

2632727

Registered provider: Applecast Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately run and provides care for up to 2 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The home provides short-term emergency, respite and bridging placements to allow the local authority time to decide on the most appropriate long-term provision for children.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living at the home. The child had been living there for one week. The inspector spoke with the child during the inspection. Since the last inspection, 2 children have left the home.

The home and the manager registered with Ofsted in July 2021.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 February 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: 15 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/01/2025	Full	Good
16/01/2024	Full	Good
25/01/2023	Full	Good
22/02/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children living in the home receive a good standard of care from a stable and experienced staff team. Staff are committed to the children they care for and work through challenges with them. Children are supported to build positive, trusting relationships with staff. When children move on, staff support them to move back to family or to identified permanent placements.

There are excellent plans in place for children moving into and out of the home. The manager carefully considers the needs of each child alongside the skills and experience of the staff team. The manager speaks with people in the child's network, shares information about the home and meets children before they move in. Staff arrange visits so that children can get to know staff before moving in. These steps help children build familiarity and reduce anxiety before moving in.

Children's statutory care plans are not always obtained at the time of moving in. This means the manager and staff do not have the information they need to ensure that care aligns with the local authority plans.

Children are registered with key healthcare professionals and staff support them to attend their appointments. However, medication reviews are not carried out routinely. When children display changes in their behaviour that may be linked to medication, reviews are not prioritised. As a result, children may not always receive the most appropriate treatment for their needs.

The manager and staff promote education. One child has been able to maintain 100% attendance at school. Children are encouraged to complete GCSE exams and actively plan for further education to support their ambitions and talents.

Children enjoy a range of activities, including cricket, football, fishing, singing and running. These opportunities help them develop hobbies based on their interests, use their energy positively, build confidence and develop social skills and friendships in the community.

The manager and staff understand the importance of family for children and support them in building and maintaining family connections. Staff facilitate regular family time for children. Family members have said they feel fully supported by staff, and children are happy living in the home.

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

The staff team has remained consistent, with minimal change over the past year. Communication between staff is detailed which means boundaries in the home are consistent. The staff build positive, trusting relationships with children and children

identify staff as trusted adults who they can speak to if worried or concerned. This helps children to feel safe and secure. Children do not make complaints about their care; however, they know how to do so.

The manager ensures that staff receive training that is specific to the identified needs of the children they care for. As a result, staff have a good understanding of children's risks and how to best respond when they are in crisis. However, risk management plans do not always provide clear guidance for staff to follow in crisis situations. This does not ensure that all staff are consistent in their approach.

The manager and staff work with specialist agencies and professionals to ensure that children receive support with issues such as substance misuse, going missing from care, bereavement and family connections. Staff encourage children's engagement with specialist services. As a result, children have access to the support that they need and are fully supported in line with their care plans.

Incidents in the home are managed well. Staff know the children well and use their support strategies to de-escalate situations effectively and help children return to their daily routines. Staff also have conversations with children after incidents to help them develop healthy coping mechanisms.

Staff are trained to carry out physical interventions. Interventions are rarely used and when they are, they are low-level guides used to prevent children from harming themselves or others. However, not all guides are recorded as physical interventions. This means they are not consistently reviewed or responded to in line with the home's physical intervention procedures.

Follow-up conversations take place with staff and children after physical interventions. However, children are not always spoken to by someone who was not involved in the intervention. This means children do not always have an opportunity to raise any concerns with an independent person.

Consequences are used to help children understand and take responsibility for their actions. Staff speak with children about any consequences so that they are clear about the reasons for them and the expectations going forward. Staff also focus on positive reinforcement and recognition of positive behaviours. Staff recognise and reward children's positive behaviours and achievements.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager and deputy manager are motivated and ambitious in their vision for the children. They have high expectations of the staff and are committed to improving outcomes for the children.

The manager has good oversight of the home. All reports and plans show clear evidence of management oversight. The deputy completes monthly audit reports, with clear actions for the month ahead. Checklists are also used weekly to oversee daily tasks.

However, key documents such as the statement of purpose and quality of care reviews are not always shared with the regulator. This prevents the regulator from having oversight.

Leaders and managers follow safer recruitment procedures. This means that staff are fully checked before they can provide care to children. New starters receive a clear and comprehensive induction programme, supported by experienced staff, to help them develop the skills and knowledge they need.

Staff receive regular good-quality supervision from the manager and deputy. Supervisions have a strong focus on outcomes for children and are reflective and supportive. Staff report feeling well supported in their roles. They enjoy working at the home and feel valued and respected.

Staff receive timely appraisals which focus on career development and celebrate their achievements. However, managers do not seek children's views or the views of professionals who have worked with the staff over the year to support appraisals.

Team meetings take place every 6 weeks and are well attended by staff. These meetings are used to prepare staff for new referrals, reflect on practice and ensure that staff remain familiar with children's risk management plans. Staff also plan for the month ahead. The manager uses case reviews to support staff to understand how children's behaviours may be linked to past trauma and to promote a non-judgemental, trauma-informed approach.

The manager and staff have formed positive working relationships with the children's networks. External professionals report that managers and staff communicate well, work collaboratively and remain child focused. This ensures that everyone is working together towards shared targets for children.

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 registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	8 April 2026

Specifically, the registered person must ensure that any physical guides used with children are recorded as physical interventions and responded to in accordance with the home's physical intervention procedures. In addition, they must ensure that children are spoken to about any physical intervention by an individual who was not involved in the incident.	
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child has access to such dental, medical, nursing, psychiatric and psychological advice, treatment and other services as the child may require. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that routine medication reviews are completed, and that additional reviews are carried out when changes in a child's behaviour may be linked to their medication.	8 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))	8 April 2026
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b))	8 April 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. When there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan and risk management plan, agreed with the placing authority, must set out the day-to-day steps staff will take to manage any identified risks. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should challenge any placing authority that asks them to accept a child without a complete and current plan. A placement should not proceed without the essential information needed to support safe and effective care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.5)
- The registered person should ensure that annual staff appraisals consider, where reasonable and practical, the views of children in the home and of professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

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: 2632727

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Applecast Limited

Responsible individual: Neil Farnworth

Registered manager: Paula Forber

Inspector

Renée Sims, Social Care Inspector

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