

# 2674792

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care for up to five children who experience social and emotional difficulties as well as being diagnosed with mild autism. There were five children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered in May 2025.

### Inspection dates: 4 and 5 August 2025

|                                                                                           |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>good</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                                             |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | good |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|

|                                           |      |
|-------------------------------------------|------|
| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | good |
|-------------------------------------------|------|

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

**Date of last inspection:** 2 January 2025

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 02/01/2025      | Full            | Good                 |
| 23/01/2024      | Full            | Good                 |
| 01/11/2022      | Full            | Good                 |
| 18/07/2022      | Full            | Inadequate           |

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children receive good-quality care from an emotionally warm and dedicated staff team. The staff are child-centred in all aspects of their work. They provide care specific to the children's differing needs. Children make good progress because of the help and support of the staff. For example, one child has improved their ability to manage their emotions. Another child has thanked the registered manager for all that she has done for them and recognises the opportunities that they have had.

There are effective relationships between all involved with the care of the children. External professionals and family members report positive working relationships based on wanting the best for the children. One social worker was positive about how staff work with them and children's families. A parent was impressed with how the staff have welcomed their child into the home, helping them [the parent] to see how well the staff care for their child.

The staff work well together to encourage children's sense of belonging. They show a strong commitment to the children. Staff have created an environment where children feel wanted and cared for. Children are engaged and take ownership of the space that they live in.

There is good planning for children moving into the home with an improved compatibility process that considers the needs of all children living here. In one example, staff worked tirelessly to ensure that one child, who moved into the home on an emergency basis, was able to remain. This was so the child could continue to make the progress that they had started to make. Additionally, this child was able to receive the stability that they needed, and they have made significant progress in all areas of their life as a result.

Staff show strong commitment to children's education. They work with a range of professionals to ensure that the children receive the education that they deserve. Staff listen to children's views about their education and support them to make representations about it. For example, staff supported one child to write a letter about why they wished to change schools.

Children make progress in all areas of their lives. They receive support with their emotional and mental health. Staff work closely with the child and adolescent mental health services to ensure that the children receive the focused input that they need.

Children have many opportunities to express their views and have their voices heard. Monthly house meetings provide a relaxed and open opportunity for children to voice their views and opinions, for example ideas about the decor of the home or how the house budget should be spent.

Staff know the children well and understand their individual needs. They support the children to explore their interests and provide opportunities that help them to develop. For example, children are involved in sport, horse riding and they enjoy cooking and baking (the house smelled of cookies being baked). Children go on holidays in small groups and have positive experiences that contribute to lifelong memories.

Staff help children prepare well for their futures regardless of their age. They support children to take some responsibility for their personal and communal space. The staff provide good activities to support children's independence, including money management and supporting a child to prepare a CV.

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

Staff know how to safeguard children. They understand the risks that some children can be subject to. Staff are guided in managing risk by having good-quality, clear risk management plans that are updated regularly. Staff know these plans well.

The staff work with children to ensure their safety online. This is a regular discussion point in house meetings and one-to-one sessions. One child said, 'I know how to keep myself safe online... don't talk to people I don't know and if someone tries to speak to me block them!'

There is a strong response to children who go missing from the home. The staff response is effective. Staff work with a range of professionals to ensure the safe return of children who go missing. There is a consistent response. Additionally, children receive return home interviews so that their reasons for going missing are known, and staff can work proactively with them to try and reduce reoccurrence.

Staff understand the children's need for boundaries and structure. They know the behaviours of each child and how to manage them. Positive behaviour support plans are clear and specific to each child. Strong rules and boundaries help children to feel safe. One parent said that their child is starting to understand why rules are in place.

Children feel safe living in this home. They have staff that they can go to if they feel worried or concerned about anything. One child said, 'I feel safe here... I don't know why but I do.'

Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff know what to do when a child makes an allegation about a member of staff. Records of any incidents and allegations are clear and well written. The manager and staff work with a range of agencies to safeguard children. These relationships are strong and effective. The manager ensures that significant incidents are clearly and appropriately notified to Ofsted and other relevant professionals.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

A good and effective management team is in place. Managers work well together as a team, and they are ambitious for children. As a management group, it has high expectations for what children can achieve. Managers ensure that children have opportunities to meet their goals. The management team model cares and provides support and warmth to children and staff.

The management team ensures that children have positive experiences that enable them to make progress. The manager knows the progress that children make and encourages their continued growth and development. She helps children to know that they can achieve if they put their minds to it. The manager is a strong advocate to ensure that children's best interests are at the centre of care planning decisions.

Staff receive regular, good-quality reflective supervision and appraisals of their practice. The opportunities to reflect in whole-day team meetings mean that staff are consistently developing. Staff value this time, which they feel helps their professional development. The manager ensures that staff induction is strong and meaningful. Staff training is relevant, of good quality and is designed to help staff meet the needs of the children. Workshops are held in the team meeting, which further helps to improve staff knowledge and confidence.

The manager has a strong understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. She takes decisive action to address poor staff performance and works closely with human resources to ensure that she manages this appropriately. Additionally, the manager is responsive to shortfalls. For example, the statement of purpose for the home was out of date and missing critical information. The manager reflected on this and rectified it during the inspection.

Leaders and managers actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion. Children can be themselves here. Leaders, managers and staff support children to maintain their identity and to keep links with their community.

No requirements or recommendations were 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:** 2674792

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** East Sussex County Council

**Registered provider address:** East Sussex County Council, County Hall St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1UE

**Responsible individual:** Fiona Lewis

**Registered manager:** Mandy McDonald

## Inspector

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

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