

2593032

Registered provider: Smooth Stone Care & Education Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to 3 children who may have learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in 2020.

Since the last inspection, one child has moved out of the home.

The provider is currently caring for one young person who has recently turned 18 years old.

There was one young person living in the home at the time of the inspection. The inspector spoke to the young person.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 January 2026

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

Date of last inspection: 3 March 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/03/2025	Full	Good
22/02/2024	Full	Good
29/03/2023	Full	Outstanding
14/04/2021	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home is designed to meet the needs of the children. Careful consideration has been given to ensure that the children's sensory needs are supported through art, play and therapeutic activities. Staff are mindful of the children's visual needs when moving furniture in the home.

Children's care and support plans are clear and consistent. When children move on from the home, staff prepare them through independence planning and discussions about what will happen. When the local authority changed the care plan for one child at very short notice, the registered manager responded proactively by providing detailed transition and moving on plans, which included good insight into the child's risk and behaviour management plan.

Children make good progress in all areas. Staff provide experiences for children through learning at home, social activities and participating in their interests. They keep memories of the time children spend in the home, and they respect children's wishes about how their memories are kept.

Staff work in close partnership with schools. One headteacher supported the young person with a reflective summary about the young person's best interests to remain in the home beyond the age of 18 years. The headteacher describes the young person as having come on in 'leaps and bounds' academically and this is because staff wholeheartedly support her.

Staff consistently use trauma-informed approaches and guidance from health professionals. They work well with mental health professionals to ensure that children receive individualised and tailored support. Staff work with professionals to ensure that ongoing therapeutic support is not disrupted when children move on. Parents speak highly about grownups' support for their children. They praise their commitment and effectiveness in supporting their children to develop good self-care skills.

Children enjoy family time. The registered manager played a key role in increasing family time for one child. Working together with a contact worker, she implemented a six-month family time plan, which enables the child to have family time more frequently for longer periods.

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

The home is wholly or mainly a children's home. In the best interests of vulnerable disabled children, the young person remains living in the home to complete education. The registered manager completes a thorough risk assessment alongside a moving on plan, care plan, and transition plan. This means that she takes action to minimise any

risks or negative effects to any children who come to live in the home. The young person said, 'I feel safe and the grownups keep me safe.'

Staff are skilled in the administration of medications. When medications need to be administered in school, a well-coordinated plan of transporting and recording medications is agreed. Staff understand the importance of maintaining accurate records. However, the controlled drugs book contains a notable number of admin errors and cancellations, which are unsupported by two signatures, in line with the provider's policy. This creates potential risks of administration errors.

Staff prioritise rewards and restorative approaches to encourage positive behaviour. When necessary, children make financial reparations for any damage they cause. The registered manager provides oversight of negative consequences to ensure that they are proportionate and fair. This results in a reduction of behavioural incidents and unwanted behaviours.

Children sometimes need to be held for their safety and the safety of others. Staff have the necessary skills to manage behaviours. Action plans provide clarity of appropriate strategies for staff to use. Children and staff receive debriefs after serious incidents. This helps them to understand what could have been done differently.

Focused discussions are held with children, which help them to reflect and learn safer ways of coping. However, one incident record has 3 different versions of events, which are not acknowledged in the management oversight. This affects the effectiveness of management scrutiny of incidents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is highly experienced and suitably qualified, with a proven track record of strong, effective leadership. She leads with a vision for children to experience good parenting, have fun, build positive memories, and develop the skills and confidence they need when they move on. She is well supported by a deputy manager and a skilled and experienced staff team. As a team, they create a nurturing and stable environment for children to feel safe and valued.

Staff speak highly about the caring and nurturing culture of the team. They describe a 'home away from home' approach where there are always smiling faces and welcoming arms. Staff value the registered manager's open-door policy. This enables them to have ad-hoc discussions about the children and the home. As a result, staff keep the children at the centre of everything they do.

Staff receive a comprehensive package of induction when they come to work in the home. The registered manager uses a training matrix that helps her to identify any shortfalls. Senior members of staff benefit from supervisory training. The manager and deputy will often audit supervisions completed by seniors. This helps to manage skills, performance, and the appropriateness of agreed actions. The manager's approach to supervision helps staff. She will often use external venues to have informal chats with

them about how they cope emotionally. This helps to build strong relationships and promotes better staff wellbeing.

Staff actively use team meetings to reflect about continuous improvements. Children are at the heart of discussions and staff reflect on the progress they make and any emerging or ongoing support needs. Staff creatively use the home's mascot, a teddy bear called Katch, to encourage communication and relationship building. Children enjoy this approach and will even remember to take him with them during fire drills. Staff carefully consider feedback from the children through their meetings, which they call 'catch up with Katch meetings'.

The registered manager uses monitoring systems to maintain oversight of the home. This includes review of the home's file audit and the home's development plan. She has also developed a bespoke tool to monitor timeliness of a review of documents, appointments, and housekeeping maintenance. The registered manager's monitoring is supported by the Reg 44 visitor. However, the registered manager has not submitted the six-monthly review of quality of care within required timescales. As a result, this requirement will be restated from the previous inspection.

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

Statutory requirements

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration, and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular, the registered person must ensure that— a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff adhere to the home's medication policy when recording controlled medications.	30 April 2026
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality-of-care review") at least once every 6 months. The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality-of-care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality-of-care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1) (4)(a))	30 April 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that discrepancies in records have robust management oversight. In particular, when explanations regarding incidents differ, they are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('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: 2593032

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Smooth Stone Care & Education Limited

Registered provider address: Datum House, Electra Way, Crewe CW1 6ZF

Responsible individual: Raymond Scales

Registered manager: Alison Harris

Inspector

Tenji Wesa, Social Care Inspector

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