

SC063259

Registered provider: SES Avocet Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The privately owned home offers a therapeutic model of care. The home provides long-term placements for up to eight children who have difficulties managing their emotions and may have experienced neglect and/or emotional abuse. There is a registered school on site that is also run by the organisation. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision.

There has been no registered manager since 26 July 2023.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 December 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	good
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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: 29 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/11/2022	Full	Outstanding
01/09/2021	Full	Good
03/03/2020	Full	Outstanding
27/02/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

This inspection was brought forward to address specific concerns received by Ofsted. At the time of this inspection, five children were living at the home.

Children continue to thrive and make exceptional progress while living at this home. A highly committed and dynamic staff team who understand the children's individual needs enables their progress. Staff ensure that their support has a lasting, positive impact on children's quality of life and future life chances.

The staff have a culture of high aspiration and regard for every child. They have very strong relationships with children. Staff are acutely aware of how children's previous experiences affects their behaviour and ability to form healthy attachments with others. Staff use this understanding to adapt their approaches to each child's individual needs. As a result, children are provided with well-informed care which is full of love and nurture.

Parents describe the staff's support as being 'beyond their expectations' and 'life-changing'. Parents said that they are 'blown away' by the richness of children's day-to-day experiences. They said that communication with staff is excellent and that children make 'phenomenal' all-round progress from their starting points.

Staff are highly creative and ambitious when researching new opportunities and experiences for children. All children enjoyed a recent holiday to Wales, participating in cave trampolining, coasteering and kayaking. Children have ample opportunity to attend a variety of exciting local clubs that match their interests. One child plays for a local rugby team and another child joining the regional pigeon enthusiast group. Children are provided with an incredibly varied range of enriching activities and lead highly active, healthy and fulfilling lifestyles.

A significant strength of the support provided by staff is furthering children's aptitude to learn. Residential staff work seamlessly with school staff to provide highly individualised learning timetables for children. This includes assistance for some children to obtain work experiences that match their career aspirations. Staff are adapting a GCSE in physical education for one child to include an assessment of skiing to align with the child's talents. Staff use a combination of positive reinforcement and exceptional understanding of children's needs to inspire and engage children in their learning. As a result, all children overcome previous barriers to school attendance and begin to make meaningful educational progress.

Staff work with children to improve their confidence and self-esteem. Staff supported a child with high social anxiety to perform in a pantomime show. Staff worked with another child to help them plan a successful community fete which was enjoyed by local residents in the village. This range of support has increased

children's sense of achievement and given them important and valued roles in the community.

Leaders, managers and staff work tirelessly to enable children to gain the skills they need to move into adulthood. Children are prepared both practically and emotionally through well implemented and individualised plans. This work has been instrumental in the successful moves for three of the children into their adult lives.

Staff have worked in partnership with a specialist team to provide high-quality support for a child to explore their gender identity. Because of staff's support the child has been able to express their individuality and preferences in a safe space.

The home is decorated to an extremely high standard and well-resourced throughout. Children provided very positive feedback about the decor, the quality and variety of food and their overall experiences with staff.

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

Children feel safe and secure. They are supported by staff who have an in-depth understanding of the risks they face. Staff are skilled at identifying changes in children's behaviour and adapting their support accordingly. Highly dynamic risk assessment processes and well-developed behavioural strategies provide staff with clear up-to-date guidance. Staff's support has resulted in children being able to safely access a wide variety of new experiences and build a stronger level of emotional resilience.

Before moving into the home, a child previously needed high levels of staff to maintain his safety. This child had been isolated and was unable to participate in the wider community. Since living at the home, risks have significantly reduced for the child and staffing levels have decreased. The child's social worker said that the progress the child has made has been 'amazing'.

Children are provided with a wide range of therapeutic interventions, including support from a consultant systemic psychologist and a consultant psychiatrist. The specialist team offer training to staff and undertake group consultations with staff to discuss children's needs. Some of these consultations have led to positive reductions in children's medication. The psychiatrist also provides children with one-to-one therapy sessions. Consequently, children have ample opportunities to work through their emotions and feelings safely.

There are very few incidents of children attempting to go missing from the home. This demonstrates that children have a strong sense of belonging at the home. When children do go missing, staff work effectively and proactively to ensure that the children return safely. The manager thoroughly monitors and reviews these incidents to identify future learning and to prevent re-occurrence.

Children are central to all the decisions made about the consequences for their actions. Staff seek children's views as well as helping them to think about the impact of their behaviour and how it could be different. There is a strong restorative philosophy at the home which the children are fully invested in.

Staff use physical intervention when necessary and as a last resort. Leaders and managers implement thorough monitoring systems to oversee these interventions which reduce over time. High-quality debriefs enable staff to reflect and identify any future behaviour strategies that are needed. Managers ensure children's views and feelings are well understood. This is very effective in re-establishing children's relationships with others after difficult situations.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The previous registered manager has left the home. An experienced deputy-care manager has been appointed and is working towards the required qualification. The new manager is in the process of registering with Ofsted. Senior leaders have ensured a smooth and well-planned handover between the managers during this time. Staff have provided feedback that the changes were seamless, and they are confident about the effectiveness of the new management arrangements.

Leaders and managers have very high expectations and inspire staff to change and improve children's lives. They confidently oversee an extremely effective child-centred approach based on a highly regarded model of care that is underpinned by several areas of research.

Leaders and managers are particularly innovative in driving continuous improvements and overseeing developments in practice. They have improved on an established children's achievement programme based on the feedback from children and staff. Recently introduced morning sessions built around staff's therapeutic model of care have been exceptional in supporting children's connections with each other.

Leaders and managers have achieved a 'pride award' from a specialist local charity. This was awarded based on the strong assessment of staff's training and leaders and managers review of policies around LGBTQ+ themes.

Leaders, managers and staff are instrumental in enabling children to make significant contributions to charitable schemes. Various sponsored runs and an annual festival have raised funds for important causes. Children have been highly motivated to participate in these initiatives.

Regular team meetings are well attended and reflective. Staff receive high-quality training which greatly enhances their skills to meet children's individual needs.

Leaders and managers are currently responding to a complaint. This is ongoing and is being actioned in accordance with the home's policy for managing concerns.

Staff provided good feedback about their support and development opportunities. However, leaders and managers have not ensured that all staff have received supervision sessions at the frequency outlined in the home's statement of purpose. Managers are aware of these gaps in supervision and have plans in place to address this.

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

- The registered person should ensure that all staff receive supervision in accordance with the home's policy. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: SC063259

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: SES Avocet Limited

Responsible individual: Jonathan Lees

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Mark Anderton, Social Care Inspector

Mary Costello, Social Care Inspector

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