

2731377

Registered provider: Core Children Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private company owns this home. It is registered to provide care for up to three children who may have adverse childhood experiences that can lead to associated trauma and social and emotional difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since June 2023 and is appropriately qualified.

At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home. Both children spoke to the inspector.

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 June 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: 11 March 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/03/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
26/02/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, there have not been any changes to the children living in the home. One child has lived there for just over two years and the other child for six months. Children say that staff are 'kind' and that they like all staff. Staff are playful and caring towards children and they talk to them affectionately. These nurturing relationships support children to feel valued and secure.

The home is welcoming and well presented. Communal areas offer children large, comfortable spaces in which to relax and enjoy themselves. Staff put photos of children on display around the home and high-quality soft furnishings contribute to a lovely, homely atmosphere. Children are supported to personalise their bedrooms to their individual tastes. As a result, children feel a sense of belonging and they invest in the home.

Children's time with family is appropriately risk assessed and then strongly promoted. Social workers praise the way managers and staff maintain positive relationships with children's families. A family member commented that they have seen a positive difference in their child since they started living in the home. They say that staff are flexible and imaginative in the way they promote family time, 'they genuinely care for (name of child). They think the world of him.'

Children are supported to attend health appointments, including specialist services. Staff understand the impact of trauma on emotional wellbeing and have meaningful conversations with children. However, staff do not consistently talk with children about puberty, sexual health or consent.

Managers and staff have a good understanding of barriers to education. They advocate for children to have the support they need to achieve. One child, who is currently waiting for a specialist school place, has been encouraged and supported to take on a part-time job. This is huge progress for a child who is unable to manage formal education.

Children are encouraged to explore new interests and take part in a range of activities. One child enjoys horse riding lessons. Children and staff spend time together cycling, playing football and visiting water parks. They also go on holiday together and are planning a trip abroad. These shared experiences help build strong relationships and create positive memories that contribute to children's life stories.

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

Managers have worked hard to address shortfalls in safeguarding practice identified at the last inspection. They notify appropriate agencies and carry out effective investigations when safeguarding concerns are raised. On one occasion, staff did not notify agencies of a safeguarding concern within agreed timescales. This was quickly identified through the

manager's monitoring systems and addressed with staff. There was no impact on children.

Safeguarding incidents are rare due to strong relationships between staff and children. Staff consistently promote strong routines and boundaries which helps children to feel safe and contained. Risk management plans are based on the home's therapeutic model and provide staff with clear guidance to manage risks and respond to complex behaviours. Children are involved in developing and reviewing their plans. Consequently, the home has a calm atmosphere, and there have been no incidents of physical intervention since the last inspection.

Children do not go missing from the home. Staff understand missing-from-home protocols, and managers share relevant information with the police as an added safeguard. Staff are skilled at having important conversations to help children understand dangers such as criminal exploitation and knife crime.

Children are sometimes unkind to one another and there have been incidents of bullying. Staff manage these risks through close supervision and arranging separate activities for children. They also help children talk things through with each other to help repair their relationship. However, staff do not consistently educate children about bullying or support them to reflect on its impact on themselves or others.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager holds the children at the centre of his decision making and advocates for them to ensure they have what they need to thrive. He is skilled at building positive working relationships with partner agencies. This promotes partnership working and ensures that children receive the correct support. Both professionals and family members speak positively about the manager. They identify communication as a key strength, and describe the manager as being a strong advocate for children.

The manager has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development for the home. There are effective systems for monitoring the quality of care including regular audits. The manager creates clear action plans that help to drive development and ensure that the service is continually improving. Additionally, the senior leadership team are experienced and are regular visitors to the home. They maintain good oversight and the manager says he feels well supported in his role.

Staff say that staff morale is good. They say that the manager listens to their views, 'He lets you speak in supervision; he listens. He is a calm happy manager.' Staff benefit from regular good quality, reflective supervision meetings and an annual appraisal. Additionally, the manager is aspirational for staff. All staff have a personal development plan and are supported and encouraged to progress in their role.

Children receive consistent care from a team of well qualified, dedicated staff. Three staff have a relevant qualification and three are enrolled. Cover staff from other homes in the company are rarely used. Shortfalls in staffing are covered by core staff, including

the manager. This means that children receive good quality consistent care from adults who know them well.

Staff benefit from a comprehensive range of training, including training that is individualised to children's needs. All staff have training in the home's model of care which is updated annually. Staff say that they find training helpful and can identify how it informs their practice. As a result, children are cared for by staff who understand their roles and responsibilities and provide good quality care.

The manager ensures that children have many opportunities to share their views in planned meetings and ad hoc discussions. He encourages children to attend their care planning meetings and enables children to clearly express their views. This strong support has enabled children to change aspects of their care, such as increasing the time they spend with family members. This approach empowers children and enables them to feel a sense of agency over their lives.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, in line with their individual health plans and the ethos of the home, children are offered advice, support and guidance on health and well-being to enhance, and supplement that provided by their school through Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). Staff should have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to help children understand key areas of health and well-being such as, sexual relationships, sexual health, contraception and the physical and emotional effects of puberty. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18)
- The registered person should ensure that standards of behaviour are high for all staff and children in the home. These standards should be clear and unambiguous. Children should be supported to develop understanding and empathy towards each other. Positive behaviour and relationships should be reinforced, praised and encouraged; poor behaviour should be challenged and discussed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11)

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: 2731377

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Core Children Ltd

Registered provider address: The Glades, Festival Way, Festival Park, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire ST1 5SQ

Responsible individual: Lyndan Whiston

Registered manager: Christopher Horton

Inspector

Karen Gillingwater, Social Care Inspector

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