

2711719

Registered provider: Dorset Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a local authority.

The home provides long-term care for up to three children with learning disabilities or physical disabilities. The home currently cares for three children who were seen and spoken to by the inspectors.

The manager in post has applied to register with Ofsted. He was present throughout the inspection.

This inspection took place on 18 and 19 November 2025, but an inspector also returned on 16 December 2025 to gather additional evidence.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 November 2025 and 16 December 2025.

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: 28 August 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/08/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff spend time building positive relationships with children. They have good knowledge of children's overall needs. Staff follow clear and detailed care planning and support children to meet clear and achievable targets. This has helped children to make progress. One child has developed their emotional resilience, empathy and their ability to communicate their feelings. Another child's communication skills have developed, which has improved their ability to express their wishes and feelings.

Staff understand children's individual communication needs. Communication passports set out how children can be supported to express their views and needs. The use of the Picture Exchange Communication System and personalised stories with symbols and words, called 'social stories', is part of day-to-day practice. Staff listen to children and actively seek their wishes and feelings. They adapt their communication and responses to the child's need at the time. All of this supports ongoing and essential direct work and the inclusion of children in their care planning. All external professionals spoken to said that children are listened to and advocated for by staff.

Staff understand how important family is to children. They support children to spend quality time with the people they love and care about. When concerns are raised about the safety of children during family time, staff have clear guidance to follow to ensure the safety of the child. Staff aim to build positive relationships with family members and to keep them up to date about children's lives. Managers acknowledge that they could improve communication with some family members and professionals.

Staff recognise the importance of children receiving an education. When children are not attending school, staff provide them with activities of an educational nature. Staff consistently raise their concerns about one child not receiving a formal education. They work closely with educational professionals to devise joined-up planning and care for children.

Children are cared for by staff who understand their health needs. Staff are alert to changes in children's behaviours that may indicate a health concern. When children feel unwell, staff provide them with the care and attention that they need. When it is identified that children would benefit from external support services, such as grief counselling, staff complete the referrals and support children in every part of the process.

Staff provide children with a wealth of positive experiences. Children attend a variety of clubs and activities. When children are unsure about trying new things, staff allow them to make their own choices and experience new things at their own pace. This has led to children having increased confidence and being able to access more of the world around them. Staff plan children's days, which provides them with the structure and routine that they need.

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

Staff understand the risks that children can face. They have an acute awareness of the children's individual vulnerabilities. Documents designed to support staff to reduce risks and keep children safe are informative and thorough. Staff work closely with other professionals to gain their views and expertise. This allows them to consider risk and risk management from all angles.

Staff talk confidently about the measures needed to safeguard children. Other professionals are confident that staff do all that they can to keep children safe. Two children said that they feel safe and well cared for by staff. They identified staff whom they could talk to if they are worried or upset. Observations of staff with children show the strength of the relationships that have been built. Children presented as calm and relaxed with staff.

Incidents in the home are well managed. Staff use their knowledge of the child and behaviour management planning to support children with the aim of ending incidents as quickly and safely as possible. Every effort is made to protect the other children in the home when there is an incident. Following incidents, children and staff are engaged in comprehensive reflective conversations to review their actions and any learning. This has informed ongoing care planning and risk management.

Restrictions that are in place are necessary to keep children safe. Monitoring of the effectiveness of restrictions takes place regularly. Actions to reduce restrictions are clearly documented and followed. Clear chronologies of the progress that children make are kept. This has led to restrictions being eased or removed.

When restraint has been used, it has been appropriate. Managers monitor the use of restraint and consider trends in behaviours and the effectiveness of support provided to children at times of distress or upset. Staff seek guidance to consider the techniques that they use in their practice and whether less restrictive measures could be used.

Recruitment practice ensures that checks necessary to determine whether staff are safe to work with children are completed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by a knowledgeable, committed and reflective leadership and management team. Since the last inspection, a new manager has been recruited. He has applied to register with Ofsted. The manager and the deputy manager demonstrate a positive working relationship, also linking in with senior managers. This joined-up working promotes good communication and effective working practices that benefit the whole team and improve the lives of children.

Leaders and managers have excellent oversight of children's lives and staff practice. Reflective and effective management oversight is present in documents about children. However, one document about a child is written as if it were the child, despite the words not being theirs. Managers regularly review staff practice, children's progress, and behaviours and incidents. This enables them to identify where children may require additional support and guidance and contributes to robust care planning that is in line with children's needs and abilities.

Staff feel settled and supported in the home. They have confidence in leaders and managers. There is a clear ethos of transparency and collaborative working in the home. Staff value the positive relationships that they have with their colleagues and the children and enjoy going to work. Managers respect staff and actively gain their views about the home and the care of the children.

Managers and staff work alongside other professionals to meet children's needs. They have built strong, effective relationships that benefit children and assure others that children are safe and well cared for. When concerns for children arise, managers request meetings to elicit multi-agency responses and planning where it is needed. A concern about the practice of another professional was promptly highlighted and addressed.

Staff receive regular, reflective supervision. They attend regular, well-planned team meetings. Managers ensure that staff are supported to access and receive any services that they may need to support their well-being. Managers place value on learning and development. They ensure that staff have the training that they need to meet children's needs and encourage staff to reflect on how the training has impacted on practice and outcomes for children.

Planning for a child to move into the home was thorough. Managers gathered essential information about the child and considered this alongside the skill set and experience of staff and the needs of the children who already live in the home. They spent extensive amounts of time with the child and with those who know the child to gain valuable information and to begin to form relationships.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular, information about children should not be written in a manner that sounds like the child's voice if the text does not actually use the child's words. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that when it is appropriate, they maintain good levels of communication with all relevant people who are involved in the care of children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.3)

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'.

The inspection started on 18 November 2025. An inspector returned on 16 December 2025 to gather additional evidence in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2711719

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Dorset Council

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

Responsible individual: Adam Male

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Carla Simkiss, Social Care Inspector

Clare Nixson, Social Care Inspector

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