

2727134

Registered provider: Smoothstone Care & Education Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is privately owned and is registered to care for up to three children who may have learning disabilities. This is the home's first inspection.

There was one child living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The registered manager has been in post since May 2023 and is suitably qualified and experienced.

Inspection dates: 11 to 12 March 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	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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is the first inspection of the home since it was registered. One child lives here and was welcomed two months ago. The child living at the home had been welcomed in a planned manner. Prior to moving in, staff spent time getting to know the child to ensure the move took place in a supported way. There was good information sharing amongst the staff to ensure that all the adults understood the child's needs and felt well prepared for caring for them. The child's previous carer told the inspector, 'We couldn't have been happier with the planning, they did everything they could to make it as smooth as possible'.

The child is succeeding in education. She attends a special school in the local area. A planned school move is taking place so she can attend an independent school attached to the children's home provider. The school has just two pupils in the class allowing for individual care and support for those children who need it the most. Staff have worked hard to promote a positive ending at one school, alongside a welcome into a new school. A school leader told the inspector, 'The new school have taken our thoughts and feelings into account and are providing a structured approach to introducing her into the school, she has formed very strong relationships with members of the staff team and speaks highly of them. I have visited the children's home and am impressed with what they are providing her'.

The child has complex health and care needs. These are identified and understood by the staff team. Staff are providing support to manage lifelong conditions whilst promoting the child's independence where possible. The use of social stories, and pictorial communication aids, are helping the child prepare for regular health appointments. Communication with health professionals is excellent. As a result of this positive practice the child is becoming less anxious about attending the hospital.

Staff understand the importance of the child's relationships with family and friends. The manager and staff make certain this is prioritised and supported so that the child regularly spends time with those important to them. Careful thought has gone into providing social opportunities for the child to have fun with other children, she has made new friends and enjoyed playdates and tea visits since joining the home.

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

Individual risk assessments for children are effective safeguarding tools. They are written in a way which is clear and concise. Staff understand that children's behaviour is a form of communication. Regular updates and analysis by leaders ensure these documents are reflective of children's changing needs and staff thoroughly understand them.

The child who lives here always requires adult care and attention. Two members of staff are always available to her. Staff understand this high level of supervision mitigates against many risk factors. However, they are not complacent and have a good understanding of how vulnerable disabled children are.

On occasions when the child is distressed measures of restraint are needed to ensure everyone's safety. The use of physical restraint is always a last resort and proportionate to the event. Following measures of restraint, staff do not always talk to the child about the impact this could cause and the records of such do not capture all the necessary information. Members of staff involved in such measures are not always de-briefed by an appropriate senior manager to allow for reflection, and for managers to deal with the emotions raised by the incident. This prevents improvements to staff learning and is a missed opportunity for professional development.

The management of allegations is not yet effective. Staff are not clear about their responsibilities in this area of practice. The manager does not yet have robust oversight of children's complaints or allegations. This is crucial to ensure disabled children are protected from harm. Whilst no direct harm has been caused to children by this shortfall, the provider is aware that it requires improvement as a matter of priority.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Staff enjoy working at the home and retention is good. They are a very small team which offers consistency to the child. Staff are united in the way that they care for the child and are supportive of each other. Several internal promotions are underway which results in staff feeling valued by their employer.

The staff and child benefit from having an experienced manager and deputy manager. Staff say managers are approachable and listen to suggestions about how the home can be developed. Managers ensure that the staff have regular opportunities to come together in team meetings and handover discussions. This has created a culture of ambition and accountability throughout the team.

The manager has effective working relationships with external professionals and communicates regularly with them. The manager is proactive in ensuring that involved professionals contribute to the child's care planning. This has resulted in a collaborative approach towards removing all unnecessary barriers for a disabled child. The manager is a passionate advocate for the child in her care and promotes inclusivity for her in all areas of her life.

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, 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 registered person must prepare and implement a policy which— sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular— provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response; describe the measures which may be necessary to protect children following an allegation of abuse or neglect; and (Regulation 34 (1)(b)(2)(d)(e))	30 April 2024
The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	30 April 2024

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: 2727134

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Smoothstone Care & Education Limited

Registered provider address: Datum House, Electra Way, Crewe CW1 6ZF

Responsible individual: Raymond Scales

Registered manager: Alison Harris

Inspector

Rachael Sprigg, social care inspector

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