

2626773

Registered provider: Hertfordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care for up to three children. Children have a range of highly complex needs, including significant trauma, mental health needs, risk of exploitation, and attachment issues, and they cannot be placed in mainstream care settings at the time of admission.

The home consists of three flats that provide accommodation for three solo placements.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2021.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 January 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: 31 January 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/01/2024	Full	Good
01/02/2023	Full	Good
19/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Since the last inspection, four children have moved into the home and four children have moved on. Children living at the home are either supported on a short or long-term basis depending on their individual assessed needs. At the time of the inspection, two of three children living at the home were spoken to by the inspector. One child was in hospital for the duration of the inspection and was therefore not spoken to.

Children have made excellent progress from their individual starting points. One child, who lived in the home for more than two years, has completely transformed their life. The child, who previously did not engage in education, has now passed their GCSEs and attained a vocational qualification in hair and beauty. This child is now learning to drive and has been successful in volunteering and securing a part-time job. Other children make significant all-round progress in relation to improving educational engagement, building positive relationships with others and having notable reductions in high-risk incidents.

Staff clearly invest in the children they support. They have an incredible understanding of children's individual needs and provide bespoke support to enable children to flourish. Staff are empathetic and show high levels of respect and regard to children even at times of challenge and crisis. Children learn that they can trust staff to help them to manage their feelings of distress and anxiety and find ways of communicating anger or upset that reduce the risk of harm to themselves or others.

Children's health and emotional well-being are prioritised. Staff support children to have very active and healthy lifestyles. Staff confidently use a research-informed individual relationship-based approach to care. There is clear evidence that this innovative and nurturing approach has been successful in positively helping children to change their behaviour.

Staff provide high-quality support for children to maintain relationships with the people who are important to them. For example, staff have supported a child's sister to join them on a caravan holiday and have travelled a considerable distance to support the child to visit their family members. Other children are encouraged to have friends visit and stay in the home when this is safe.

Children's wishes and views are central to the day-to-day decisions in the home. Children are encouraged to regularly share their views and fully contribute to their care planning. All children can access external advocacy. Children are aware of their rights and entitlements and know how to make complaints.

Staff ensure that children's moves out of the home are well planned and in their best interests. One child moved out of the home to live with a parent, and staff celebrated

the child's success. The child highlighted that the positive influence that staff had made in their life enabled this move.

Staff provide excellent support for children to explore their individual identities. Because of staff's support, children have been able to express their individuality and preferences in a safe space.

Children live in modern individual purpose-built accommodation. The home is separated into three single flats. Each flat is decorated and furnished to a high standard. Children's bedrooms are personalised to their taste and adapted to their needs. For example, one child who posed a high risk of ligaturing has adapted furnishings to mitigate this risk.

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

Staff build loving and trusting relationships with children. They are committed to working with children to reduce any risk of harm. Staff have good knowledge of safeguarding procedures and understand how to report any potential concerns.

Managers devise high-quality risk assessments and behaviour support plans for children. This helps staff to successfully support children's specific vulnerabilities. Guidance for staff is detailed and individualised to reflect children's high level of need. Staff are skilled in de-escalation techniques when responding to children's emotions. Risks for children reduce over time because of staff's support.

When physical intervention is used, it is necessary and proportionate. Managers ensure that meticulous monitoring and analysis take place to review interventions.

Managers ensure that a comprehensive assessment of the local area is reviewed regularly. This helps staff to have up-to-date information about any emerging risks in the local area and adapt their support accordingly.

Children have gone missing frequently. Managers ensure that children's missing-from-care protocols are regularly reviewed and up to date. Staff act quickly in line with these protocols when children go missing from the home. They work with other agencies, including the police, to help children to return safely. Although there remains a high risk for children in this area, managers maintain good oversight of incidents and ensure that proactive work is carried out to try and prevent future missing-from-care incidents for children as much as possible.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is experienced and has been in post for four years. The manager has an exemplary track record in achieving the best standards of care for children who have high levels of risk and complex needs. He is supported by an equally experienced and dedicated deputy manager. There is a supportive senior management structure that also provides excellent oversight.

Staff are extremely motivated to provide outstanding care. Staff morale is high, and staff feel well supported by managers and each other. Staff talk about their 'love' of working in the home and have commented on the strong child-focused ethos that pervades their day-to-day practice.

The manager strives for the best practice among staff. The manager makes excellent use of reviews, monitoring and audits to influence further development in the support provided. This has included encouraging senior staff to take the lead in some elements of operation across each flat individually, which is then overseen by the manager.

The manager ensures that only staff who can meet children's needs to the highest standard are employed. As a result, typically, only two children have resided in the home since the last inspection. This shows that the manager has prioritised children receiving excellent care, as opposed to maximising the home's occupancy. There has been an active attempt to reduce the use of agency staff, which has provided children with stronger continuity of care.

Supervision is held monthly for all staff and takes place as scheduled. Staff speak about supervision as an open forum where they feel supported and can discuss how they are feeling. Staff also welcome informal and ad-hoc discussions with the manager. This helps to create an open and honest culture where staff can seek support and improve their practice.

Staff have excellent training opportunities. The organisation has recently developed a bespoke training programme for staff to equip them with the skills they need to support children's individual needs. This includes a comprehensive induction for new staff. Additional staff meetings called 'process days' take place monthly and focus on delivering additional development or training. They also give staff a space to reflect further on their practice and support for children.

Staff ensure that children's records are detailed, accessible and include frequent use of child-centred language. Staff regularly include photos and views from children in records. Children's involvement in record-keeping ensures that they fully understand the progress they are making.

The manager and staff have developed and maintained strong relationships with a network of local professionals and agencies. The police and child exploitation specialists have particularly provided excellent feedback about the success of collaborative working with staff.

No requirements or recommendations have been made at this inspection.

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: 2626773

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Farnham House, Six Hills Way, Stevenage SG1 2ST

Responsible individual: Miranda Kumar

Registered manager: Christopher Davis

Inspector

Daniel Rankin, Social Care Inspector

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