

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/or disabilities.

A total of 47 children and their families are receiving support from the home. There are 44 children accessing overnight stays, and 3 children receiving support during the day. 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 registered manager resigned in October 2025. A new manager has been in post since November 2025 and has recently submitted their application to register with Ofsted.

The previous responsible individual resigned in July 2025. The registered provider appointed a new responsible individual in July 2025 and Ofsted is currently checking this person has the relevant capacity, experience and skills to carry out the role.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 March 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: 24 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/02/2025	Full	Good
11/10/2023	Full	Good
31/01/2023	Full	Good
29/11/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff are welcoming and nurturing towards children, who receive individualised care from staff who understand their complex care needs and are familiar to them. This helps children to settle quickly and enjoy their stay.

Managers and staff work well with parents and the professionals who support children. They attend care planning meetings to discuss children's experiences during their visits and contribute to reviewing children's needs. This ensures that children have a voice and receive consistent care that focuses on their individual needs and targets.

Staff prepare activities that children enjoy for when they arrive. Story time is interactive and includes sensory toys that are associated with their chosen book. Staff are aspirational for children and encourage them to try new experiences. For example, some children have enjoyed canoeing activities for the first time. These opportunities broaden children's experiences and build their confidence as they gain a sense of achievement from trying new activities.

Children respond to interactions with staff with excitement and affection. Staff communicate with children using their preferred method. This helps them to understand children's views, wishes and feelings and informs the care that children receive. Staff encouraged children to make decisions about things that are important to them. This ensures that children feel heard and are valued.

Learning is promoted by staff, who work well with education professionals. Staff visit children at school at least annually. They speak with their teachers to establish what support works well for each child and identify how staff can support children to meet their education targets. This enhances opportunities for children to make progress with developing their independence and communication. Staff help children's cognitive development by encouraging children to count and identify objects, colours and shapes.

Since the last inspection, 3 new children are enjoying stays. The manager works closely with parents to ensure that children's plans in the home are child led and progress at a pace that feels safe and comfortable for them. Staff also arrange events for families; during this inspection, parents visited to celebrate Mother's Day. Positive relationships between staff and those important to the children help them to feel secure and a sense of belonging during their stays.

Staff have a good understanding of children's complex health needs. However, there have been some occasions where staff have not administered medication to children following the prescriber's directions. On one occasion, this was due to the medication record not being accessible to staff. Staff seek guidance from the prescriber when medication errors occur. Reassurances were given on each occasion that the error would

not have an adverse effect on the child's health and wellbeing. There has been a reduction in medication errors in recent months.

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

Managers and staff are experienced in caring for children with special educational needs. They understand children's vulnerabilities and can anticipate potential risks. They use this understanding to identify and implement effective strategies to help keep children safe. Staff provide personal care that respects children's dignity.

Managers and staff have a good understanding of children's risks and behaviours. Staff use effective strategies to prevent behaviours from escalating. Since the last inspection, there has been one occasion where staff who are trained in physical intervention have held a child. This measure was necessary, proportionate and effective in keeping the child safe. The manager reviews the child's experience and ensures that information is shared with parents and relevant individuals. This transparency promotes a safeguarding culture that helps to keep children safe.

Many of the children have specialist equipment, which is well maintained and serviced regularly. Managers ensure that children's stays are organised to ensure that specialist equipment required to support children's assessed needs is available during their stay.

Staff ensure that children benefit from routines that are familiar to them, making daily tasks more manageable. Predictable structure helps children to understand what is expected of them and provides them with a sense of security that helps them to manage change effectively.

On one occasion, staff did not report a concern in line with the NHS Trust safeguarding policy. This was promptly identified by the manager and information was shared with the agency responsible for investigating the concern. External monitoring systems identified that the safeguarding concern was not reported to Ofsted. Leaders, managers and staff have reflected on the safeguarding response and identified learning that has been shared with all staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager resigned in October 2025. The new manager previously worked in the home and is familiar with the children, staff and organisation's systems. As a result, the day-to-day care of the children has not been affected by the change in management.

Staff consistently report high levels of support from managers. Regular, reflective supervisions allow staff to review their practice, consider children's experiences and contribute to care planning. Managers complete annual performance appraisals and agree plans for further learning and development. Recently, managers have introduced lead roles, enabling staff to undertake training and act as champions in areas such as autism, behaviour management and safeguarding.

The manager has introduced weekly team huddles to provide staff with more opportunities to reflect on practice, share ideas and contribute to the home's development. These meetings complement existing team meetings that are held regularly and attended by all staff. They strengthen communication and promote consistent approaches to supporting children.

Most staff hold a relevant qualification or are working towards completing a qualification within 2 years of commencing their role. There is always a qualified nurse present in the home who takes a lead role in completing clinical tasks. Managers ensure that staff receive training that supports them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and meet the individual needs of children who access the service.

Managers ensure that children who require a high level of support and supervision are cared for by suitably experienced staff who are familiar to them. Occasionally, children's visits are cancelled and rearranged at short notice due to changes to staffing sufficiency. This can lead to children and their family feeling disappointed.

Safe recruitment systems are in place for staff who are employed by the NHS Trust. However, managers do not seek reassurances from universities responsible for student nurses who are placed in the home to further their learning. As a result, it is not clear if recruitment checks specific to student nurses are effective in reducing the risk of children being cared for by unsuitable individuals.

The effectiveness of monitoring systems is mixed. The managers review performance monthly to understand children's experience and identify actions to be completed. However, practice specific to managing medication and safe recruitment have not improved despite these being raised as a requirement or recommendation in previous recent inspections.

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 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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(h)) In particular, staff should ensure that they report safeguarding concerns to relevant individuals without delay so actions required to keep children safe can be agreed and concerns can be investigated. Additionally, managers should ensure that requirements and recommendations from inspections influence changes to practice to keep children safe. Furthermore, the manager should ensure that they inform all relevant agencies including Ofsted when there is a serious event.	22 April 2026
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular the registered person must ensure that— a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child.	22 April 2026

(Regulation 23 (1) (2)(c)) In particular, managers should ensure that staff administer medication to children following the prescriber's directions. Records relating to children's medication must be stored safely and be accessible to staff responsible for administering it. This has been increased from a recommendation at the last 2 previous inspections.	
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. 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.	22 April 2026

This requirement has been raised at 2 other previous inspections over the last 4 inspection cycles. Within the same time frame, on one occasion, a recommendation was made.	
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Recommendation

- The manager should ensure that there are sufficient staff who are suitably trained on duty to meet the assessed needs of all children in the home. In particular, managers should ensure that suitable staffing arrangements are available to prevent children's stays been cancelled. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including quality standards', page 51, paragraph 10.1)

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: 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:

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Helen Dunn, Social Care Inspector

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