

1227335

Registered provider: Exceptional Care Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private organisation. It provides care for up to 3 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, 2 children were living at the home. The inspectors spoke with both children.

The previous registered manager resigned their registration in October 2025, which took effect in January 2026. The home does not currently have a manager in post.

Inspection date: 17 February 2026

Date of last inspection: 20 May 2025

Judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspectors evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We identified the following widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

Widespread failings were identified in the leadership and management of the home. These shortfalls reduce the overall quality and consistency of care provided to children. Inconsistent management arrangements have resulted in a lack of action to address the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that children are helped to learn about the risks associated with using electronic devices, the internet and electronic cigarettes, as well as to establish a clear routine for those who are not in education. These recommendations are restated.

Staff do not consistently demonstrate the skills or confidence needed to manage challenging behaviour safely and effectively. Staff responses to incidents are variable, and some situations have escalated to the point that police have been called to the home to manage the children's behaviour. However, leaders have reflected on some of these incidents and identified learning needs for some staff.

Recruitment processes are not followed to ensure that only suitable adults are responsible for children's care. Leaders and managers fail to ensure that safer recruitment procedures are applied for new staff. References provided do not match the dates on application forms, and gaps in employment are not explored with individual staff members. Agency workers who regularly work with children are doing so without all required checks being carried out. These shortfalls do not ensure that only suitable adults are working with children.

The rotas do not provide clear or accurate information about who is caring for the children in the home, including identifying who is the waking night staff and the hours that managers work. Leaders and managers were also unaware of which staff were sleeping in the home on a nightly basis. This lack of clarity does not support safe oversight of children's care in the home.

Monitoring of the home is ineffective in identifying shortfalls or ensuring that improvements are maintained. Records are not being accurately maintained, including information in the admission and discharge book. Staff are not receiving supervision in line with the home's statement of purpose. Leaders and managers were unable to show the training staff have received since the last inspection or the home's development plan. This lack of oversight fails to ensure that staff have the skills to support children safely. These requirements were raised at the last inspection and are restated.

When there are concerns around staff practice and conduct, leaders and managers have not taken sufficient action to address them. Leaders and managers have failed

to identify that the confidential information displayed on the office walls compromises children's privacy.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that all staff working with children have attained the required qualification within the timescales set in legislation. This includes casual staff, who have worked at the home for a significant length of time.

Since the last inspection, one child has moved out of the home, and 2 children have moved in and are still living there. Transition planning is variable. Although there is a detailed plan to support a child moving on in a positive way, not all children moving into the home have the same level of recorded information to demonstrate the support in place to meet their individual needs.

Some children have begun to build trusting relationships with core staff, who have a good understanding of their needs. However, due to instability in the staff team, there are frequent changes to the adults caring for the children. This affects the consistency of care, and staff commented, 'Communication needs to improve to ensure that children receive the best levels of care.' Children's views are mostly sought and considered in their daily lives. Some individual plans identify key areas of support and outline strategies to help staff keep children safe, but this is not consistent in all records.

Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the quality of the language used in daily care records. This means that records are now more helpful for children when reflecting on their time at the home, as the language used is child-appropriate and non-stigmatising. Following any significant incidents in the local community, senior managers have continued to review the locality assessment. This plan now identifies areas of concern and reflects the support children may need to help keep them safe in the community.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/05/2025	Full	Good
27/01/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
12/11/2024	Full	Inadequate
14/11/2023	Full	Good

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that all recruitment checks are carried out before any staff, including agency staff, work with children at the home.	1 April 2026
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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;	1 April 2026

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(h)) In particular, the management arrangements should be clear for staff and children. The arrangements should provide consistent and effective oversight of the care provided to children. The registered person must also ensure that staff have received all identified training to meet children's individual needs and that training identified to improve staff practice is completed in a timely manner. In addition, the registered manager must ensure that the home's workforce development plan and training matrix reflect how often the training is required. This requirement is restated.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that all staff, including casual staff, have attained the required qualification to carry out their role within the necessary time frame.	1 April 2026

The registered person must— ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (5)(a))	1 April 2026
The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4 ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (2)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that rotas are accurate and include all staff who are working at the home and the hours they work. Furthermore, ensure that an accurate record is maintained of the statutory provision under which a child is accommodated.	1 April 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure when children are not participating in education, they are supported to regain their confidence in education and engage in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that children are helped to manage their safety inside and outside the home. Staff should help children understand how to feel supported and protected when online and using electronic devices. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.9)
- The registered person should encourage children to take a proactive role in looking after their day-to-day health and well-being. This specifically relates to the use of electronic cigarettes and the associated risks to health. ('Guide to Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1227335

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Exceptional Care Limited

Registered provider address: Malthouse Business Centre, 48 Southport Road,
Ormskirk L39 1QR

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Michelle Edge, Senior His Majesty's Inspector
Louise Redfern, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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