

2724884

Registered provider: Willows (Devon) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private provider. It can provide care for up to 3 children who may have social and emotional needs.

At the time of the inspection, 3 children were living at the home. All of the children were involved in the inspection.

Staff in the home are referred to as carers. This is reflected in the report.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2025.

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: 28 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/01/2025	Full	Good
19/03/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Carers are committed to the children and know them well. The children are supported by a stable and consistent team. For one child, this has been the longest time in one home after experiencing multiple moves. Children spoke positively about their home and the carers who look after them. There is a current issue around the children's relationships with each other. Carers are working hard to improve these relationships.

Children are listened to and taken seriously. They know how to complain. When one child complained, this was followed up sensitively and quickly. Learning was captured well and training was provided for the team.

Learning from the previous inspection in respect of children's access to snack foods has been actioned. Snack boxes were used for a short period to help children to understand how long their snacks would last. Now snacks are freely available, and children have a better understanding of healthy eating. There is an abundance of fresh food throughout the home and children are supported to help prepare healthy meals. Support to help children understand the importance of balanced meals is also consistent.

Carers provide good support with children's education. All the children have struggled to engage or attend education at some point. The manager has been a strong advocate for the children in meetings with schools and has challenged others appropriately. Carers support children with home learning, and they engage them with the educational activities provided. Children's achievements are also consistently celebrated.

Children are offered lots of fun activities. They have been on short holidays, enjoyed fancy dress nights and pamper sessions. The organisation as a whole arranges activities so that the children can all come together. Carers encourage children to join in when they are reluctant. Memory books capture memories well and children contribute to adding to their memory boxes, so they have special mementos to take with them.

The home is beautifully decorated and well-maintained. Any damage is repaired quickly and creatively. Children are encouraged to take pride in their bedrooms, and their rooms are personal to them, giving them a real sense of home.

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

Children say they feel safe. They have felt frightened at times by the behaviours from their peers. Carers have quickly taken action to address unwanted behaviours. Children identified carers that they could trust and talk to. Lots of conversations take place with children about their worries.

There has been a recent increase in concerns about self-harm and threats of ligaturing. Additional training has been provided to help the team meet children's needs. Carers

know children's plans well and are clear that they need to contact a manager immediately at these times. However, some carers were hesitant about where the ligature cutters are kept. While they were clear about contacting a manager, this could mean a delay in safeguarding a child.

The team demonstrate nurturing responses to self-harm. Carers provide reassurance to children. Carers encourage children to wake them in the night if they are worried and increase checks on children when they have been upset. Carers work hard with children to help them to understand risk.

There is a co-ordinated response to missing from home incidents. Carers search for children and make efforts to contact them. Most incidents have been for short periods with the child returning quickly. The manager has worked closely with one child's school to improve plans for when the child goes missing from school, and to ensure the safety of the child. Meetings with other professionals are called appropriately to address the concerns together.

Children are encouraged to understand their emotions and are given strategies to help them to communicate when they are struggling. Visual charts with stages are used to help children identify their feelings if they cannot verbalise them. Children were involved in developing this which helps them to be clear about what they need from carers.

Positive behaviours are encouraged. Children can earn extra pocket money or 'wish lists' with additional chores or when they have engaged with something positive. Managers have reflected on the use of consequences and what is proportionate for each situation.

Window restrictors are in place in some bedrooms; they were added to keep children safe. However, it is not clear how this will be reviewed and what is needed to remove this restriction.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has been in post for over a year. The manager knows the children well and has a good understanding of the practice within the home. She is ambitious for the children and is a strong advocate for the children's views.

Leaders and managers are reflective. When something is not working, they look at making changes or trying alternatives. Systems are in place to monitor care. This enables the manager to understand increases in concern. When the independent visitor raised concerns about the use of consequences, leaders and managers reflected on this and made changes. This shows that systems to drive improvements are working.

Supervision takes place regularly. The manager has good systems in place to ensure these happen consistently. The team are well trained and specific ligature training recently took place to support the team. The manager has also drawn on particular topics to discuss with the team so they can support children more effectively. These are

delivered as short 'bite-size' training sessions, which makes them accessible for the team.

Effective relationships exist with professionals to support the children, particularly in education. This is something that the manager has had to work hard on. Clear processes are now in place if a child goes missing from school as a result of this. Information is shared quickly with others when needed.

Moves into and on from the home are carefully considered. External professionals and children are involved in the planning of these moves. The manager has advocated the children's views well. Attempts are made to keep in touch with children who have moved on, where possible.

Children's records are detailed and guidance to the team is clear. At times, language can be blaming. For example: 'it's disappointing that you...' This is not in keeping with the ethos of the home and does not fit with the therapeutic aims of the home. Plans are in place to review this with the help of the home's psychotherapist to ensure a more child-focused approach.

Carers enjoy working at the home and say they feel supported. They report a strong sense of being a team. Professionals and parents speak of good communication and in particular how well education is promoted for the children.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff skills for safeguarding should include being able to identify signs that children may be at risk, and support children in strategies to manage and reduce any risks. All staff must know where emergency equipment is kept so that they can access this quickly. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.10)
- The registered person should ensure that risks to children are continually and actively assessed. Where restrictions are in place, these should be agreed with placing authority and should be subject to review. There should be an aim to reduce or remove the restriction. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff responses to children are in-line with the therapeutic ethos set out in the home's Statement of Purpose. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)

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: 2724884

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Willows (Devon) Ltd

Registered provider address: Old Farm House, Gussage St. Michael, Wimborne, BH21 5JE

Responsible individual: Carolyn Coombes

Registered manager: Shona Thomas

Inspector:

Nickie Doney, Social Care Inspector

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