

2538287

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 run by the local authority. It provides care for up to two children who may have emotional and social difficulties. The home is also registered to care for children with learning disabilities.

Two children were present during the inspection. One child spoke with the inspector.

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2024. The manager is also registered for another children's home in the local authority.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 February 2025

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	inadequate
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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: 28 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/11/2023	Full	Outstanding
05/07/2022	Full	Outstanding
19/10/2021	Full	Good
12/11/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

The two children living in the home have lived there since the last inspection. Shortfalls with staffing and a lack of responsive action by managers and staff have impacted on the overall experiences of children.

Staff are committed to promoting children's physical and emotional health and well-being. Children receive support from the home's consultant psychologist or external agencies, such as the child and adolescent mental health services, when this is required. Children with additional health needs and needs relating to their neurodiversity experience individualised care and support to ensure that their needs are met and they make progress. Managers consult with all relevant professionals involved with each child to ensure that children's plans appropriately meet their needs. This support to children ensures that their health and well-being are prioritised and they achieve good outcomes with their health.

Both children are making good progress with their education. School and home communicate well to ensure that up-to-date information is shared about the children and they will receive the right support. The commitment by managers and staff to advocate for the right provision for one child has resulted in the child attending school daily and engaging with the curriculum.

Staff support children to develop age-appropriate independence skills. This involves supporting children with additional needs to acquire the appropriate skills to prepare them for their move to adulthood.

There is early planning for children with needs relating to their neurodiversity to transition to the next stage of their life. Managers advocate to ensure that children have the right placements, which are assessed to meet their unique needs. When there are delays with care planning, managers challenge this and escalate concerns when necessary. This approach to care planning ensures that children are adequately prepared to move to the right place without delays. This helps children to achieve stability and positive outcomes that contribute to their futures.

Managers and staff are committed to promoting children's relationships with family members. Staff and managers have advocated for changes in family time arrangements. As a result, children spend quality time with people who are important to them. This has been beneficial for care planning and promotes children's identity development and well-being.

When children are exploring gender and sexual identity, staff sensitively support and encourage them. Managers and staff ensure that children's records and discussions

reflect children's desired pronouns. This approach respects children's wishes and their diversity needs, which contributes to positive self-worth and well-being.

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

There is an inconsistent approach to how managers and staff address concerns raised by children. There are occasions when children raise concerns about staff practice and this information is not explored, and neither is the concern shared with the relevant professionals. This practice leaves children vulnerable to harm and does not give children the assurance that their concerns are taken seriously. There are times, however, when staff and managers do take prompt action to share information with the relevant people, such as social workers and local authority designated officers.

The relationship between the children fluctuates. On occasion, they engage in activities together and are considerate towards each other, and at other times they are not. There are occasions when staff have not acted quickly when children are upset with each other, and this has resulted in an incident occurring. Staff and managers are now supporting the children to live together safely through regular conversations and close supervision.

The quality of the recording of incidents varies. Most incident records clearly identify de-escalation strategies, while others do not. Discussions take place with children and staff following incidents. However, there are occasions when these discussions are not completed within the required timescales. The management oversight on some incidents lacks professional curiosity and does not highlight or address shortfalls with staff practice. This means poor practice is not always addressed, leading to the potential of children being at risk of harm.

Children say they feel safe living in the home and that staff help them to feel safe. The positive relationship between staff and children has contributed to children feeling more settled and displaying better emotional regulation. As a result, incidents where children require to be restrained have reduced. Staff and managers use restraint only as a last resort.

Individualised plans and protocols are in place for children. Managers and staff access monthly consultations with the home's psychologists, where children are discussed. This enables staff to better understand children's needs so they can receive individualised support and safety planning. This has contributed to staff and managers having a good understanding of children's risks and how they can safely support them.

The managers and staff ensure that all required health and safety checks are conducted in the home. As a result, the home environment is a safe place for children to live.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Ineffective monitoring systems have resulted in poor oversight of the care and support to children. The manager's review of incidents lacks professional curiosity, which means that children have been left vulnerable to harm. The manager does not have oversight of all incidents or staff practice within the home. Because of this, the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the home is inadequate.

Ofsted cannot be assured that appropriate action is being taken by staff and the manager to respond to risk effectively. This is because not all significant incidents are shared with Ofsted. This prevents the regulator from having effective oversight of the home.

High turnover of staff has impacted on the consistency and continuity of care children have received. Since the last inspection, nine staff have left the home, and 11 staff have joined. The inconsistency of care has resulted in temporary staff being required to care for the children. Not all the temporary staff are familiar with children's routines and plans. This leaves children with anxieties, and at times, incidents have occurred.

The independent visitor does not actively seek the views of professionals and other relevant people involved in children's care to ensure continuous improvement. This prevents the regulator from gaining independent views about the support children are receiving.

Professionals and parents provide positive feedback about the commitment of the staff and managers to children. Children are supported by a qualified and motivated staff team. Staff report that they feel supported by the manager. One staff member shared that the support from the registered manager has allowed them to remain in work despite some difficult personal challenges.

The registered manager is new to the role. The registered manager is supported by a deputy manager, who was appointed three months before the inspection. Both managers are child centred and are aspirational for the children and the staff team. Managers ensure that staff receive regular practice-related supervision, where their well-being, development and children's progress are discussed.

The responsible individual is aware of the shortfalls and has implemented support for the managers to address the shortfalls imminently.

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 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, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)) This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that when children report concerns about staff practice, appropriate and swift action is taken to address the concerns and ensure children are safe.	30 March 2025

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 and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)) This specifically relates to the managers ensuring the following: that they have monitoring systems in place that enable them to have effective oversight of all areas of care provided to children; that when incident reviews highlight shortfalls with practice, action plans are implemented to address these promptly; that staffing arrangements provide continuity of care to children and do not impact on children's routine and the quality of care they receive.	30 March 2025
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—	30 March 2025

an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.

(Regulation 40 (4)(b)(e))

This specifically relates to managers ensuring that the regulator is notified of all serious incidents.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the independent visitor actively seeks the views of professionals and other relevant people involved in children's care to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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: 2538287

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 Docksey

Registered manager: Paul Barker

Inspector

Nateisha Cardoza-Evans, Social Care Inspector

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