

1243962

Registered provider: North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a combined healthcare NHS trust. It provides short-break care for up to 6 children with special educational needs and disabilities.

A total of 48 children and their families are receiving support from the home. At the time of this inspection, 5 children were receiving overnight support. All children contributed and were observed as part of this inspection.

There is currently no registered manager in post. The previous manager left the organisation October 2025. A new manager has been in post since November 2025 and is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

The previous responsible individual withdrew their application. The registered provider appointed a new responsible individual in March 2026.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 June 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 10 March 2026

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2026	Full	Good
24/02/2025	Full	Good
11/10/2023	Full	Good
31/01/2023	Full	Good

Summary of findings

Children experience enjoyable stays and access a wide range of fun activities both inside and outside of the home. They benefit from being cared for by a stable team of staff who know them well.

Staff understand children's health needs and speak confidently about their safeguarding responsibilities. Clear risk and care plans help staff to care for children. However, medication arrangements are not always effectively managed.

The manager is child focused. Staff speak positively about the support they receive, and there is good-quality training. Children's families and professionals are positive about the care children receive. However, safer recruitment systems are not effective in relation to student nurses.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home environment is warm and welcoming for children. There is a wide range of fun and stimulating activities that support children's enjoyment and development. Additionally, photos of staff and children are displayed around the home, helping to create a sense of belonging for children during their stays.

Children benefit from well-planned and supportive stays in the short-breaks home. They are given opportunities to visit and meet staff and other children before they have overnight stays. Staff understand children's likes, preferences and routines by working closely with them and their families. This ensures children receive individualised care that meets their needs.

Staff have a good understanding of children's complex health needs. A dedicated nurse oversees healthcare and supports children's health arrangements. There are detailed health plans that are individualised and specific to each child's health needs. This helps to keep children safe.

Staff work effectively with education professionals to support children's learning and development. They ensure they are kept informed about key activities, such as swimming and school events, so that children have everything they need to participate. Clear and detailed discussions between teachers and staff promote consistency. As a result, children receive coordinated and supportive care.

Children are cared for by staff who know them well. They build strong and positive relationships, and their interactions with children are warm, nurturing and engaging. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of each child's preferred ways to communicate. The staff are equipped with a wide range of communication resources such as visual

supports and training in Makaton. As a result, children can express themselves and feel heard.

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

Children are regularly praised for their achievements; this builds their confidence and supports motivation. Staff work closely with families and other professionals to set clear, individual targets for each child. These targets are meaningful and support children's development, such as learning to manage clothing fastenings and joining group activities. As a result, children develop independence and social skills.

There have been no physical interventions required. Staff have a good understanding of children's individual vulnerabilities and needs. Clear risk and care plans are in place, providing effective strategies to support children when they are upset or unhappy. The manager has good oversight, reviews incidents with staff and updates children's care plans when required.

Specialist equipment used by children is well maintained and regularly serviced to ensure it is safe and suitable. Managers work closely with families to make sure children have access to the equipment they need during their stays. This supports children's comfort, safety and physical needs.

Staff speak confidently about their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to escalate concerns when needed. When worries about children's safety arise, the manager responds quickly and takes appropriate action. However, on one occasion, staff did not immediately escalate a safeguarding concern about a child to the manager. This was a missed opportunity to ensure that the child was safe. The manager took appropriate action to investigate and held reflective discussions with the staff to develop their understanding and learning around escalating safeguarding concerns.

Medication arrangements are not always managed effectively. On one occasion, a child was given their prescribed medication at the wrong time of day, resulting in an overdose. Staff took appropriate action in escalating the concern with medical professionals and the child did not come to harm. The manager has put in place strategies to improve practice in this area, such as additional competency checks. However, these are not yet fully embedded into practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager and deputy manager work well together, with a strong child-focused approach. They know the children well and are committed to meeting their individual needs, supporting progress and ensuring they have an enjoyable stay. Staff speak positively about the management team and feel well supported in their roles.

Family members are overwhelmingly positive about the support and care children receive. They said there is good communication and that they value regular updates and

photos sent to them of their children having fun during their stays. One parent said, 'Staff are approachable, supportive, and willing to listen. They work together with me to support my child.'

There is a wide range of mandatory and additional training available to staff that is specific to the children's individual needs. Additionally, the manager completes reflective learning with staff in areas such as safeguarding; this helps her to review staff's knowledge and identify any areas for development.

Supervision with staff takes place regularly. This provides staff with a space to have open conversations about how they are feeling, discuss their personal development and share any worries they may have about children or others. Managers create an open culture in the home.

Regular one-to-one meetings between the manager and staff provide valuable opportunities for reflection on practice and to share ideas. These complement the established team meetings, which are held routinely. As a result, staff feel better informed and more confident in delivering consistent care to children.

Safer recruitment systems are in place for staff who are employed by the service. Managers seek reassurances from education providers, that student healthcare workers' employment checks are completed. However, they do not always ensure they have the relevant information, about healthcare workers employment history. This does not ensure effective oversight and has the potential for unsuitable people to be working with children.

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 registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff administering medication to children follow the prescriber's directions. This requirement was raised at the last inspection and is restated.	16 July 2026
The registered person may permit an individual to start work at the home despite the fact that the requirement in paragraph (3)(d) has not been met if— the registered person has taken all reasonable steps to obtain full information about each of the matters in Schedule 2 in respect of the individual, but the enquiries in relation to any of the matters in paragraphs 3 to 6 of Schedule 2 are incomplete; full and satisfactory information in respect of the individual has been obtained in relation to the matters in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 2; the registered person considers that the circumstances are exceptional; and the registered person ensures that the individual is appropriately supervised while carrying out the individual's duties, pending receipt of any outstanding information on the matters in paragraphs 3 to 6 of Schedule 2, which is then considered satisfactory by the registered person.	16 July 2026

The registered person must take reasonable steps to ensure that any individual who is working at the home and who does not fall within paragraph (2)(a) and (b) is appropriately supervised while carrying out the individual's duties.
(Regulation 32 (7)(a)(b)(c)(d) (8))

This specifically relates to leaders and managers ensuring that recruitment checks for student nurses completed by universities are verified and confirmation is obtained that checks meet the requirements of The Children's Homes Regulation 2015.

This requirement was raised at the last two inspections and is restated.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff's skills in safeguarding enable them to identify signs that children may be at risk. Specifically, they should ensure that all incidents of unexplained bruising for children are acted on immediately and reasonably explored. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.10)

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: 1243962

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: North Staffordshire Combined Health Care and NHS Trust, Lawton House, Bellringer Road, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8HH

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Kirsty Truesdale, Social Care Inspector

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