

1259734

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 this inspection, there were three children living in the home.

A manager has been in post since July 2025 and has submitted their application to register with Ofsted. They have previously been the registered manager of one of the local authority's other homes.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 January 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: 27 August 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/08/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/11/2022	Full	Good
20/07/2022	Full	Inadequate
16/08/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, three children have moved into the home. They are building positive relationships with staff and developing a sense of belonging. The transitions for these children were well considered, and careful thought was given to how the children would interact with each other. Despite this positive planning, the dynamics between the children have been challenging at times, and staff are continuing to help them to develop more harmonious relationships.

As the children have begun to settle into the home, staff have grown in their understanding of the children's underlying needs. This has enabled staff to better consider the support that the children may require in the future. As a result of this, referrals have been made to relevant agencies and organisations as necessary.

All of the children are engaged in full-time education, and staff work well with schools to ensure positive communication and a shared understanding of children's everyday needs. One child has recently started at a new school and is already developing some positive friendships. Staff recognise that the development of social networks outside of the home may help to reduce some peer conflict in the home.

Staff ensure that each child benefits from individualised time, and this has helped children to identify preferred staff, from whom they seek advice and support. Staff enjoy spending time with the children; together, they have created a range of positive memories and experiences. Staff have developed memory books for the children as a way of recording children's experiences of living in the home.

Staff ensure that children continue to have family time in accordance with their individual plans, and they ensure that children's emotional needs are taken into account. Staff are also helping to improve children's contact with their wider family since moving to the home.

At times, managers have not ensured that children always benefit from consistent routines and boundaries. For example, there are differences in how individual staff members implement certain expectations, and staff do not always work in a united way as a team. While this has not had any significant impact on the children, it has created some friction in the staff team. Managers are already aware of this and recognise the importance of achieving consistency of care.

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

Staff prioritise children's safety and work well with other professionals to keep them safe from harm. When concerns arise, decisions from managers are proactive, ensuring that all professionals are working together to consider children's welfare. Multi-agency

meetings are requested when required to promote joint decision-making and careful balancing of risks.

Children benefit from regular, targeted conversations in accordance with their presenting needs. Staff create planned opportunities for children to talk about issues that may be affecting them and use their intuition to respond to feelings experienced by the children. Consequently, the children are supported in areas such as personal safety, mental health, family relationships, independence and managing feelings and emotions.

When children go missing from the home, there is a coordinated response, and children receive sensitive support when they return. Children's plans have been updated with any new information following these incidents. The management team appropriately balances children's desires for independence and free time with their safeguarding responsibilities.

As concerns for one child have escalated, specialist agencies have become involved, and the network of professionals is meeting more frequently. This reflects proactive safeguarding practice. The staff team has been particularly efficient at communicating with other agencies, and this helps to promote transparency and positive professional networks around the children. Information-sharing between staff and other professionals is also well established.

Staff and the management team carefully balance children's own expectations and compare these with age-related expectations for all children. This helps to break down some barriers and to carefully consider what is right for children. Most of the time, the children recognise that staff are trying to help them and have their best interests in mind.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers have a good understanding of children's individual needs and what is required for them to settle and progress. They are motivated to try new ideas and recognise the importance of considering different perspectives from other professionals who know the children.

Several professionals have praised the willingness of the staff team to advocate on behalf of children and promote their inclusion in the decision-making process. One social worker described the support from the staff team towards their child as 'amazing'.

The stability in the staff team has been disrupted in recent months due to unforeseen absences of several key staff, mostly for personal reasons. While this has not had a sustained impact on children, it has impacted on the capacity of the staff team to work in a consistent and united way. This means that, on occasions, the foundations of good staff practice have not always been in place, for example effective communication and consistency of approach.

Despite these challenges, staff have demonstrated good adaptability, and senior managers have made important decisions to help to guide the staff team through this time. The morale in the staff team remains positive, and staff are now focusing on specific areas for practice improvement across the home. Additional training has also been identified to assist this.

Staff receive regular supervision and training. Supervision records also reflect additional training being considered for staff to further develop their approaches and ability to help children. Managers across the authority are currently developing a training programme focused on resilience.

While there is a diverse team in the home with a range of skills and experience, some staff have found it more difficult to respond to children's emotional and behavioural difficulties. Managers recognise that some of these incidents may trigger difficult feelings in staff linked to previously identified shortfalls in the care provided to children, apparent during the last full inspection. Although staff have moved on positively from this time, some staff have yet to fully regain their confidence and skills.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff implement consistent routines and boundaries for children, and that all staff are working together to promote stability and familiarity for children. All staff should know their roles and responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)
- The registered person should support staff to develop their skills and confidence in responding to and managing children's emotional and behavioural needs. Staff should understand their position as 'role models' for children and be able to recognise the impact of their own emotions and feelings and how children may sense and respond to these. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.10)

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: 1259734

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hampshire County Council

Registered provider address: The Castle, Winchester SO23 8UG

Responsible individual: Deborah Price

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Ashley Edwards, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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