

1271135

Registered provider: Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home cares for seven children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Since the last inspection, the home has increased the number of children it cares for from five to seven, with the additional two children cared for in a separate building next to the main home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2019.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 August 2021

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: 12 June 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/06/2019	Full	Good
27/02/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
04/06/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress from their individual starting points. They are supported to do this by the high quality of care they receive. Staff care about children and relationships of real warmth and empathy are evident throughout the home.

Children have positive experiences of living at the home. Staff are creative in their approaches to the care they deliver. Each child is treated as an individual and their needs are understood and responded to. Staff are tenacious in their attempts to build relationships with children and overcome barriers to communication and progress. A member of staff said, 'With some children you don't think you are getting anywhere. You have to look hard but then you will see little rainbows.'

During recent periods of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, children and staff have worked together to develop a range of activities that provide children with an opportunity to play, relax and have fun. This has included recreating a planned trip to the seaside in their garden, complete with sand, a paddling pool and fish and chips. One child wrote a report of the event and it was also videoed. This gives children lasting positive memories.

Children develop a real sense of belonging in the home. Developing a sense of permanence is more challenging for those children in a large home when their peers move back to their own families or to foster care. The registered manager has a good awareness of the impact of these changes on some children and is looking at ways to minimise this for children who have a long-term plan of residential care.

Those children who return to their families are provided with well-planned support. Children and families have outreach support in their own home from staff at the home they have established relationships with. This helps to support a successful transition from residential care to a family environment.

Children are supported to attend their educational placements and are making progress in their education. Staff work closely with schools and other education providers. One provider said, 'Staff are very keen to encourage the children in their care to access the education they deserve and support them to reach their potential. They go the extra mile.'

Children have access to health provision specific to their needs, in addition to primary healthcare services. Staff work closely with a clinical psychologist and speech and language therapist to identify and assess the needs of children. This enables staff to provide care which meets each child's emotional and communication needs.

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

Children's safety is promoted through good awareness and understanding from staff of the risks children may face. The practice of staff supports reduction of risks, however, this practice is not always underpinned by good-quality written risk assessments.

Some assessments contain inaccurate information, including details of other children. Identification of risk is inconsistent. Some assessments do not detail risks that are known and that staff are already working to respond to. Others identify risks with no evidence to support this. As a result, staff do not always have the written information they need to support children effectively.

Staff work closely with other colleagues in the local authority and external professionals to manage high levels of risk faced by a small number of children. This collaborative working and shared decision-making means that professionals are all able to contribute to, and take responsibility for, keeping children safe.

Children's behaviour management plans are detailed and child centred. They help staff to understand and respond positively to children. Children receive appropriate and proportionate sanctions in response to some behaviours. These additional measures are not recorded by staff as formal sanctions. This means that there are no established systems in place for the registered manager to review the use and effectiveness of sanctions for individual children, as well as the quality of practice more broadly across the staff team.

Missing-from-care plans are well written and support children and staff to understand the risks each child may face. If children do go missing, staff actively search for them and follow the actions identified in their plans in order to return them home safely. Some records of missing-from-care incidents lack detail. In some records, it is not clear how the child has returned to the home and the response of staff on their return. It is also not always recorded if a return home interview has taken place. Records are not signed by staff and it is unclear who has written them. As a result, there is a lack of accountability for some practice.

When searches of children's bedrooms are undertaken the rationale for these decisions is clear and actions are appropriate. It is not always clear from recording of these incidents if the child has given permission for the search or is aware the search is taking place. It is also not always clear what actions staff have taken after removing property. These gaps in recording room searches means that there is a lack of transparency.

The physical environment of the home is, for the most part, safe and protects children from harm. In one part of the home, inspectors found that access to one fire door was locked and there were obstacles to accessing the door. In addition, the practice of locking the communal rooms downstairs presents a potential risk to children in the event of fire and means children do not have free access to all areas

of their home. The sash windows in the home are fitted with restrictors to ensure children's safety. These have not been risk assessed in relation to a younger child who has recently been admitted to the home to ensure that current arrangements address his needs and keep him safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Children and the staff team benefit from the child-centred and committed leadership of the registered manager. Since the numbers of children cared for has increased, the registered manager has received additional management support from the senior member of staff with day-to-day oversight of children living in the annex building. Both managers are reflective and dedicated leaders. They lead by example and are excellent role models for their staff teams.

Children benefit from a consistent, highly motivated and skilled staff team. A separate team of staff has been established to care for the two children in the annex building. Children are therefore better able to build trusting relationships with staff.

Staff receive regular supervision of their practice, which is well recorded. In addition, they have an annual appraisal, which gives them time to reflect on their achievements and identify areas for development. Staff receive a good level of challenge and support, which ensures that they are able to provide a high quality of care to children.

Several staff, including the registered manager, have been trained and approved as residential foster carers in line with the local authority's 'No Wrong Door' model of wraparound care and support for children. This has meant some staff are providing foster care for children who have previously lived at the home. They are supported to work flexibly to meet the needs of each of these roles.

The registered manager uses her quality of care review effectively to assess progress and areas for development of practice. She has a detailed understanding of the children, the staff team and her wider responsibilities in the home. However, the reports do not evidence fully consultations with children, their families and external agencies. As a result, it is not clear how these stakeholders have contributed to the registered manager's assessment of the care children receive and the progress they make.

The physical environment of the home requires improvement. One child's bedroom has a broken lock which has not been repaired within reasonable timescales. Some children have broken furniture in their bedrooms and floors are stained with paint. One child's bedroom has a rotten windowsill. In the bathroom, the bath panel is broken, as is the shower cubicle handle. In the annex building, there is damp on the ceiling in the hallway. The main building in particular needs a programme of repair and redecoration. This will give children a home environment which makes them feel valued and which they can be proud of.

The registered manager has a good understanding of her wider safeguarding responsibilities. She ensures that information is shared with relevant agencies to protect children. She is also creative in her approach to safeguarding and has identified where there are currently gaps in joint working, particularly in relation to some health services. This proactive response to safeguarding means that children are better protected.

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
If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(1) applies to the home— the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring fire exits are accessible and free from obstacles.	30 September 2021
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected; children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) This specifically relates to ensuring that communal areas of the home are not locked at night, that all children have working locks on their bedroom doors, and that records of room searches detail why a room search was conducted without a child's permission and/or presence and what was done with any items removed.	30 September 2021

The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d)) This specifically relates to ensuring that window restrictors on sash windows are positioned to ensure the safety of smaller children and that the rotten windowsill in one child's bedroom is replaced.	30 September 2021
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This specifically relates to ensuring that risk assessments are accurate, individual to each child and include all known risks, with evidence to support the assessment of risk levels.	31 October 2021
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the missing child policy") setting out— the procedures to be followed, and the roles and responsibilities of persons working at the home, in relation to a child who is, or has been, so absent. (Regulation 34 (4)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that the recording of incidents is detailed, that reports are signed and dated by staff completing them, and that records detail what actions staff have taken on a child's return to the home in line with the agreed missing-child policy.	31 October 2021

The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child’s behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure (“the user”), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) This specifically relates to ensuring that any sanctions imposed are recorded and reviewed by the manager for effectiveness.	31 October 2021
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the review of the quality of care provided by the home demonstrates that the views of children, families and professionals external to the home have been taken into consideration and contribute to the outcome of the review and future planning. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)
- The registered person should ensure that damp on the annex ceiling is addressed. In the main building, broken furniture in children's bedrooms should be removed or repaired, paint stains removed from children's flooring and the broken bath panel and shower cubicle handle should be repaired or replaced. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: 1271135

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, Stockport SK1 3XE

Responsible individual: Laura Hopkinson

Registered manager: Elizabeth Vetcher

Inspectors

Dawn Parton, Social Care Inspector

Genevieve O'Reilly, Social Care Inspector

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