

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 children's home is run by the local authority and offers care for two children who have experienced early childhood instability that has led to trauma and/or associated complex behaviours.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2020 and holds a level 5 qualification in leadership and management.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Ofsted last visited this setting on 2 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit inspection. This report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 October 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 November 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/11/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of this inspection, there was one child living at the home. The child is making good progress from their starting point. Two children who previously lived at the home have moved out. One child's move was successful and in line with their care plan. However, the other child's move was not managed well. This child was not given adequate support to take the next steps to independent living; they were not fully prepared and moved out earlier than expected.

Staff develop positive and enduring relationships with children. Staff have a good understanding of childhood trauma and children's complex behaviours, and they respond to their needs. As a result of staff showing in-depth knowledge and resilience, most children develop trusting relationships, stability and positive self-esteem.

Most children have had good school engagement throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff encourage children to succeed in their education. Achievements, no matter how small, are acknowledged by staff. Good liaison with teachers and social workers helps to ensure that children's learning and development needs are met. However, the registered manager does not always escalate concerns to the relevant professionals promptly when children's education is compromised. As a result, one child did not have an education plan to support their learning. The registered manager took action to address this shortfall when this was identified.

Staff have good relationships with children's families. They have a good understanding of family dynamics and why these relationships are important to children. This supports children to stay in touch with important individuals in their life. Talking about family time, a parent said, 'It's a positive experience; I come away with a smile on my face.' As a result, children's emotional well-being is improved, and they retain a sense of identity with their families.

Children are supported and encouraged to be active. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, staff have supported children to participate in a range of leisure and recreational activities. For example, children have enjoyed visiting the countryside and seaside. This has promoted children's physical and emotional well-being.

Staff ensure that children are registered with the relevant health services, and they support children to maintain a healthy lifestyle to improve their well-being. However, staff do not always ensure that each child's day-to-day health needs are met. For example, one child's nutrition and dietary needs were not met. The registered manager acknowledged this and put plans in place to address this shortfall.

Children mainly live in a warm and nurturing environment. The home has been fitted with new carpets and is decorated to meet the needs of the children. However, not all aspects of the home are welcoming, which gives it an institutional feel. For example, one child's bedroom window was covered up with a filter, so that the child could not see out. In addition, another bedroom is being used for storage. This means that children are unable to fully enjoy their environment.

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

Incidents of restraint are rare in the home and are always a last resort. The registered manager and staff implement strategies well to de-escalate children's behaviours. However, staff do not always have a good understanding of the behavioural management policies. For example, when restraint does occur, records do not contain all the relevant information about the restraint and the effectiveness of the measure. These missed opportunities do not ensure that restraint practice is proportionate and safe.

Staff respond quickly when children go missing from the home and follow the missing-from-care protocol. They work in partnership with the local authority and the police, to ensure that children are offered a return home interview as soon as possible. However, following incidents of missing from care, staff do not always engage with children to help them understand how to keep themselves safe.

Staff give time and attention to children for important conversations with them about a range of topics, including physical education, substance misuse and internet safety. However, in one situation, a child was not given the opportunity to talk about their poor relationship with another child. Consequently, this is a missed opportunity by staff to help the child to understand the impact of their relationships on their mental health.

Overall, staff ensure that risk assessments are detailed and include guidance about how to manage children's risks. However, the registered manager does not always ensure that risk assessments accurately reflect the correct information. For example, one child's risk assessment failed to give guidance and rationale as to why the child's bedroom window needed to be covered up.

Staff work with other professionals effectively to respond quickly to safeguarding concerns. They have good relationships with the police, social workers, education professionals and therapists. As a result, children have clear care plans and strategies that reduce any potential risk to them.

The registered manager safeguards children effectively. Safeguarding concerns are well managed. Prompt monitoring of incidents and quick referrals to safeguarding agencies promote the welfare of children. Most staff fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Children live in a home that is managed by a committed and qualified registered manager. He has an in-depth knowledge about the home, its strengths and limitations. The registered manager uses this insight effectively to support the children and staff to help them achieve their full potential.

The registered manager is very responsive to feedback and advice from the regulatory body. He has taken action to meet the requirement raised at the last inspection.

The registered manager ensures that staff are supported in their day-to-day duties and responsibilities. Staff have good opportunities to develop their learning and reflect on their practice through regular and reflective supervisions. Staff strive to raise the standard of the quality of care they provide to children. In addition, throughout the pandemic, the registered manager has worked hard to ensure that the core staff team receive varied and specific training. This training has helped to improve staff's understanding of suicide awareness and self-harming behaviours.

Overall, the registered manager uses monitoring and review systems well to help him to have a good level of oversight of the home. However, children's case records, such as children's one-to-one discussions and important conversations, are not always kept up to date.

Despite the good progress, not all staff who work in the home have the necessary qualifications to meet children's needs. One out of six staff members has not completed their required level 3 qualification within the specified timescale. Consequently, not all the staff are suitably qualified to care for children.

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 positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— an understanding about acceptable behaviour. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful. (Regulation 11 (1)(b) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that they support children to develop positive relationships.	26 November 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—	26 November 2021

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; 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)(a)(i)(ii)(d)) This particularly refers to staff ensuring that risk assessments are up to date. It also relates to ensuring all aspects of the home are welcoming.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)) This particularly refers to the registered manager ensuring that children are supported when moving from the home.	26 November 2021
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children’s home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that—	26 November 2021

the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform. For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that all staff have completed the relevant qualification in residential childcare.	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. 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— a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(b) (3)(a)(iv)(v))	26 November 2021

This particularly refers to the registered manager ensuring that all relevant information is contained in behaviour management records.	
--	--

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping in relation to children's statutory plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that each child's day-to-day health and well-being needs are met. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 33, paragraph 7.3)
- The registered person should ensure that they escalate concerns with the local authority in relation to children's care plans. ('Guide to children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.3)

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: City of Stoke-on-Trent, Swann House, Boothem Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 4SY

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Christopher Whalley

Inspectors

Patrick McIntosh, Social Care Inspector
Fiona Roche, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021