

1275569

Registered provider: The Mulberry Bush Organisation Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

According to the home's statement of purpose, the home provides an integrated combination of residential therapeutic care, treatment and education for primary school aged boys and girls who have severe social, emotional and mental health difficulties. It also works with those children's families. A child's placement is for either 38 or 52 weeks per year.

The head of group living was registered with Ofsted as the home's manager on 18 June 2018.

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 November 2019

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 **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: 23 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/10/2018	Full	Outstanding

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
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c))	05/01/2020
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— provide adequate means of escape from the home in the event of fire. (Regulation 25 (1)(b))	05/01/2020

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Exceptionally well-trained staff go to great lengths to support the children, all of whom have experienced trauma in their earlier childhoods. The staff give them stability, understanding and the confidence to achieve. This lays the foundations for the children to start to heal and to develop resilience to overcome adverse early life experiences.

Attuned staff provide the children with structure and predictable routines. Children seek out affection and reassurance and the staff respond with attentiveness and kindness. Children experience a sense of security and safety that has often previously been lacking in their lives.

Staff convey warmth, acceptance and empathy in their interactions with the children. The children learn to be in a group and to conform to rules and expectations. Consequently, children begin to understand that they can have a positive influence on the social and physical environment in which they live.

Staff and the children have a sense of belonging to a supportive community. Children enjoy living in a well-equipped and child-centred environment. The homely and spacious design encourages play and this enables them to make friends and to have fun with each other. Staff provide a range of stimulating activities that help children to stay fit, be creative and develop social skills.

Senior managers carefully plan before new children join the home. Careful consideration is given to the group dynamics, taking into account the needs and feelings of other children living in the home. Parents report being reassured that visits and moves are planned at a pace that the child can cope with.

Staff work in close partnership with the children's families and with their professional networks. Positive communication and collaborative relationships help to build trust and engagement. This creates a strong team around each child and ensures that they get the resources and support they need to succeed. Outreach support and family intervention help families to develop new strategies and to strengthen relationships.

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

An integrated therapeutic approach between the home, the school and the therapy team means that the children receive consistent, tailored help and support. Access to specialist help and therapeutic services is provided on-site. This includes psychotherapy, drama and music therapy, family therapy, family work, speech and language and educational psychology. The range of different therapies and services available ensure that the children's social, emotional and educational needs are extremely well met.

Staff advocate a reflective and open culture. Children are encouraged to have a voice, and staff listen to them. Children sit on the school council and influence decisions which may affect their lives and the running of the community. Members of the council take part in interviews and have a say in choosing new staff. Children also arrange a number of events. The children's involvement and ideas in planning a forthcoming charity pyjama day were impressive.

Staff practice is underpinned by an excellent understanding of attachment and trauma. This helps equip them to emotionally hold the extreme levels of emotional needs that are sometimes displayed by the children. Staff are able to hold limits in a considered way, to bring about change and keep the children safe.

The recruitment process operated by the home ensures that only adults with appropriate background checks and working histories are employed. Visitors are closely monitored when on-site. Anyone who is not known or recognised is challenged to explain the reason why they are there. This awareness and thoroughness reinforce the ethos embedded in the home of ensuring that everyone is safe and accountable.

Some communal areas of the homes are locked at night to prevent children hiding in these rooms, in the event of a fire, and to provide a clear access to a fire escape route through the main entrance. However, there was no evidence in the fire risk assessments of consultation with the fire authority about this. It was therefore not clear to the inspector if locking the doors provides for a safer route out of the home or could hinder the means of escape.

A shortfall was identified in relation to Ofsted not being notified of a number of

reportable incidents. This was due to a misinterpretation of the regulations by the registered manager and leaders. Children were not put at risk by this as all other safeguarding processes were followed and addressed promptly.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Influential leaders and managers are unwavering in their determination to improve the children's life chances. Research-informed practice continues to develop from a strong and confident base. Practice in the home has contributed to wider learning within the residential sector through published papers and training at a local and national level.

Acceptance, tolerance and respect permeate throughout the culture of the organisation. Leaders and the staff are compassionate, curious and committed to understanding the experiences of the children they work with.

Internal and external monitoring promotes and drives continuous improvement and new learning. There is excellent management oversight of staff performance and care planning. The registered manager and leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. There is strong evidence of ongoing development and improvements over a sustained period to improve the outcome for the children.

Staff are provided with outstanding professional development opportunities. They are trained to a foundation degree in therapeutic work with children. In addition to mandatory training, staff have the opportunity to access innovative experiential learning opportunities. As a result, the staff perform their roles with confidence and diligence.

Staff supervision is child-focused and echoes the ongoing reflective conversations that occur on a daily basis. Staff act as each other's critical friend, providing constructive feedback and mutual support. This learning culture extends the staff's competence, and also provides an additional safeguarding layer because staff have a well-informed and sophisticated understanding of the children's needs.

Staff say they feel well supported by their manager, and they take great pride in the children's achievements. Leaders are receptive to the staff's needs. For example, in response to the recent staff survey, leaders are currently setting up an emotional well-being room for the staff. Consequently, morale is good, and the children benefit from a stable workforce.

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: 1275569

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: The Mulberry Bush Organisation Limited

Responsible individual: Lee Wright

Registered manager: Claire McCarthy

Inspectors

Anne-Marie Davies: social care inspector

Amanda Harvey: social care inspector

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