

1255823

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, emotional and mental health difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since June 2017 and is suitably qualified.

At the time of this inspection, there were four children living in the home; all children were seen as part of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 July 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: 23 July 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/07/2024	Full	Good
22/08/2023	Full	Good
14/06/2022	Full	Good
25/08/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Most children have made positive progress since moving to the home. For one child, this progress has been substantial, particularly their academic achievements. For another child, despite all the foundations being in place for them to thrive, the staff team was not able to achieve positive change for them over time; a child-centred decision was made for this child to move to a new environment, with aspirations of greater stability and a fresh start for them.

Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting children and encouraging them to lead positive and fulfilling lives. All staff benefit from good relationships with children and use these relationships to engage children in meaningful conversations. These discussions focus on helping children to move on from difficult experiences in their lives and on enabling children to develop the skills and knowledge they need to make healthy choices.

Staff have endeavoured to promote a sense of stability and belonging for children. Although this has been well intended, on numerous occasions since the last inspection, staff have struggled to consistently provide the levels of stability that all children have needed. This has been more apparent for two children, who have engaged in frequent missing episodes and persistently been at risk of harm while out in the community. More recently, following a change in the household dynamics, the home environment has been much more settled.

During periods of sustained difficulty, staff have continued to use their good relationships with children to promote consistency and familiarity. For two children, the home has been their place of belonging and consistency, while facing external safeguarding risks and difficulties in their relationships with others. Staff demonstrate unconditional positive regard, and this has enabled open communication with children about difficult topics, even when children's lives outside of the home have sometimes been chaotic.

Staff are child-centred and recognise the importance of creating the right environment for children. Staff routinely adapt their approaches to accommodate children's individual needs and create a safe environment. Despite this, one child became increasingly unsettled in response to other children's emotional and behavioural needs, and this caused a number of additional behavioural challenges. Although the staff team made reasonable adjustments, this situation did impact on this child and their initial sense of safety and security on moving into the home was compromised.

Staff have tried their best to support children's educational needs and have developed individualised education plans for children in accordance with their identified needs. Staff encourage children to engage positively in education, with only limited success for two children. There has been notable improvement towards the end of the recent academic term, which was also a time in which the household dynamics had changed.

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

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of children's risks and respond to the best of their ability. Staff have developed positive working relationships with a range of safeguarding professionals and work well within multi-disciplinary networks to promote children's safety. One professional stated, 'Staff are well supported by their managers in relation to challenging situations. I am impressed on their policy to follow the children when they leave the home, and their updates are always timely.'

For two children, staff have not been able to achieve a persistent level of safety in relation to their time out in the community. These children have engaged in harmful interactions with peers, and they have frequently been at risk of harm while in the community. Despite this, staff have continually demonstrated sustained and coordinated efforts to improve the children's understanding and self-management of known risks. Both children have benefited from specialist workers to try to reduce their exposure to risks and increase their understanding of unhealthy peer relationships.

Staff maintain high levels of commitment to help children to engage in better choices and encourage them to lead increasingly safer lifestyles. One social worker noted that staff have managed complex and high-risk behaviours effectively and have made good use of de-escalation and distraction techniques.

When children go missing from the home, staff routinely follow children and engage other safeguarding organisations to ensure coordinated responses to resolving missing episodes. Following these, children consistently benefit from return home interviews; these help to provide greater transparency about their actions when they are away from the home. Staff communicate well with other professionals to ensure that relevant information is shared across children's networks, and this promotes effective multi-agency working.

On occasions, during missing episodes or safeguarding incidents in the community, staff have become frustrated, as responses from other organisations and professionals in other industries, such as retail, have not always demonstrated proactive safeguarding practice. In these situations, staff communicate well and use dynamic risk assessments to consider the steps that they should take to reduce risks to children.

Children are supported to develop important life skills, and this helps them to be better prepared for adult life. In addition to this, staff recognise that children's behaviour is a form of communication, and staff use a range of opportunities to explore children's wishes and feelings. Team meetings reflect a culture of curiosity, and staff use these meetings to make important connections between children's actions and the harm that they have experienced in the past. This enhances staff empathy and improves their capacity to help children to understand the wider context to some of the decisions they may make, which may at times have an impact on their safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is supported by an experienced management team who lead by example; they have been particularly effective at implementing research-informed practice into the home. This approach has further enhanced an existing child-centred culture and helps staff to maintain an overriding focus on supporting children using unconditional positive regard and emotional warmth.

Managers are rightly confident in the ability of the staff team to provide the care that children require. The deputy manager noted the breadth of different skills and personalities of the staff, who work closely together to ensure that the children get the best possible chances in life; staff will share and debate views, but always return to the ethos of understanding how children are feeling, recognising the adverse childhood experiences they have faced before they moved into the home.

Staff demonstrate an exceptionally strong commitment to improving children's quality of life and supporting them to make better choices. This is evident in examples of enduring commitment to children, despite substantial safeguarding challenges, and when children appear unaware of the efforts being made to try to keep them safe.

Staff listen to children and ensure that they are involved in day-to-day decisions about their lives. When required, staff advocate on children's behalf, both to ensure that children benefit from the support they need, and also during times of disagreement with familiar adults or external professionals in their lives. Consequently, children have strong confidence that staff will act in their best interests and support their wishes and feelings.

Transitions for children moving on from the home are well planned and carefully managed. One child will be shortly moving on to university, and the management team has ensured that they will receive positive ongoing support when they move on. In another situation, excellent planning and joint working enabled managers to tell children difficult news about one child moving on; this transition was managed very carefully and meant that the ending for this child was as positive and sensitive as possible.

All staff receive regular supervision and training; this helps staff to think about their care of the children. Managers use team meetings as an opportunity for wider staff development and reflection. Morale in the staff team is high, and staff have developed a sense of togetherness and unity.

Individual staff members take lead responsibility for reviewing the home's compliance with the quality standards. This promotes innovative and child-led practice. For example, instead of children's meetings, one staff member collects children's views in a natural manner, asking thematic monthly questions which encourage children to think. Another staff member leads on educational experiences for children and has developed carefully considered education plans for relevant children.

When considering which children may be suitable to live in the home, the home manager recognises the importance of talking to adults who know the child best. Despite this, initial risk assessments do not strongly convey how managers have compared differing needs between children. For two children, this did have an impact, and although suitable information was available to assist the manager's decision-making, this was not used in the most effective manner.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. Any assessment process should include relevant information to outline how the registered person has determined the suitability of children moving to the home, and the steps that may be required to fully support their needs. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- Many children placed in homes may undergo a difficult transition and what should be simple aspects of their care take on a substantial significance in this context. Staff should provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming, supportive, and which provides appropriate boundaries in relation to their behaviour. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: 1255823

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: Kerry Pringle

Inspector

Ashley Edwards, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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