

2624723

Registered provider: Dorset Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service is run by a local authority. It provides short breaks for up to three disabled children.

At the time of the inspection, 11 children were using the service for overnight stays.

The manager is registered with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 June 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: 24 September 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/09/2024	Full	Good
18/05/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children's needs are thoroughly considered before their first visit to the service. Staff understand how difficult it can be for children to start spending time away from their family and the importance of them knowing who will be meeting their care needs. During the planning and introduction stages, staff spend time with children and those who know them well to help children successfully settle in. They form excellent relationships and obtain valuable information. Children only share their time at the service with other children when it is assessed to be safe and appropriate. While being with other children, they are making substantial progress in learning to interact with others, take turns and share.

Staff are unreservedly committed to the children they care for. They consider children's individual needs and abilities to create achievable targets. The excellent care that children receive is thoroughly planned and personalised. As a result, all children who attend the service have made substantial progress and flourished. Staff understand that success, no matter how small, is significant for the children who attend the service and should be celebrated. Examples of progress include reductions in negative behaviours, eating different foods, being able to make choices, being more independent, carrying out personal hygiene tasks, the expression of views, wishes and feelings and working towards accessing the community. For some children, progress is transferred to home and school environments.

Preparation for children's arrival for their stays at the service is meticulous. The home and their bedroom are filled with personal items, such as photos and toys, to replicate a homely and personalised environment. Information received about children from their parents between children's stays is logged and accessed by staff before the child arrives. Attractive and informative memory books are used to document children's experiences.

Staff go above and beyond in supporting children with their education. They have strong relationships with children's teachers and use these effectively to gather information on their health, care, learning styles and journeys. They help children to do their homework, thus progressing their learning. When children experience challenges, staff have worked creatively with the children's school. For example, staff provide well-planned outreach support to a child in their education setting. Their dedication to the progress and well-being of the child has allowed them to attend school.

The health needs of children are known and monitored. Staff have addressed and planned for the possibility of a child experiencing seizures. Staff share their plans with other professionals to ensure that they are appropriate and align with others' plans. Staff implement the medication policy and ensure that children only receive prescribed medication. Effective planning has ensured that a child who can only take concealed medication receives this before their stay.

Children's complex communication needs are understood. The use of communication passports is now complemented by imaginative gestural passports which the children have participated in developing. The use of the Picture Exchange Communication System, sign language, Makaton and personalised stories with symbols and words, called 'social stories', is part of day-to-day practice. Staff know children well enough to read their body language and understand the sounds that they make. Children are actively supported and encouraged to express their thoughts, wishes, and feelings about the service and the care that they receive.

Staff regularly seek children's views about their needs, experiences with staff, other children and the activities available to them. They share accessible versions of children's care plans with them, allowing them to understand and inform their targets. One child said that they would like to do more baking. This has been added to their planning and implemented during their stays. The extensive levels of communication and consultation with children have contributed to them feeling involved in their care and settled at the service.

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

Staff have good knowledge and understanding of the risks that children may face. Clear guidance outlines the measures staff should take to support children and reduce risks, such as not leaving the building without a safe adult. Staff regularly review risk levels and maintain clear chronologies of concern or progress. This ensures that children's progress is acknowledged, and that practice is reviewed for effectiveness. One child was involved in creating a plan to make sure that they are safe when accessing the internet. This has led to the child accepting the boundaries in place.

Observations of a child at the service showed them to be confident and relaxed in their surroundings. Their interactions and communication with staff showed positive relationships. They said that they felt safe and enjoyed their stays. Three parents and four professionals said that children are kept safe when they use the service.

Incidents involving challenging or negative behaviour are rare. When they occur, staff use known and effective techniques to support children, so they quickly feel safe and calm. Social stories are widely used to educate children about boundaries and behaviours. Staff work alongside parents and healthcare and education professionals to mirror care planning, boundaries and care. This provides children with much-needed consistency between the different environments.

Protocols designed to inform staff actions if a child were to go missing highlight the extreme vulnerability of the child. However, some essential details are not included. Leaders acknowledged that the planning needs to be more robust. They promptly addressed concerns that a child may choose to leave the property without an adult and devised a plan to educate the child on the risks.

Unexplained marks seen on children are investigated. Staff complete thorough body maps and contact parents or teachers to gather further information. Immediate and

effective action was taken in response to a member of staff failing to report a mark on a child. The investigation carried out was thorough, and clear learning points were identified. All staff have received additional learning with the aim of preventing any future occurrences.

Planning to keep children safe in the event of a fire is robust. One child's extreme sensitivity to noise has thoughtfully been considered, and steps have been taken to minimise their distress should a fire drill occur.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

An incredibly knowledgeable and highly valued leadership and management team leads the service. The registered manager was not present during the inspection as she was on leave. Two senior practitioners confidently and expertly led the inspection in her absence. They were extremely reflective, knowledgeable and effective in discussing the service, the children who come to stay, and the parents and professionals they work with. Leaders and managers are unquestionably committed to the service and providing exceptional care to children.

Managers have excellent oversight of children's journeys. These are clearly documented in informative and up-to-date documents that show all aspects of children's time at the service. The linking of documents allows for the monitoring, evaluation and review of children's progress and experiences. Managers highlight areas for further work or discussion. These are discussed collaboratively with the team who implement actions, further improving children's time at the service.

Documents that include information about children contain essential information. They are easily accessible, regularly updated, and shared with the staff team. Where possible, children's views are included. However, Children's communication passports are written as if they have been written by the children themselves. Managers understand the potential negative impact of this and plan to ensure that the documents are amended.

Recordings of children's time at the service include intricate and meaningful details. The inclusion of photos and descriptions of children's experiences and actions provides a highly personalised overview. Staff recognise the importance of keeping detailed logs of children's experiences for all who access them, particularly the children. These recordings exceed the expectations of family members and professionals who read them.

Other professionals who work with the children who use the service provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about the excellent levels of care that children receive. Professionals value the unique experiences that children have, the quality and regularity of communication, staff's motivation to go above and beyond for every child, and the high and attuned level of support provided to children and their families.

Feedback provided by parents of children who use the service is remarkably positive. Parents said that the care and attention that their children receive exceed their expectations. Staff work with parents to ensure that they provide the right level of

information and communication while their child is using the service. This allows parents to feel relaxed and reassured that their child is settled. One parent likened taking their child to the setting to dropping them off with their sister. Children return home happy and wanting to communicate the experiences that they have had with their family. Parents said that the service is essential for their child and has improved family life.

There is an ethos of learning and development in the home. The process of learning lessons and expanding knowledge through discussion, review, research, reflection and analysis is extensive. The recent introduction of reviewing the quality standards in relation to practice further demonstrates the drive to improve practice, better meet the needs of children and improve outcomes.

Staff enjoy working at the service and are committed to the children who spend time there. They choose to remain working at the service. This provides children with consistency of care and enables the building of safe and secure relationships. Staff spoke about a positive and supportive culture. They receive high-quality, reflective supervision sessions that help them to understand children's experiences and to continuously improve practice.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular, information about children should not be written in a manner that sounds like the child's voice if the material is not actually the child's words. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 2624723

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Dorset Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester DT1 1XJ

Responsible individual: Adam Male

Registered manager: Amanda O'Connor

Inspector

Carla Simkiss, Social Care Inspector

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