

2508451

Registered provider: Hampshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and run by the local authority. The home's statement of purpose states that the home is designed to improve children's life chances and outcomes by enabling them to rebuild relationships with their families and/or to achieve a stable living situation.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2020.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 29 June 2022

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
29/06/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
28/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
15/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
13/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

There has been a significant increase in incidents between children and staff since the assurance inspection in October 2022. This has caused fractured relationships and, on occasion, has resulted in children harming each other and staff. This has contributed to a decline in staff retention and an increase in staff absence. For children, this has meant they have been supported by unfamiliar staff who are learning to work cohesively as a newly formed team.

The registered manager and senior leaders have worked tirelessly to support one child to move from the home. The registered manager worked alongside the local authority to help find a suitable provision for the child to move to. Subsequently, staff creatively supported the child to move from the home in March 2023.

Since then, no other children have moved into the home. The registered manager is reflective of the difficulties and influences children have been exposed to during this time. Staff, children and professionals feel this previous turmoil is contributing towards unsettling behaviours for children continuing to live in the home, as they adjust and re-explore relationships and boundaries with staff.

Despite challenges faced by the children and staff, children are continuing to make positive progress in important areas of their lives. For example, all children are attending school in line with their current plans, and two children are currently sitting their GCSE exams. Staff are sensitively supporting revision for these exams in the home and are extremely proud of the children's commitment and academic achievements. An educational professional said, 'All children have made progress this year.'

Staff regularly discuss children's challenges and learning difficulties with educational psychologists. This forms part of the model of care commissioned by this local authority and includes frequent reviews for children living in the home. These provide advice on learning methods and behaviour management strategies for staff to follow. These reviews are informative and acutely assess in detail the children's past, present and emerging needs. Although these reviews are available to staff and discussed in team meetings, they do not filter into individualised risk assessments or care plans for children. This is a missed opportunity to focus attention on clear guidance provided by external professionals in attempting to reduce anxieties and further promote children's welfare.

Staff support children to explore their relationships with family and friends. This helps children to understand healthy and purposeful relationships. For one child, this has developed their confidence in when and how they spend time with their family. A professional said, 'The child has grown in self-esteem.'

Children enjoy many trips and activities with staff. The registered manager keeps a well-maintained log of events, which is encapsulated with photos and children's thoughts around their planned days out with staff. This demonstrates meaningful time spent with children that is not only suited to their likes and interests but is an invested effort in building positive relationships with other children and staff.

Staff have continued to support equine assisted therapy for one child. This helps to promote the child's emotional awareness and self-control outside of the home. The child speaks fondly of their role, responsibilities and support they provide to the horses they care for. This further promotes independence and transferable caring skills.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Staff write child-focused and comprehensive placement plans for the children. These are written directly to the children. This puts children at the centre of practice and helps them to understand their experiences in the home should they ask to read or access their records in the future.

Managers and staff manage children's internet safety and use of internet-enabled devices well. When concerns arise, staff work collaboratively with allocated social workers and parents in revising and reducing risks for children. Staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities, and children are kept well informed and understand their agreed plans and protocols around the safe use of the internet. One child has recently completed a qualification in internet safety.

When incidents occur in the home, managers are quick to review written reports and speak to the necessary staff, children and linked professionals. Where needed, children are referred to additional services for further help and support in meeting their needs. There are plentiful examples of good, reflective conversations with children. This is helping children to develop their resilience, compassion and ability to manage their own feelings.

Staff write well-informed risk assessments for children. These demonstrate a good understanding of the children's current risks and presenting needs and contain clear strategies and guidance for staff to follow. However, this good practice has missed emerging bullying risks for one child. This means that staff do not have specific written guidance to respond to or challenge bullying behaviours. This is further exacerbated by gaps in recruitment, staff training needs and a newly forming staff team. This is impacting on children's welfare and has the potential to undermine the development of positive, healthy relationships for children in the future.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers are dynamically recruiting to the needs of the home. The registered manager has attended job fairs and visited local job centres and other services. On

the day of the inspection, managers were interviewing for roles on both days. This demonstrates a commitment to recruit to the current five vacant posts.

Senior leaders actively listen to the registered manager and the needs of staff and children. The responsible individual carries out regular and reflective supervision sessions with the registered manager, which demonstrates an overarching understanding of the recent difficulties in the home. The responsible individual has attended and chaired regular multi-agency meetings, and the director of children's services in this local authority has visited staff to offer their support and guidance. This promotes good leadership arrangements and helps staff to feel valued and appreciated.

The registered manager says that she feels well supported. Senior leaders have recently seconded a second deputy manager to the home for 12 months. This manager previously worked in the home as a team supervisor so knows and understands the children and staff well. This has contributed towards improvements in management oversight and capacity. As a result, the previous requirement around managers' monitoring has been met.

Staff say that they feel well supported by managers. The registered manager has gone above and beyond in supporting staff to return sensitively to work following incidents in the home. Staff are extremely appreciative of her love and support during these difficult times and have a commendable commitment to her, each other and the children they care for.

The management team is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Development needs filter into management action plans and these are further disseminated and discussed in team meetings and staff supervision sessions. There are good examples of staff being kept well informed and updated. This is helping unify the team and strengthen continuity for children.

Managers and staff do not use the word 'agency' to describe some staff working in the home. This is to aid inclusivity and create a culture which aspires to promote stability for children. Furthermore, these staff receive good value-based supervision and necessary training in first aid and physical intervention methods and approaches. This demonstrates leaders' wishes and desires to create a cohesive team for children.

The registered manager and the deputy managers work well together. Managers lead by example and are actively involved in the day-to-day running of the home and caring responsibilities for children.

There are several staff who have not been able to complete mandatory training in line with expectations due to staffing difficulties. However, learning opportunities have been disseminated into team meetings and supervision sessions. Staff speak confidently in following safeguarding protocols and procedures for children. Senior leaders plan to work closely with the registered manager and the seconded deputy

manager to review all staff training in line with the new learning and development pathway. This is included in the registered manager's development and action plan.

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, 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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(e))	1 September 2023
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— manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(iv))	1 September 2023
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults.	1 September 2023

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—

that staff—

de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;

understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and

have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them.

(Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(xi)(xii)(xiii))

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: 2508451

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Hampshire Council, 3rd Floor, Elizabeth II Court
North, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UG

Responsible individual: John Stacey

Registered manager: Nichola Meads

Inspector

Kelly Monniot, Social Care Inspector

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