

2682113

Registered provider: Core Children Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private organisation. The home provides care for up to 3 children who experience social and emotional difficulties. The home was registered in July 2022.

The same manager has been in post since the home was registered. The manager is registered with Ofsted and has an appropriate qualification. The manager oversees two homes.

One child lives in the home and was present for some of the inspection. The child did not want to contribute their views.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 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	requires improvement to be 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: 21 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/01/2025	Full	Good
21/02/2024	Full	Good
28/02/2023	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Managers and staff ensure that children's experiences of moving into and out of the home are positive. Since the last inspection, one child has left the home in a planned way, and one child has moved in. The child who moved on lived there for 2 1/2 years and made good progress. Staff supported the child to choose their new accommodation, and they helped the child to move their belongings. They then ensured the child had everything they needed to live comfortably in their new home. The child has kept in touch with staff which creates a sense of belonging and emotional security for the child.

The current child has lived in the home for 4 months. The child has quickly settled because staff understand the importance of strong routines and boundaries, and nurturing relationships. Staff build strong relationships with the child by supporting the child's hobbies and sharing their interests. The child's social worker said the child's risks have reduced and, 'his behaviour tells me he's happy'.

Children make good progress in education from their starting points. Staff understand children's barriers to learning and they work hard to overcome them. One child, who came to the home with a history of not attending school, started to attend regularly and sat exams which is a massive achievement for the child. The current child attends a school that meet their needs. The child's teacher said they have, 'nothing but positive comments about the home. (The child) has done really well there'.

Staff ensure that children register with local health services and they support children to attend appointments. Staff talk with children about their emotional health and relationships and they support children with practical strategies. For example, staff bought a child some fidget toys to enable them to manage their anxiety.

Staff support children to spend time with family and friends. They welcome families into the home and provide practical help, such as transport and supervising contact, when needed. This strengthens children's relationships with those who are important to them.

The child benefits from a home that is clean, spacious, well furnished, and decorated. The child's precious possessions are easily accessible and photos of the child participating in their favourite hobby are on display. The child's bedroom is personalised, reflecting their individual interests and tastes. These factors contribute to a homely and welcoming environment.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Staff lack awareness of safeguarding procedures. Following one incident, a child disclosed that the staff member working with them had hurt them. Despite this disclosure, the staff member did not acknowledge the allegation and continued to

support the child. The incident was subsequently addressed; however, managers did not then speak with the child about the outcome.

When children's behaviours escalate, staff use physical intervention to keep them and others safe and prevent damage to property. Managers are skilled at evaluating staff practice and identifying areas for improvement. Managers then ensure that children and staff have a supportive conversation with an independent person. However, on two occasions staff inexperience has led to poor outcomes for the child. Managers have identified shortfalls in staff practice but missed opportunities to reflect with the staff team to improve understanding of the child's behaviours.

Despite these two isolated incidents of poor practice children are thriving, and their risks have massively reduced. Staff are very committed to keeping the child safe. Staff are skilled at having important conversations with children. They use children's preferred communication style and their strong relationships to have sensitive discussions on a range of topics including exploitation and gang culture, and the dangers of going missing. This helps the children to keep themselves safe and make safer informed decisions. Additionally, restorative approaches are used effectively, which enables children to gain insight into their behaviour and promotes positive engagement.

Staff are guided by clear risk management plans that identify triggers to children's risks and strategies to manage their complex behaviours. However, information about the child's emerging risk of barricading has not been disseminated to staff. This leaves staff unprepared and without guidance on how to manage this behaviour.

When children go missing from the home or are not where they are expected to be, staff respond well. They look for children and support them in returning home. Staff talk to children to understand why they left the home and about their experiences. They work well with other professionals, such as the local police. Staff ensure that children have an opportunity to speak with an independent person. This practice helps keep children safe, and information gathered is used to manage reoccurring risks.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is child focused and ambitious for children in his care. He has robust oversight of all aspects of the home, which he uses to make improvements and to support children's progress. The manager is supported by a newly appointed deputy who is skilled and experienced and a responsible individual who is a regular visitor to the home. The management team have an open-door policy to ensure that they are available to staff and to children.

The manager is skilled at building positive working relationships with partner agencies. This promotes partnership working and ensures that children receive the correct support. External professionals speak highly of the manager, highlighting strong communication, good partnership working, advocacy and a focus on children as being particular strengths. One child's independent reviewing officer praised the manager for strongly advocating for and protecting a child's rights and their wellbeing.

The manager has a range of monitoring systems used to effectively improve the quality of care. He has a good grasp of the strengths of the staff team. Staff are encouraged to be aspirational and to progress in their careers. Regular supervision and job chats ensure that any issues regarding shortfalls in practice or support needs are quickly addressed. Staff say the manager is kind and supportive, 'He's very professional and has a great manner, relaxed and calm and great with the kids.'

The home is fully staffed. 3 staff have achieved an appropriate qualification and 3 are enrolled. Agency staff have been used at times when children's behaviours have escalated to provide additional support to children. Managers have ensured the same agency staff have been used, whenever possible, to ensure children receive consistent care. During periods when children's behaviours have escalated, staff have remained resilient, consistent and focused on children's needs.

New staff receive a well-planned induction which includes face-to-face training in the company's therapeutic model of care, which underpins their day-to-day practice. Staff have also received face-to-face training in essential areas relating to safeguarding. Staff who have not previously worked in a children's home say that training is good quality and it fully prepares them to safeguard and support vulnerable 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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(vii)) This specifically refers to the registered person ensuring that staff have the skills and experience to assess and appropriately intervene to prevent harm when a child is showing dysregulated behaviours. Additionally, that staff are supported to follow safeguarding procedures when a child makes an allegation.	19 April 2026

Recommendation

- The responsible person should ensure that staff use their professional judgement, supported by their knowledge of each child's risk assessment, an understanding of the needs of the child (as set out in their relevant plans) and an understanding of the risks the child faces to manage children's complex behaviours. Professional judgements may need to be taken quickly, and staff training and supervision of practice should support this. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 48, paragraph 9.53)

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: 2682113

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Core Children Ltd

Registered provider address: The Glades, Festival Way, Festival Park, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire ST1 5SQ

Responsible individual: Lyndan Whiston

Registered manager: Richard Hill

Inspector

Karen Gillingwater, Social Care Inspector

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