

2484441

Registered provider: Stoke on Trent City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by the local authority. It provides care for up to two children who have experienced early childhood instability, resulting in trauma and/or complex behaviours. The home primarily functions as a short-term assessment home, offering accommodation for emergencies and planned short stays. These may include overnight stays in urgent situations, 12-week assessment packages and, where appropriate, medium- to long-term residential care, depending on individual needs.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living in the home and spoke with the inspector. The inspector also engaged with children who had recently moved on from the home.

The manager is suitably qualified and experienced and registered with Ofsted in June 2024. The manager is also registered for another of the local authority's children's homes.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 October 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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 18 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/02/2025	Full	Good
12/03/2024	Full	Good
21/03/2023	Full	Good
14/09/2021	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 and four have moved out. Managers carefully assess each child's needs before agreeing to a placement, considering how these needs will be met alongside those of any child already living in the home. As a result, children experience well-planned and managed transitions that minimise disruption and support them to settle safely and positively.

Internal moves in the organisation have been particularly beneficial for children. These transitions provide continuity of care, familiar adults and reduced disruption, all of which support children's emotional stability. Managers ensure that children move with staff who know them well, helping them maintain positive peer relationships and continue building trust with familiar adults. This thoughtful and consistent approach promotes stability, reduces anxiety and supports children to settle quickly and make positive progress. One child told the inspector that they had no negative experiences of living in the home.

All children are engaged in education and have made progress from their starting points. When children are reluctant to attend school, staff and managers identify barriers and take effective action to overcome them. Managers advocate strongly to secure the right educational setting for each child and ensure that learning continues in the home or community when required.

Children's physical, emotional and mental health needs are well understood and met. Staff ensure that children are registered with local health services and have access to specialist support when required. As a result, children's health and well-being improve.

Children's engagement in their care is promoted effectively. They have multiple ways to express their views, including key-work discussions, access to advocacy and child-friendly complaints information. Staff support children to reflect on their feelings, understand risks and contribute to decisions about their care. For children with neurodiverse or additional communication needs, staff use simplified language, visual prompts and patient, repeated explanations. This approach ensures that every child's voice is heard, understood and acted on.

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

Children are helped to feel safe through warm, trusting and secure relationships with staff. These relationships provide a foundation for children to express their emotions safely and manage unsafe behaviours. Staff understand the risks children may face and offer consistent support that reduces their involvement in harmful or unsafe situations. For one child, behaviours such as going missing from home and engaging in anti-social behaviour have been significantly reduced since moving to the home, demonstrating the positive impact of staff support and relational practice.

Children have not raised concerns about staff practice. When staff identify concerns about a colleague's conduct, managers take appropriate action by promptly sharing information with safeguarding professionals and requesting social workers to speak directly with children to gather their views. Managers also ensure that any staff subject to safeguarding enquiries are removed from working in the home until investigations are concluded. This approach prioritises children's safety and ensures that they are cared for by adults deemed safe and suitable.

When children go missing from the home, staff follow procedures appropriately. They respond sensitively when children return, offering reassurance, conducting debriefs and helping them reflect on how to keep themselves safe. Staff demonstrate a calm and caring approach during these times. However, in a small number of incidents, managers did not provide timely oversight or update risk assessments to reflect changes in risk. As a result, opportunities were missed to strengthen staff guidance and further reduce risks.

Managers and staff use a range of approaches to promote positive behaviour and help children understand their feelings and actions. Staff access regular consultations with the clinical psychologist to reflect on children's behaviour and strengthen their therapeutic practice. Children are supported through key-work sessions to understand risks, identify safer strategies and learn from challenging experiences. Positive behaviours are consistently praised and reinforced, helping children build confidence and self-esteem. When consequences are applied, these are restorative in nature and help children reflect and repair relationships appropriately.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager and deputy, both of whom have high aspirations for what children can achieve. They provide clear direction and demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting children's progress and emotional well-being. Staff speak positively about the leadership and describe a culture where they feel valued, supported and motivated.

Children benefit from a stable and skilled staff team. Managers ensure that the home is consistently staffed in line with children's needs, and persistent recruitment efforts have helped maintain continuity of care. Safer recruitment processes for new staff are robust and ensure that only suitable adults work with children. However, managers have missed opportunities to complete updated checks for longer-serving staff, which limits assurance that all staff remain suitable to continue working with vulnerable children.

Managers and staff work proactively and effectively with external professionals. Social workers and other professionals are highly complimentary about the support children receive, describing the home's approach as nurturing and therapeutic. They highlight the positive impact of staff's commitment, insight and long-term thinking on children's progress, particularly during periods of transition. One professional told inspectors: 'I don't think my young person would have transitioned so well if it wasn't for the excellent

manager and hardworking staff, who are thinking about the long-term achievements of this young person and not just the now.'

Managers use a range of monitoring tools to review practice and the quality of care, and these systems are largely effective. However, managers have missed some opportunities to ensure that all staff receive regular, practice-focused supervision and that risk assessments are consistently updated. This limits opportunities for reflective oversight and means some staff do not always receive timely guidance. Despite these areas for improvement, the leadership team understands where further development is needed and demonstrates the capacity to continue strengthening the service.

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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that there is effective oversight of all incidents and that risk management plans are reviewed and actions aligned to reduce risks.	11 January 2026
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) This specifically relates to the manager ensuring effective oversight of all incidents, including missing-from-home episodes, and making sure that risk management plans are promptly reviewed and updated so that actions taken are aligned with current risks and reduce the likelihood of further harm.	11 January 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that staff who have been recruited for several years are subject to regular Disclosure and Barring Service checks to ensure that they continue to be suitable to work with children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: 2484441

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke on Trent City Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre Glebe Street, Floor 2, Stoke on Trent ST4 1HH

Responsible individual: Tracey Dawson

Registered manager: Lee Davies

Inspector

Nateisha Cardoza-Evans, Social Care Inspector

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