effective efforts to provide children with a homely environment. Children's bedrooms are well furnished and reflect their tastes and preferences. There is closed-circuit television (CCTV) monitoring in the communal areas of the home, but this is non-intrusive and CCTV is not used in the children's bedrooms or bathrooms. CCTV is not routinely monitored and is used for safeguarding purposes only. A small group of leaders have access to CCTV recordings and there is a clear record of when leaders have had to access it.

The maintenance team prioritises health and safety issues as they arise. Inconsistency in the standard of accommodation, particularly in the older houses on the site, has been identified. Currently, there is an ongoing building development project to improve the environment so that all the children receive a consistently high standard of accommodation.

Staff say that they feel well supported and receive regular formal and informal supervision from their managers. However, some supervision records are not of a

consistent standard, and a small number of supervision meetings take place outside of the organisation's own time frames.

Leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well. The majority of requirements made at the last inspection have been met. The home's improvement plan sets out clear outcomes for sustained improvement by all departments and trustees. This reflects ongoing innovation and creative ideas to provide the children with the highest quality of care.

## 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, The 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 local authority designated officer is consulted prior to investigating allegations made against members of staff.</p> <p>This requirement is repeated.</p>	<p>30 November 2023</p>

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff in a restraint situation use their professional judgement, supported by their knowledge of each child’s risk assessment, an understanding of the needs of the child (as set out in their relevant plans) and an understanding of the risks the child faces. Professional judgements may need to be taken quickly, and staff training and supervision of practice should support this. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 48, paragraph 9.53)
- The registered person should ensure that systems are in place so that all staff receive regular supervision of their practice, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.2)

## **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

**Responsible individual:** Gillian Barrett

**Registered manager:** Timothy Clark

## Inspectors

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector

Jane Balfe, Social Care Inspector

Mark Newington, Social Care Inspector

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector

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