

2544217

Registered provider: Absolute Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private company and provides care for up to five children who may need support with their social and emotional needs.

The registered manager has been in post since June 2021.

At the time of this inspection, four children were living at the home. All four children were spoken to as part of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 September 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 9 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/10/2024	Full	Outstanding
07/09/2023	Full	Good
03/05/2022	Full	Good
06/10/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are happy and comfortable in their home. They benefit from a nurturing and welcoming environment where they feel safe and cared for. Staff build positive and trusting relationships with children, which enables them to settle and develop a strong sense of belonging. As a result, children's emotional well-being is promoted, and they are able to enjoy their day-to-day experiences.

The voice of the child is central to the ethos of the home. Staff place great importance on listening to children and ensuring that their views are integral to decision-making. There is regular consultation with children, and staff take clear and robust action in response to their wishes and feelings. This empowers children and demonstrates to them that their opinions matter.

Therapeutic practice is a clear strength from the manager and staff. It is embedded in daily care. Staff consistently use therapeutic approaches, including PACE, which are evident throughout children's records and incident reports. This approach supports children to regulate their emotions and respond positively to challenges. Over time, incidents have reduced because staff work patiently and consistently to help children remain calm and settled.

Children make significant progress from their starting points. This is evident in the reduction of incidents, increased engagement in education, and the development of positive relationships. The progress achieved demonstrates the impact of the consistent care and support provided by staff.

Staff and the manager are ambitious for children and hold high aspirations for their futures. Children are encouraged to set both short-term and long-term goals, which helps them to build confidence and a sense of achievement. This approach supports children to develop self-worth and pride in their progress. For example, one child has been supported to pursue personal interests, such as eyelash training, and is now preparing to attend college. These achievements reflect the home's commitment to promoting children's independence and future opportunities.

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

Children who go missing from care are safeguarded through clear and effective protocols, which all staff understand and follow. Staff work proactively to de-escalate situations and reduce the risk of children going missing. When incidents do occur, staff and managers reflect together and with the child to identify solutions and prevent recurrence. This reflective practice, alongside the development of trusting relationships, has led to a significant reduction in missing incidents for all children.

Physically holding children is rarely used and only ever as a last resort to ensure children's safety. When interventions do occur, they are proportionate, appropriate and clearly recorded. Over time, there has been a notable reduction in the use of physical intervention. Particularly for one child who has made significant progress since moving into the home. This demonstrates the effectiveness of staff in using de-escalation strategies and building positive, trusting relationships with children.

Individual behaviour support plans are thorough, detailed and regularly updated to reflect children's current and emerging needs. The plans are highly personalised and demonstrate a thoughtful approach to supporting each child. For example, one child's plan includes a picture of her pet on the front, which helps the child to feel reassured and engaged. The plans also clearly capture the child's voice following debriefs after incidents, ensuring that their views shape the strategies in place.

In one child's bedroom, there was a strong smell of urine from cat litter, raising concerns about the potential impact on the child's health and well-being. The child's risk assessment did not clearly outline how these issues were being managed or the steps being taken to support the child. However, during the inspection, immediate action was taken to address the concern. Staff worked alongside the child to review and change the arrangements for the cat litter, resulting in improvements. This also highlighted the strength of the trusting relationships that staff have developed with the child, which enabled them to engage positively in making changes.

The manager's response to reporting an allegation to the designated safeguarding officer was delayed. The immediate process was not followed in line with safeguarding procedures, resulting in a delay in how the matter was addressed. On this occasion, the child's safety was not compromised, as appropriate action was eventually taken. The registered manager has recognised the shortfall and has undertaken reflection and a lessons-learned review.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager and leadership team demonstrate a clear understanding of the needs of both children and staff. They are highly committed to providing a high standard of care and actively support staff in their professional development. Staff report feeling well supported by managers, who recognise the emotional demands of their roles and ensure that staff receive appropriate therapeutic support to maintain their well-being.

The leadership team is proactive in considering ways to improve practice and the overall experience for children. Their reflective approach and ongoing commitment to development help to ensure that children receive consistent, high-quality care in a nurturing environment.

The manager and staff actively use research and reflective practice to enhance the support provided to children. They carefully explore each child's journey at the home, considering how experiences can inform improvements in care. This approach ensures

that lessons are learned and applied, helping to tailor support to each child's individual needs and promote positive outcomes.

All staff are appropriately trained to meet the needs of the children in their care. The manager actively considers additional training and resources to further develop staff knowledge and ensure the provision of a high standard of care. When new, emerging behaviours or needs are identified, the manager responds promptly. Providing the necessary guidance, resources or training to the staff team. This proactive approach ensures that staff are equipped to respond effectively to children's individual needs and promotes consistent, safe and supportive care.

Supervisions and team meetings are conducted regularly and to a high standard, providing staff with opportunities for reflection and professional development. These sessions allow staff to review previous incidents and concerns with children, ensuring that learning is embedded into practice. The manager and team also draw on research-based practice to explore resources and strategies, continually enhancing the support staff provide to children and promoting positive outcomes.

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

Recommendations

- Children must be listened to and enabled to report any allegations at the earliest opportunity. Staff should report any allegation of abuse immediately to a senior manager within the home. Any allegation of harm or abuse must be addressed in line with the home's child protection policy. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.17)
- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: 2544217

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Absolute Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: 98 Grove Street, Leek ST13 8DU

Responsible individual: Derrell Crump

Registered manager: Taslima Shaikh

Inspector

Eleanor Quanbrough, Social Care Inspector

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