

2794302

Registered provider: Essential Therapeutic Care and Education

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care for up to three children who experience social and emotional difficulties. There were three children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The registered manager has been in post since August 2024.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 July 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: 19 March 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/03/2025	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff have a good understanding of children's individual needs and vulnerabilities. They work effectively to help children develop trust and a sense of belonging. These strong relationships have helped children to make progress from their individual starting points, such as eating more healthily or communicating more with peers.

Staff help children to take part in a range of activities, such as karaoke, bowling, cinema and boxing. Their individual interests and enthusiasms are understood and encouraged. These activities boost children's self-confidence and life experiences and help them to make positive memories.

One child has moved into the home since the last inspection. Managers gave careful consideration to this move, taking into account the needs of the child and those already living in the home. The staff team was helped to understand the child's needs in preparation for their arrival. Staff and managers worked proactively and flexibly with other professionals, family members and the child to support a positive move into the home.

Education and learning are valued by staff, who are aspirational for children's progress. None of the children in the home are currently attending school, but staff provide children with daily structure and opportunities to learn, in line with their relevant plans, and they work closely with education colleagues to review these plans and work towards school attendance. Such support helped one child, who had been out of education, to begin attending again. On one occasion, when the manager was concerned about a school's support for a child, they consulted with the virtual school head for guidance, although they did not take the opportunity to directly challenge the school themselves.

Staff spend regular one-to-one time talking to children to ascertain their views and wishes about topics relevant to them, such as family relationships, education plans and internet safety. Children's achievements and strengths are recognised and encouraged. This helps children to feel cared for and to think about how they respond to the challenges that they face.

Children's relationships outside the home are valued and promoted in line with their plans. Staff work well with family members to review these arrangements and plan to make them as positive as possible, helping children to maintain their sense of identity.

Leaders and managers have made the decision to end the placement for one child. This decision has been carefully considered in consultation with other professionals and is based on a realistic appraisal of the child's needs. Managers are using the support of their clinical team to consider what can be learned and are working proactively with other agencies to support the child with the transition.

The home is warm, and furnished in a comfortable, child-friendly manner. Children are supported to personalise their rooms; this helps to give them a sense of ownership and belonging.

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

When children are at increased risk, for example, if they are missing from home or experiencing mental health difficulties, staff take prompt action to try to keep them safe. They are guided by clear, up-to-date assessments and plans. Systems for communicating changes to plans are effective. Following incidents of concern, staff work individually with children to help them to think about what has happened. This means that risks are managed as safely as possible and children are supported with strategies to become safer.

Staff and managers work effectively with other professionals to manage risks and to review children's safety plans. When appropriate, managers challenge partner agencies constructively. This promotes a coordinated response to keeping children safe.

Staff undertake training in positive behaviour management and use de-escalation techniques before using physical intervention, which is only used as a last resort. After physical intervention is used, staff and children are given opportunities to reflect on the incident; the analysis of patterns of behaviours supports staff to learn from these events.

When there are allegations made against staff, managers conduct timely consultations with relevant professionals, such as the local authority designated officer and the child's social worker. Interim measures are put in place to manage potential risks during investigations. In relation to one allegation made by a child, who has since been missing from the home, there has not been a clear, proactive plan to try to follow this up and communicate with the child. Following discussion during the inspection, managers devised an action plan to address this concern.

Managers understand their responsibility to notify Ofsted when serious incidents occur. While such notifications have been appropriate, some have not been submitted in a timely manner. This has meant that the regulator has not always been kept up to date. However, this has not impacted on children.

Thorough safer recruitment practices are in place, which help to ensure that suitable people are employed to care for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager. The registered manager is enthusiastic about their role and knowledgeable about the children living in the home, and takes a very child-centred approach. They provide a good role model for staff.

Staff are positive about the children they care for and about the support that they receive to carry out their roles. They say managers, including senior managers, are present and available. This underpins a culture of care for everyone in the home.

Staff receive training that is tailored to meet the specific needs of the children in the home and supports care in line with the statement of purpose. Systems for ensuring that staff are up to date with training and progressing with required qualifications are effective.

The structure for staff support includes individual supervision, appraisals, regular team meetings and reflective time, supported by the clinical team. One-to-one supervision of staff is of good quality, but some staff have not received regular supervision in line with the home's policy, which undermines an otherwise robust system of support for staff.

Managers and staff understand the importance of working relationships with others involved in children's lives. They work effectively and sensitively with professionals from a range of appropriate agencies. Relationships with children's parents are generally managed well. The parents of two of the children provided positive feedback about the care and communication. For one parent, there was a need for improvement to ensure that they are consistently informed and updated on their child's progress.

The home is adequately staffed. There has been some use of agency staff to cover one waking night position in recent months, but this is carefully managed and there is ongoing and active recruitment to cover this post. As a result, children experience consistency of care.

Managers have effective systems in place to maintain oversight of the service. These include regular visits by an independent person. Senior managers work with the independent person to ensure that this process works as well as possible. Management oversight of recording has been strengthened since the last inspection and the shortfall identified in this area has addressed.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(b)) In particular, ensure that all possible efforts are made to follow up allegations made by children and to offer them reassurance that their concerns are being taken seriously.	8 September 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff act as effective advocates for or on behalf of a child who may be experiencing difficulties with education as a good parent would do. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 28, paragraph 5.12)
- The registered person should ensure that steps are taken to develop an effective working relationship and communication with all children's parents. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.3)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff receive supervision of their practice at a frequency in line with company policy. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people, including the regulator. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)

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: 2794302

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Essential Therapeutic Care and Education

Registered provider address: Unit 9, Court Farm, Rag Hill, Aldermaston, Reading RG7 4NT

Responsible individual: Emma Teasdale

Registered manager: Kathryn Raison

Inspector

Jacob Robson, Social Care Inspector

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