

2568244

Registered provider: Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority. It provides short- and long-term care for up to five children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. This includes children with physical disabilities.

There has been no registered manager in post since 12 August 2025.

At the time of the inspection, five children were living in the home. Four children were spoken with.

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 August 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 28 August 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/08/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
09/08/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
28/06/2022	Full	Good
15/02/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children say that they have good relationships with staff and are able to talk to them if they have any worries. Feedback from the children was positive, with one child saying, 'Staff really listen and have supported me with my emotions. I feel safe living in the home.'

Children's needs are carefully considered alongside the needs of others prior to them moving into the home. One child said that they were offered the opportunity to get to know staff and visit the home before moving in. This approach helps children to settle quickly after they move in. Staff have also supported children when they have moved out of the home in a planned way. They have maintained contact with the children following the move when it was appropriate to do so. This provides a positive ending for children.

Staff support children to attend school. Staff are proactive in working with professionals to explore alternative education for children and support them to return to education. One child's attendance has improved since moving to the home, and another child, who has previously struggled with attending education, has started to attend an alternative education provision. One professional said that the relationships children have with staff, along with good daily routines and structure, have had a positive impact on them attending school.

Staff promote children's independence. Children said that they are supported to manage their own money, buy food, cook and manage day-to-day tasks. All of this helps them to feel ready for moving into their own home when they reach young adulthood.

Activities are not always individualised to children's likes and interests. Some children said that activities are not individual, which is echoed by staff. This hinders children's opportunities to gain new experiences and develop new skills.

The home looks tired in some areas and is in need of attention. Repairs to the garden have not been completed in a timely manner, which does not provide a homely feel for the children. Furthermore, children do not always get the opportunity to decorate their bedroom to their individual likes.

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

Staff use physical intervention, when this is required, to keep children and others protected from harm. When children are held, this is followed up with a discussion to help them reflect on their behaviours. This has helped children to learn other ways to manage their emotions and has led to a reduction in physical interventions being used.

Staff know how to respond when children go missing from the home. Staff work well with multi-agency professionals around risks in the community and are proactive when children go missing. Staff follow up concerns through having conversations with children and referring to outside agencies to help educate children. This has led to an overall reduction in children going missing from the home.

Children are supported to understand the risks around misusing substances. Staff complete direct work with children and support is also offered from outside agencies. This has led to a reduction in children misusing substances, meaning that they are healthier and are making better choices about their personal safety.

When children are at risk of exploitation, staff are proactive in working with agencies and responding to the risks. However, staff do not consistently follow this up through direct work sessions to help educate children around the risks of exploitation. This prevents children from developing a greater understanding of risks and how to keep themselves safer.

Risk assessments are not always kept up to date to reflect changes in risk for children. This prevents staff from having clear guidance on what the risks are and what steps they should take to safeguard children.

Health and safety measures in the home are mostly effective. However, managers do not ensure that all actions from the fire risk assessment are completed in a timely way. To date, escalation from management has been ineffective in progressing works.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There has been change in the management of the home since the last inspection. An acting manager is in post; however, they are not yet registered with Ofsted. In addition, there was a significant delay in the previous manager's application being submitted and therefore being registered to manage the home. The change in the management arrangement has impacted on some aspects of how the home is operating on a day-to-day basis.

Not all serious incidents are notified to Ofsted by leaders and managers. When child protection enquiries are initiated and concluded, this is not always notified to Ofsted. When there are exploitation concerns about children, this is not always notified to Ofsted. This prevents the regulator from having oversight and understanding of how situations are managed.

There are gaps in staff training. Not all staff have completed the mandatory training that is set out by the organisation. Staff have responsibility for inputting their own training, which is not effective. This impacts on the manager's understanding of what the training needs of the staff are.

Staffing levels in the home do not consistently provide the children with the flexibility that they may need. Furthermore, feedback gathered from staff during the inspection identified that some of the children's activities need to be pre-planned due to staffing levels, meaning that on occasions staff have limited ability to respond to unexpected events.

The manager uses a monthly audit process to review the quality of care for children. Children's views are sought as a part of this process. Audit findings are then fed through to team meetings and communicated with staff. This helps create a learning culture within the home.

Leaders and managers build positive working relationships with multi-agency teams. Staff communicate effectively with wider professionals to ensure that children's needs and risks are understood. One professional said, 'Staff advocate well for [name of child] and there is a tight care team.' This positive communication helps children receive the right support.

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 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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(e))	2 October 2025
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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii))	2 October 2025
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—	2 October 2025

a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or (concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry). (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(d)(i)(ii))	
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children’s home. (Regulation 25 (1)(a))	30 October 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children’s home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of their children; they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. In particular, maintenance to the home must be actioned in a timely manner. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that staff seek to identify and provide appropriate opportunities for children to develop themselves in accordance with their wishes and feelings and as part of the home’s plan for their care. Each child’s talents and interests should be understood and nurtured, with children selecting activities based on their personal preferences and abilities, so far as is reasonable. Staff should also support children to try activities that are ‘new’ for them, where appropriate. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 31, paragraph 6.4)
- The registered person should plan staffing levels to ensure that they meet the needs of children and can respond flexibly to unexpected events or opportunities. Staffing structures should promote continuity of care from the child’s perspective. If children complain, or give a view on how the staffing structure could be improved to promote the best care for them, appropriate action should be taken. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 51, paragraph 10.1)

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: 2568244

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Registered provider address: Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton on Tees
TS18 1TW

Responsible individual: Debra Farrow

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Natalie Clark, Social Care Inspector

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