

SC025813

Registered provider: McRae Residential Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to eight boys who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The home and the manager registered with Ofsted in March 2007.

There were four children living at the home at the time of this inspection.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 September 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 1 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/11/2022	Full	Good
24/02/2022	Full	Outstanding
15/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
07/03/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children settle into the home quickly and very well. Staff have a very good understanding of each child's likes, dislikes, strengths and challenges. Children respond well to the warm and nurturing care that is provided by a dedicated staff team who provide children with exceptional care that enriches their lives.

Staff place children's well-being at the centre of their practice and ensure that they are meeting children's day-to-day needs. One child said staff are 'the true definition of carers, because they really care'.

A parent said the 'brilliant' care from managers and staff is providing 'a therapeutic backstop' for her child. A social worker said that staff 'clearly understand the needs of the child and are working with them to get positive outcomes for his health, education, family contacts and identity'. Feedback from police, schools and other professionals about the care provided by managers and staff was also positive.

Staff promote children's relationships with their families. Children are supported to spend time with their families, and staff make every effort to get to know the important people in children's lives. Staff understand that children having opportunities to positively connect with their families is important for their identity and well-being.

Children are listened to by managers and staff. Staff value children's input and enthusiastically involve them in activity and menu planning. Children take part in enjoyable experiences, which include swimming, go-karting and day trips in and out of London. One child's interest in creating original videos is fully supported by staff.

Children are supported to develop a positive self-identity. Research-informed practice, which focuses on the specific needs of children in the home, makes an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children. Staff proactively helped one child change a negative self-image into a healthier one. Children also have opportunities to talk to the home's therapist, who visits on a weekly basis. This enables children to reflect on their emotions and build resilience.

Children regularly participate in education. Staff help with transport to school for one child so they can remain at their long-term education placement. Staff prioritise children's learning by promoting regular attendance at school and helping them to develop their independent living skills. With staff's help and encouragement, children learn to budget, shop and cook. Children's confidence increases as they learn life skills, and they are motivated by the opportunity to move into one of the home's 'transitional flats' to ensure a smoother journey to independent living.

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

Children are safeguarded effectively and say that they feel safe. They can identify a trusted person to talk to when they have any worries or concerns. The known and potential risks to the children are well understood by managers and staff. Risk assessments are clear and detailed and followed by staff. Regular key-working sessions are an effective way of speaking with children about their risks. Staff use effective de-escalation techniques to support children. This helps to reduce risks to children and promotes positive experiences. However, on occasion, there can be a delay in some records being uploaded to the computer information system.

Managers and staff provide a calm, safe and stable base for children. There is a strong emphasis on creating a family atmosphere and giving children a sense of belonging. Children eat meals and go on outings together. There are frequent positive interactions between staff and children, which contributes to the home's relaxed atmosphere. This also leads to children feeling safe in the home.

Missing-from-home incidents have reduced and are managed well. Staff follow appropriate procedures and work collaboratively with other professionals when children go missing. Staff take proactive steps to contact children and encourage their prompt and safe return home. Some children allow the registered manager to track their whereabouts via their mobile phones, which further enhances their safety.

Children regularly participate in 'team talk' sessions, which focus on a variety of topics designed to keep children safe. Staff are proactive in finding current research, videos and handouts on subjects such as bullying, community safety and domestic violence, to encourage children to fully engage in these sessions. These interactive meetings enhance and promote children's understanding of themselves and others within their community.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The managers are experienced and have aspirations for the home and moving it forward to benefit the children in their care. Their positive outlook for children's future results in children having aspirations for themselves. Children's current interests and future career goals are fully encouraged by managers and staff. The manager also made arrangements for children to attend a talk about higher education at a London university. These connections broaden children's outlook and provide them with a sense of community and opportunity.

Staff receive a comprehensive induction and ongoing training to build their knowledge and skills. Staff receive regular supervision which considers and prioritises children's needs. Supervision is also an effective space to support and challenge staff to promote their own professional development.

Staff receive annual appraisals. However, appraisals could be strengthened by including the views of children and professionals who work with staff.

Leaders, managers and staff continuously strive to make a positive difference to children's lives and to advocate on behalf of children. Staff enjoy being positive role models for children and praise children for their achievements. The registered manager has created an ethos for the home that is child-centred and focuses on meeting the needs of children. This results in an environment where children can thrive.

The staff are dedicated and committed to the children, and several have worked at the home for many years. When agency staff are used to supplement staffing ratios, they are consistent staff who have previously worked at the home. Consequently, children benefit from having consistency of staffing and knowing who will be caring for them.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff appraisals take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and of children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered person should ensure that records are stored more efficiently and organised in ways that allow for easy access and monitoring. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 14.2)

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: SC025813

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: McRae Residential Care Services Limited

Responsible individual: Kevin Henry

Registered manager: Paul Rhys-Taylor

Inspector

Julie Cresswell, Social Care Inspector

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