

2726010

Registered provider: Elm Lodge Residential Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and is registered to provide care for four children aged seven to 17 years, who may experience emotional and social difficulties. Three children were living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2024.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 October 2024

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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Date of last inspection: 7 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/11/2023	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The three children were all spoken to during the inspection, and two children shared their experiences and views in detail. The children were positive about living at the home.

Three children have moved in, and three children have moved out since the last inspection. Two of those who moved out had onward moves that were planned; one child moved to a more specialised home due to their identified need, and the other child moved to semi-independent living. Both moves were positive. However, another child moved out after only living in the home for a short period of time. The manager has reflected on this and has improved the impact and matching assessments. This has meant the most recent children who moved to the home have had better support.

Staff speak positively about working in the home and about the relationships they have with the children. Staff know the children well and talk about them warmly and with respect. Children spoke positively about staff members and could identify a staff member they trusted.

Children's views and wishes are listened to. The home has a complaint procedure, and children know how to make a complaint if they wish to. Managers make themselves available to children, with an 'open door' policy if children wish to speak to them.

Staff encourage children to attend school, college, or alternative education provision. Staff and managers work with education providers and virtual schools. This has included challenging others when necessary to support children.

Staff support and encourage children to engage with activities, clubs and leisure interests they enjoy. For example, two children have played in local football clubs, one child has a gym membership and another has attended Army Cadets training. Staff also organised trips and activities during the school holidays. Positive activities and hobbies help children to build confidence and self-esteem.

Children spend time with the people who are important to them. Staff support children to spend time with family and welcome family members to the home. Children receive support with friendships, including for friends to visit the home. Social connections support children's identity and the building of social relationships.

The home is a good size, in a good state of repair and well decorated. The home was clean and tidy throughout. Children's rooms are large, and children can personalise them. Shared spaces are also well furnished; however, some shared spaces were not personalised to children's tastes and lacked child-friendly decor. These factors detract from the otherwise homely environment.

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

Children are well supported and kept safe. Staff know their safeguarding responsibilities and protocols and know how to raise any potential concerns.

Staff know children's strengths and vulnerabilities. Staff have access to risk assessments for children. The plans and assessments have sufficient detail and are individualised. New or emerging risks are added by staff to 'live' risk-management plans, and significant risk areas have more in-depth assessments. Managers review incident records; however, records lack detail, and following incidents, debriefs with children are minimal. This has the potential to limit opportunities for learning and reflection.

The staff do not use physical interventions and instead focus on using de-escalation techniques. This helps children feel respected and helps them feel a sense of safety in the home.

The number of missing-from-home episodes is high. However, managers and staff work within a multi-agency framework to try and reduce these. Staff follow procedures and react responsibly, for example by contacting other agencies, particularly the police. Staff also make enquiries and conduct searches when appropriate.

Staff conduct room searches appropriately when required. The rationale for searches is clear and justified. Children are aware of why a search is happening. Records are made that provide evidence of the reasons for the search, what was found and the next steps.

The home's location review is well developed. Staff and managers have established effective working relationships with a network of professionals and agencies in the area. The manager has been responsive in engaging with the local community and has responded effectively to local complaints when these have arisen.

There has been one incident of agency staff misconduct. The manager identified this quickly and took the incident seriously. A referral to the local authority designated officer was made by the manager, and the staff member has not returned to the home. The manager has also reflected on this and improved their scrutiny of agency training. This effective response to poor practice shows the home is committed to ensuring that staff look after children safely in the home.

Staff and managers encourage positive behaviour. However, their approach to promoting positive behaviour has not always been effective. Staff were unable on two occasions to de-escalate incidents, which led to staff calling the police to the home. Staff have been unable to prevent one child from misusing cannabis; this has included use in their bedroom.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is suitably experienced and qualified. Staff speak positively about the manager and the support they provide. The manager is supported by a deputy, who staff also spoke positively about.

The manager, deputy manager and responsible individual have good expectations and aspirations. The manager has shown insight and reflection, enabling the quality of care to be improved across the home.

The home has a stable workforce, many of whom have a good level of experience. Staff turnover is low, and morale among the staff team is high. Staff speak positively about working in the home and their support for each other in working together as a team to support children. The use of agency staff is uncommon, and they are only used to cover occasional periods of sickness or other staff leave.

Staff receive a range of training. Staff feel that this gives them all the necessary tools to be able to support children in the home competently. However, staff have not been able to translate some training into consistently effective responses to behaviour they have found difficult to manage. Furthermore, staff do not consistently respond to some incidents of positive behaviour.

There is a good staff induction process for new staff when they join the home. The registered person ensures the home follows safe recruitment protocols.

Staff have regular supervision. The manager and deputy have an 'open door' culture with staff that encourages ad-hoc discussions when needed. The manager also has supervision from an external consultant to support his own development and practice. Team meetings take place regularly to ensure staff know about matters to do with the home.

Professional feedback is mostly positive, both in response to individual children's care and in respect of the management and staff support across the home.

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 positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)) In particular, implement a clear and positive behaviour policy that is effective and restorative.	1 December 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should provide a nurturing, homely environment. In particular, ensure that the shared spaces in the home are well decorated and personalised for children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that that staff understand the system for rewarding and celebrating positive behaviour and recognising where children have

managed situations well. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.39)

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: 2726010

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Elm Lodge Residential Limited

Responsible individual: Farxiya Ismail

Registered manager: Peter McGugan

Inspectors

Daniel Rankin, Social Care Inspector

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