

2744065

Registered provider: O'Connell Care Group

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care for up to three children who may have experienced social and emotional difficulties. Two children were living in the home at the time of inspection, and they contributed to the inspection.

The home opened in March 2024. The manager has been in post since June 2025 and is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 June 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: 4 September 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/09/2025	Full	Good
07/05/2025	Full	Inadequate
11/06/2024	Full	Good

Summary of findings

The children living in the home are settled and experiencing stability. They have good relationships with staff who know them well. Safeguarding is effective and staff work collaboratively with partner agencies to meet the needs of children. The manager and deputy are reflective and committed to improving practice. Safer recruitment, training and the consistent implementation of learning from incidents are identified as areas for development.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children live in a homely environment. It is large, clean and well furnished. Children experience well-planned moves into the home. Children are involved in their plans and offered increased support to meet their needs. An interactive children's guide enables children to virtually tour the home, meet staff and ask questions about the home before moving in and while living there. This creative approach helps children to understand what it is like to live in the home.

Children like living in the home and have meaningful relationships with adults they trust. Staff understand children's needs well and build positive and supportive relationships with them. Children receive care tailored to their individual needs. Children's plans are clear, evidence-based and capture their unique qualities. Staff demonstrate creativity in supporting children, with one child and staff member using soft toys to support communication, relationship-building and affection.

Education is a priority in this home. One child attends school regularly. Another child benefits from an alternative provision in line with their individual needs. Both children are making progress. A child's tutor shared that the child 'demonstrates increased confidence in their learning', reflecting the consistent support and encouragement by staff. Strong advocacy for another child has resulted in a change to their education provision, ensuring it better meets their needs. This has helped the child feel less anxious and more settled when they are there.

Managers advocate for children and challenge professionals when stigmatising language is used about children. Staff respectfully challenge professionals when children's behaviours are not well understood, and children are not getting the support that they need. This is recorded in an age-appropriate way and written directly to the child to help them understand the decisions being made about their care and education.

Children are supported to have safe and meaningful relationships with their family and people who are important to them. Children's achievements are celebrated. Staff use praise and encouragement to reinforce helpful behaviours, such as seeking support from adults to talk about how they feel. This supports children's confidence and helps them to develop coping mechanisms for the future.

Children know how to raise concerns and make complaints and feel confident to express the things they don't like or would like to be different.

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

Staff keep children safe. Physical interventions are used infrequently. When they are used, they are necessary, reasonable and proportionate. Management oversight is reflective and identifies early signs of children becoming upset. As a result, staff respond earlier to children to prevent recurrence.

Staff understand children's risks well and know what to do during a missing incident to try and locate the child safely. Children's important people are promptly informed, and information is shared with the relevant agencies. Staff keep in touch with children by using approaches they know children respond to best. Missing-from-care incidents have reduced because of the strong relationships between children and staff.

When children harm themselves, staff manage this well with calm redirection techniques and humour. Consequences are used appropriately and children are involved in discussions to understand impact of their choices. Children know why the consequence is in place. Rewards are understood by the children and centred around incentives that are important to them. The tasks are age appropriate and individual for each child, helping them to stay motivated.

Multi-agency working is effective and supports safety and exploration of risk. Communication with partner agencies is strong, and feedback from professionals highlights children's safety as a priority. One professional said, 'Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding and implement appropriate interventions to promote and maintain the safety of young people.' Allegations are responded to in a timely way with information shared quickly with relevant agencies and people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by an empathic and passionate manager and equally passionate and approachable deputy. They receive effective support from the responsible individual. Leaders have high aspirations for children.

Staff describe a family culture within the home, with an emphasis on building relationships and trust with children. Staff report feeling well supported by leaders and describe a positive morale in the home.

Managers have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they care for. Team meetings are used to support staff in reflecting on children's experiences and the care they receive. Clinical supervision is also being provided by an external service to create space for reflection for staff to better understand and respond to children's needs.

Recruitment has been a challenge since the last inspection. There is now a full staff team in place and agency staff are only used in exceptional circumstances. Where agency staff are used, they have sufficient training and experience for the role. Familiar agency staff members are specifically requested due to their competence and relationship with children in the home, providing continuity of care.

Staff are mostly recruited safely, but practice is not sufficiently robust. One permanent member of staff did not have a reference from their most recent employer. This has left a gap in leaders' understanding of the staff member's employment history.

Leaders and managers are embedding a learning culture in the home. Supervisions are regular and provide staff with opportunities to reflect on their own feelings and children's experiences. Leaders use a range of monitoring and oversight tools to identify gaps and learning. However, when learning opportunities are identified, they are not yet consistently actioned by the staff team. For example, staff were provided with guidance about storing keys safely as part of safety planning for children. This has not been happening consistently. This increases the likelihood of incidents recurring, leaving children unnecessarily vulnerable.

Training and development activities are not yet effective in meeting the specific needs of children in the home. Some staff members are not trained in first aid, and most staff do not receive the training they need to meet children's specific health concerns.

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 leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(h)) The registered person must ensure that staff are sufficiently trained in first aid and to meet children's individual health needs. In addition, the registered person must ensure that any learning identified is implemented in practice.	20 August 2026
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.	20 August 2026

(Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(d))

The registered person must ensure that references are requested from a prospective employee's most recent employer and that all information required under Schedule 2 is satisfied.

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: 2744065

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: O'Connell Care Group

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Lee Wendon

Inspectors

Kim Morgan, Social Care Inspector

John Tomlinson, Social Care Inspector

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