

1254782

Registered provider: Hampshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to four children who experience social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were four children living in the home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since March 2023.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 May 2025

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	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 November 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/11/2024	Full	Good
03/10/2023	Full	Good
21/03/2023	Full	Good
28/03/2022	Interim	Not judged

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Most children have made positive progress since moving to the home and have a strong sense of connection and belonging. Children benefit from a consistent and stable staff team, who know them well. Since the last inspection, the home experienced a period of instability over the course of several months, which led to one child moving on from the home in an unplanned way. This was the right decision for the child, and they are now much more settled in another home within the authority.

Children have strong relationships with staff and can identify preferred adults to help them. Staff are well attuned to children's needs and recognise when children are making progress, regularly providing praise and encouragement to children. This has a positive impact on children's emotional well-being and sense of achievement.

Children benefit from range of positive activities and opportunities in accordance with their interests. Staff diligently keep records of these experiences. This helps children to have positive memories of their time living in the home, which staff then formalise in a memory book. In addition, each child has a diary and staff write daily positive affirmations for them. This enhances the relationships that staff build with children and helps children to know that they are loved and well regarded.

Staff are united in recognising the importance of children expressing their wishes and feelings, and this is embedded in multiple areas of practice. Consequently, children feel listened to and approach staff with confidence, knowing that their wishes will be heard and acted on. For example, one child recently asked to visit a particular theme park, and staff arranged this for them alongside their friends. This was a reward in recognition of the excellent progress that this child has demonstrated with their school engagement.

Children's health and education needs are well understood by staff, and children receive the care and support that they require. Two children who have recently moved to the home have not yet started education, although school places have been arranged for them. During this transitional period, staff have created meaningful and engaging education plans for the children. These are child focused and reflect the individual needs of each child.

When children have moved into the home, this has been carefully managed and well planned. As a result, children have settled well and are already making positive progress from their starting points. Following a difficult placement ending for another child, the management team has carefully thought about how they can support all children to live together in a positive way, and demonstrated learning from the unplanned ending.

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

Children are kept safe from harm, and staff respond effectively when safeguarding incidents occur. Staff use their good understanding of children's presenting needs to determine when they might need extra help and support. One professional said, 'Staff are excellent at reporting and sharing any safeguarding concerns. They follow their protocols to report or raise safeguarding concerns. They listen to the children's voice and are not dismissive to any concerns or allegations made by the children.'

Staff are well attuned to children's emotional and physical presentation. This means that they are able to determine and anticipate when children may require extra support, sometimes even before children themselves realise. Staff work carefully to help children develop their coping strategies so that they are better prepared to manage their own needs in the future.

Shortly after the last inspection, the stability of the home was undermined for several months. This had a negative impact on the ability of staff to meet all children's needs. Despite this, staff maintained a strong commitment to children's welfare and, on occasion, made proportionate decisions to call for police support. The ability of the entire staff team to navigate through these challenges has been instrumental in supporting the progress and renewed sense of belonging for two children residing in the home during this period.

Staff respond positively to children's presenting needs. They help children to develop their emotional literacy and make important distinctions between their physical and emotional needs. This enables children to better understand their feelings and improves their ability to communicate how they feel. For one child, this has helped them to seek help in a safer and more socially acceptable manner.

Since the last inspection, there have been two medication errors. On both occasions, experienced staff did not follow the procedures in place, although this did not have a negative impact on children's welfare. The manager has undertaken effective follow-up work, and the staff involved have been able to reflect and consider any learning. Despite this, the management team recognises that there is further work to be done to ensure that the likelihood of human error is reduced and that all staff are carrying out their responsibilities in a consistent manner, guided by internal policies and relevant guidance.

Children who go missing from the home do not regularly benefit from timely return home interviews. This undermines important oversight for the management team and could cause avoidable delay for the sharing of safeguarding information. Senior leaders have recently implemented some wider practice improvement monitoring across the authority, including a specific group looking at missing episodes for looked-after children, and are committed to improving the timeliness of return home interviews.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Staff are universal in their praise for the management team and the exceptional support that they receive. Staff feel inspired to support children to the best of their ability, and there is strong sense of togetherness within the staff team. One staff member said, 'Our manager is really committed to her role as manager, not only to our children but also to her staff team.'

The registered manager is highly ambitious for children and has embedded a strong culture across the staff team about the positive impact that individual staff can have on children's lives. Staff morale is high. All staff feel a strong sense of team identity and aspire to help children achieve positive outcomes. One staff member said, 'The manager loves everything about the children, even when they are struggling, she still has their emotional well-being at heart and listens to them.'

Managers lead by example and are strongly integrated into the day-to-day arrangements of the home. They know the home's strengths and areas for development and can demonstrate how the home has supported children to make progress over time. Staff value the expertise and support of managers and use them as role models to guide their own practice.

The registered manager has introduced several innovative strategies and support tools to help staff to provide well-informed care and help to children. These are focused on improving children's emotional regulation and helping them to understand and maintain important connections from their past. The principles of this work are pivotal to children understanding their journey into care and the adults in their lives who they may have lost immediate connections with. This informal life-story work has already started to make a difference in children's lives and would benefit from wider dissemination across the authority.

The management team demonstrated commendable adaptability to support the staff team to navigate through a difficult time in the home and enable staff to maintain a strong focus on supporting children. During this time, managers made the right decisions. Consequently, all the children have made positive progress, despite the relatively short period since these difficulties were resolved. Staff have undertaken important reflective work with two children to enable them to think about how this time affected them and others.

The management team is child focused and always keen to gather children's wishes and feelings. Examples include a regular newsletter for children about their successes and achievements, and all team meetings having children's experiences and interests as a central component. When needed following difficult incidents, the registered manager writes personalised letters to children. These are powerful and well written, inviting children to reflect on their feelings and emotions in a time and manner that suits them and offering sensitive words of support and advice. This approach extends the impact of already well-developed support systems for children.

All staff receive good-quality supervision that encourages them to reflect on their support and care of children. Alongside this, staff speak unanimously about the 'open door' approach by the management team, and the sense of reassurance this creates across the team.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any children who go missing from the home have a return from missing interview within 72 hours, in accordance with the organisation's relevant policy. The registered person should be able to evidence any actions they have taken to ensure that this task is progressed promptly. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a structured process in place for the administration of medication in the home. All staff should follow a common approach and take into consideration relevant professional guidance and good practice principles. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

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: 1254782

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hampshire County Council

Registered provider address: Hampshire County Council, The Castle, Winchester
SO23 8UG

Responsible individual: Deborah Price

Registered manager: Jackie Marshall

Inspector

Ashley Edwards, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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