

2530021

Registered provider: Devon County Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides short break visits for disabled children. During the inspection, four children were visiting the home. The inspector spent time with all the children.

Inspection date: 5 February 2026

Date of last inspection: 17 June 2025

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

Children like visiting this home for short breaks; their smiles, eagerness to come in and see staff and their relaxed demeanour during their visits show this. A parent said that their child always happily packs their bag and jumps in the car ready to make the journey to the home. Several children have visited the home for many years, and their parents value the strong relationships that staff have formed with them and their children. Staff work well with children, their families and other professionals to help prepare children for when they become adults.

Staff understand children's individual needs. They recognise when children feel unhappy or worried and take prompt action in response. Strategies to help children to sooth or calm are usually effective, meaning the use of physical intervention is minimal. On a small number of occasions, staff have locked doors inside the home to protect children and others from unsafe situations. Leaders and managers are clear that this approach is only as a last resort and to make an area safe. Records of these incidents are maintained and the rationale for restrictive practices thoroughly explored.

A mealtime activity whereby staff are supporting a child to develop their communication and sharing skills and understand cause and effect requires urgent review. While meant with good intentions and following the child's preference to spend time outside, the approach has not been adapted to consider how this activity is carried out in the winter months.

Since the last inspection, some children who are new to the home have started to visit. Parents confirm that staff spend time with them before children visit, getting to know the children and their family, to understand children's needs and how they should be cared for. Managers use this valuable information to help them make decisions about which days are best for the children to visit so their stay is tailored to their individual needs. At the last inspection, leaders and managers were asked to strengthen how they make these decisions so that children and staff are kept safe. Leaders and managers listen to feedback from staff about how children are during their stay and use this information to carefully consider visit allocations. Currently, some children only visit the home when no other children are staying. In addition, leaders and managers are trialling an increase in staff numbers to support some children. Some staff said they are not clear how managers make these decisions about the levels of staff allocated to support children. It would be helpful if this information is explained.

Many staff have worked in the home for several years and say they enjoy caring for children and seeing their progress. However, morale among the staff team remains mixed, with some staff saying they feel there is a 'them and us' culture with senior

leaders. Leaders and managers recognise what works well in the home and accurately understand the challenges. The registered manager and responsible individual are working hard to engage staff and act on their feedback but recognise they are on a journey of improvement to being a fully cohesive team. More action is needed from staff at all levels to address the culture and ensure everyone works well together to improve morale and ensure it does not impact on children's experiences.

Leaders and managers monitoring of what happens in the home has improved. Incident events are promptly reviewed and there is good evidence of reflective discussions and learning identified to ensure practice develops. A policy is in place that appropriately directs staff away from using their personal mobile phones during work time. Despite this, staff regularly use their own phones for work purposes as the one provided by the organisation is not fit for purpose. Leaders and managers recognise that this resource issue needs addressing.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/06/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
19/09/2024	Full	Good
29/11/2023	Full	Good
26/07/2022	Full	Good

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— protect and promote each child's welfare. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(ii)) In particular, the registered person must urgently review the mealtime arrangement for a specific child.	1 April 2026
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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach, ethos and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate. Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b))	1 April 2026

In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff at all levels take action to ensure a cohesive team and to improve morale. In addition, the registered person should ensure that resources for staff to use mobile phones for work tasks are fit for purpose.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2530021

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Devon County Council

Registered provider address: Devon County Council, Chief Executive's Directorate, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QD

Responsible individual: Joanna Thomas

Registered manager: Rebecca Thomas

Inspector

Paula Lahey, Social Care Inspector

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