

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 have experienced early childhood instability that has led to trauma and/or associated complex behaviours.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2020.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection, and care.

Date of last inspection: 5 July 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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: outstanding

Two children are living in the home. Both children moved into the home during this inspection period. No children have moved out of the home since the last inspection. The children spoke positively about living in the home and the carers who look after them. Children also recognised and were proud of the progress they have made since living in the home. One child said, 'Staff help me to be better.'

The managers and staff continue to ensure that children have extremely positive experiences moving into the home, even when they move at a time of crisis.

One of the children has been diagnosed with a complex genetic condition and neurodiverse needs. This child experienced an exceptionally well-planned and individualised transition into the home over a four-week period. The managers and staff accessed specialist support and training and carried out research on how to meet the child's specific needs. The manager recruited carers who supported the child in previous setting to provide continuity of care for the child. This child-centred approach contributed significantly to the child having a successful move into the home, and subsequently making exceptional progress.

Children's physical and emotional health and well-being are prioritised by staff and managers. Managers' and staff's knowledge of children's needs, alongside their high aspirations, supports children to make outstanding progress with their overall health and well-being. For example, one child came to the home using a wheelchair and with their personal care needs met by staff and parents. The child now goes out in the community without the wheelchair and carries out all self-care tasks independently.

Children make exceptional educational progress from their starting points. One child had significant struggles with school attendance. The child was regularly excluded, and attendance and attainment were below nationally expected standards. The managers were relentless in their efforts to advocate and challenge education professionals to find a suitable alternative provision for the child. As a result, the child was placed in a suitable provision. The child now attends school daily, engages positively with the curriculum and is making good progress. The child said, 'I like school 10/10.' The other child's educational attainment is excellent, considering their needs, and they are also a prefect in school.

The managers are committed to supporting children with additional needs to overcome social and psychological barriers, to ensure they access extra-curricular activities in the community. For example, one child with complex needs and disabilities is enrolled on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The child also enjoys boxing, cadets and other activities of their choice. This approach supports children's self-confidence and self-worth.

Managers and staff understand the importance of promoting children's relationships with people who are important to them. The managers and staff have been instrumental in supporting one child to stay overnight with family. Staff have supported transition and provided training and safety protocols to parents to ensure children receive the right support. The manager also agreed arrangements for one child to spend quality time with their parent and sibling in the home during the Christmas period when the other child is with family. This also demonstrates how children's views are listened to and acted on. This practice supports children to maintain their identity safely, alongside developing a sense of belonging which leads to positive experiences and progress.

The home environment is lovely and warm. Children's bedrooms are personalised and decorated to their choice. The manager and staff use a range of monitoring systems to ensure that the home environment is safe and secure for children. There were some minor repairs requiring attention. These were completed during the inspection, as the manager had previously arranged this.

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

The manager and staff understand children's risks. There are effective systems in place to keep children safe. One child said, 'I feel very safe living here.'

The manager creates individualised plans and protocols for children's individual needs, based on bespoke training, research and consultation with parents and professionals. The manager ensures these plans are shared with parents and all professionals involved with the child. The manager also delivers training to other professionals, such as school staff, to ensure they are confident in implementing the guidelines set out in children's behaviour support plans.

This multi-agency approach to care planning means that children receive consistent individualised care, which contributes to them making significant and sustained progress. As a result, children's needs are better understood, their needs are met effectively and they are safe. On the rare occasions when the child is in crisis in school, incidents are well managed and they are kept safe.

Staff and managers are persistent in their efforts to understand children's unique needs and ensure their safety. One child moved into the home with a deprivation of liberty order (DLO) to ensure their safety and well-being is promoted. The individualised and research-informed practice from staff and managers enabled staff to understand and provide responsive care to the child. As a result, the child did not go missing or require the restrictions to ensure their safety. The support and strong safeguarding from staff and managers meant that the child no longer required a DLO, as their needs are understood and they are kept safe. This highly effective practice ensures children, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being.

External professionals are extremely positive about the proactive and creative responses from managers and staff to safeguard and support children. One headteacher commented on the work carried out by the manager to create a behaviour support plan for school, along with visiting school during crisis situations to demonstrate how to implement the guidelines set out in the plan.

Staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. The managers and staff ensure that children are actively involved in creating behaviour management plans. Children are involved in finding creative strategies that are effective. Children's plans are visually appealing and created with graphics and images that mirror children's interests. Children know their plans well. One child with additional needs explained what is expected of them and staff at times of crisis. This child-centred and creative safeguarding practice keeps children safe and enables children to feel empowered and accountable for their actions.

The staff follow a restorative approach to respond to negative behaviours. They use a variety of behaviour management approaches that empower children to understand and develop more positive responses and behaviours when they are in crisis. This approach, alongside reflective discussions and key-work sessions, helps children to manage their behaviours and feelings safely and positively. This has contributed to a significant reduction in the use of consequences to manage children's behaviours in the home.

Staff have used physical intervention as a last resort to ensure children and those around them are safe in times of crisis. When restraints are used, they are proportionate and reviewed by leaders. Debrief take place with the staff involved and with children. When children decline to reflect on incidents, staff use a creative and child-centred approach to gain children's views. This practice has enabled children to understand and reflect on their behaviours. This has also provided an opportunity for children to be supported to use more positive strategies, which has seen a reduction in instances of staff holding children to keep them safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home has a manager and a deputy manager. The managers are experienced and child-centred practitioners who have extremely high aspirations for children and the staff team. The managers create a culture of aspiration and positivity. They have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for. The manager constantly seeks ways to improve the quality of care given to children. For example, they have passed information to staff about a recent enquiry, to explore in the next team meeting. This leadership model ensures that children are supported by staff who are invested in their care.

The managers and staff have strong working relationships with partner agencies and schools, which ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children. Parents and professionals are exceptionally positive about the care staff provide to children, the communication and the leadership of the home.

Staff are extremely positive about the support they receive from the managers. One member of staff said, 'I couldn't ask for a better person to do supervision, understanding and empathy through personal circumstances. Challenge is appropriate to make things better for children.'

The managers lead by example and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children. The home's therapeutic approach, research and theoretical framework underpin staff practice and the leadership of the home. This approach challenges staff and leaders to better understand and respond to children's changing needs. This also ensures that the staff who support children provide the highest quality of individualised care. As a result, children are thriving because of the exceptionally consistent care they receive.

Children are supported by a qualified, motivated and skilled staff team. Additionally, staff access a range of training and research that informs their practice and meets children's individual and diverse needs. Staff work collaboratively to implement this training in their practice. The dedication of the staff team and the quality of care provided to children are seen in the positive progress children are making and in their outcomes.

Staff receive regular child-centered supervision sessions which provide them with the opportunity to reflect on practice and their development. The managers and staff also have monthly consultation sessions with clinical psychologists, where they receive further support to better understand and support children.

The managers use a range of monitoring and reviewing systems which are effective in providing constant oversight of the home. This ensures that problems are quickly identified and support is put in place for children and staff as soon as it is needed.

No requirements were made following this inspection.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The registered provider should ensure that records of restraint are recorded clearly to enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly when any issues or trends of concern emerge. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

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

Inspector

Nateisha Cardoza-Evans, Social Care Inspector

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