

2682502

Registered provider: Dorset Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by the local authority. It provides care for up to three children between the ages of 12 and 18 years who may experience social or emotional difficulties.

At the time of inspection, three children were living in the home. All children were spoken to during the inspection.

The manager has recently applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 10 December 2025

Date of last inspection: 15 April 2025

Judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

This inspection was completed in response to a complaint made to Ofsted regarding the standards of care in the home. All the children who live in the home were spoken with. One child said that they felt safe in the home. Another child said they did not feel safe and the third child also shared they do not feel well cared for.

All the children said they do not like aspects of the home environment, for example the thin carpets, cold flooring and heavy doors. Leaders and manager shared that plans are in place to improve the home. Children have expressed that the home feels 'institutional' and, while plans are in place to address this, action to put this into place has been slow.

Children raised concerns about some of the restrictions in the home, for example the small, plastic cups, which they are not happy about using instead of glasses. Restrictions, such as not having glass or sharp items in the home, are in place and the rationale for these restrictions is not clear. Sharp items are locked away ineffectively as children have broken into the locked cupboards. Plans lack clarity about why restrictions are in place and when they will be reduced.

The layout of the home does not help to promote time for both children and adults to spend time together. The ground floor is a shared space with office space used also by outreach services. The above two floors are dedicated to the home. Children said that staff spend considerable time on the ground floor and not with them. Specifically, one child spoke about the 'segregation' between staff and children and this having a negative impact.

Concerns were raised that staff do not appear to care for children and are not curious when children make poor choices, for example when they misuse substances. All the children can identify at least one member of staff they could talk to if they were worried, and said that staff are routinely having nurturing conversations with children about the choices they make.

Two children have misused alcohol or substances on occasions. Conversations take place with children about this, and close working relationships are in place with the police to address substance misuse within the local community and the home.

Complaints from children are taken seriously and children are supported to express their views about the care they receive. Concerns have been raised about staff swearing at children and about inappropriate conduct. The manager listened to the children's views and took appropriate action to address the concerns. Children were kept informed as needed.

There have been serious incidents that have resulted in property damage. Police have been contacted appropriately, and social workers are informed. Leaders and managers have failed to notify Ofsted of these incidents in a timely way.

Concerns have been raised that staff refuse to collect children. On occasion, children have not returned home at the agreed time. Staff keep in contact with children where possible and report them missing to the police appropriately. On occasion, when children have requested to be collected, staff have offered to meet them on foot rather than collect them by car.

Staff responses when children have been missing from the home are mixed. Guidance to staff is clear about the steps to take, but this is not always being followed. For example, staff do not always go out and look for children because there are not sufficient staff working to leave the other children. On these occasions, safe arrangements have been in place for the children's return.

Concerns were raised around the staff response when children self-harm. Two of the children in the home have a history of self-harm. The inspector found that staff take appropriate medical care and respond warmly to children at these times.

Changes to the manager have meant inconsistencies for the staff and children. A new manager started in August and has recently applied to register with Ofsted. Children and staff spoke positively about the manager's leadership and support.

Recording of incidents is unclear in places. This means that the manager does not always have a clear picture of what has happened. This does not help the manager or staff to meet the children's needs effectively. The manager is reflective and aware of the shortfalls in the home. The manager has reviewed concerns about staff practice and has taken appropriate action to address these concerns.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/04/2025	Full	Good
21/05/2024	Full	Good
11/04/2023	Full	Good

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) This means that children need to have a homely and comforting environment. Any items that are locked away and any restrictions in place should be assessed as being necessary to protect the child, with clear strategies as to how to reduce or remove such restrictions.	13 February 2025
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;	31 December 2025

a child protection enquiry involving a child—

is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.
(Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))

Recommendations

- The registered person should specify the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from the home and how the staff should support the child on return to the home. All staff must know these procedures and be clear on the steps to follow. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28)
- The registered person should oversee the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with: each child, the staff, the child's family/carers and professionals involved. The registered person should review records and serious incidents to understand the care provided for each child. Clear guidance needs to be provided to staff to ensure that they can meet each child's needs effectively. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2682502

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Dorset Council

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

Responsible individual: Adam Male

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Nickie Doney, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025