

2819760

Registered provider: ESTUARY RESIDENTIAL CARE LTD

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a small private provider. It can provide care for up to 4 children who may have social and emotional difficulties or learning disabilities.

At the time of the inspection, 3 children were living at the home. They were all involved in the inspection.

The registered manager's post is vacant. The responsible individual was present throughout the inspection.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 May 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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 19 May 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/05/2025	Full	Good

Summary of findings

Children have close relationships with staff who are invested in them and know them well. Children are listened to and benefit from a nurturing staff team. Safeguarding procedures are embedded and staff have a good understanding of children's vulnerabilities. Some shortfalls in practice have been identified. These include missed opportunities to improve practice and promote best outcomes for children. Communication with families and professionals is mixed and at times staff do not work collaboratively to provide the best support to children.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have positive relationships with a nurturing staff team. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of children's needs. Children appear settled and comfortable with the staff team. Children approach staff for support or affection which is responded to positively by staff. Children were seen to be having lots of fun and laughing with staff. Staff understand children's needs paying attention to body language, presentation and non-verbal cues which indicate how they are feeling.

Children's communication aids are easy for them to access. However, pictorial symbols which support communication are not available for all the every-day objects that they use. This makes it harder for children to express their needs quickly and can lead to unnecessary frustration.

Children are supported to express their views. Staff take time to explain, observe and listen to children carefully. Children's relationships with each other are supported well. When there was a concern about conflict between children, they were each supported sensitively. The manager considered both children's needs well and helped them to repair their relationship.

Children and staff come together to share evening meals. Care is taken to support one child's specialist diet, with food being stored carefully. Children are offered some choice around food although this is limited.

All the children attend school or college and are making good progress. Some professionals explained that a communication book which enables school and home staff to communicate about a child's needs is not utilised well by the staff team. This has a negative impact on children. For example, on occasions the correct equipment has not been provided for children to help them fully enjoy activities at school.

Children have fun; the trampoline and new swing are particularly enjoyed. There are day trips out to the park, fairs and theme parks. These experiences are captured well for children in their memory books. Children can access toys in the home, although there is

not a good variety. For example, children who enjoy role-play do not have access to age-appropriate toys and are limited by small, child-like toys. A better equipped sensory room is planned to increase children's experiences.

The home environment provides a safe space for children. There is plenty of room in the home for children to come together or have time apart. The home is clean and well maintained. Photos of the children can be seen throughout which celebrate their experiences. There are some areas of damage, some of which are quickly repaired or there are clear plans in place to repair.

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

Staff have a good understanding of the risks to children and understand their vulnerabilities well. Children are listened to and supported to express their views by staff well. This helps staff have a good insight into how children are feeling. Child are also supported to an independent advocate.

There have been very few incidents of children going missing from the home. When children have been missing staff search for them and inform the police when needed. It is not always clear where one child is during missing episodes. However, work was completed with this child to understand the risks and no further incidents have occurred. Independent Return home conversations have been completed when children come home.

Physical interventions have been used. In the main, these have been to prevent children from harming themselves and are proportionate to the risk. Conversations with children do not consistently take place after restraint has happened. For children who are non-verbal, there are no recorded observations of them. This means that the impact on children at these times is not fully considered. Similarly, conversations with staff are not consistently happening. This means that opportunities for learning from the incidents are lost. This does not help to reduce the level of physical intervention used.

Children benefit from consistent routines; this helps to allay anxieties and makes situations predicable for them. There is a nurturing response to self-harm behaviours. Staff know how to support children and use distraction techniques to help children manage difficult feelings as quickly as possible.

Concerns about staff practice are investigated thoroughly. Concerns raised by children are taken seriously and reported to the relevant professionals in a timely way.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The home has been without a registered manager for almost 10 months. However, the previous manager remains working at the home and a covering manager has been appointed. Additional staff have been recruited to accommodate the increase in children. There has not been a need for agency staffing and the team has provided consistency of care for the children.

Leaders and managers lack understanding of staff practice. There is a lack of oversight of some key incidents for children. Limited conversations with staff and children after significant events mean opportunities for learning are lost. There is some evidence of reflection within team meetings, but this varies.

There is limited feedback from children, families and professionals when managers complete reviews. Feedback received from professionals and families indicates a mixed response to communication. Some say this is excellent and others say that this is not happening routinely. This does not help to drive improvements for children.

Relationships with other professionals to support children's needs varies. On occasion meetings have been cancelled by the home due to staffing or IT issues. This has led to delays for children in certain areas. For example, a recent meeting to support one child's time with their family was cancelled by the home. This has meant a delay in creating a safe plan for the child to spend time with family members.

Staff generally say they feel supported, although this is more by colleagues than leaders and managers. Systems are in place so that staff are supervised regularly. Staff report varied quality of supervision.

Staff are up to date with mandatory training. However, no specific training has been identified to meet children's particular needs. For example, staff have not had training to use children's communication aids. Senior staff have provided some resources and guidance for the team.

Team meetings take place regularly. Safeguarding matters are discussed and staff are reminded about processes. However, actions identified through meetings and audits are vague and without timeframes.

Children's documents are not always up to date. This means that the guidance to the team is not the most relevant and may be confusing.

Children's moves into the home are carefully considered. However, professionals and family members report that opportunities were not taken up to share known strategies to support children. This lack of working together can mean additional frustration and delay for children to settle and flourish.

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 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 work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received.	31 July 2026

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(ii)(h)) In particular this means that staff are provided with the training to meet the children's specific needs, especially in relation to any communication needs. In addition, leaders and managers must have oversight of the care provided and use learning and feedback systems to inform improvements.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; 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	31 July 2026

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)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))

In particular, this means that following any physical intervention, conversations (or observations of children) must take place with staff and children about the measure used to understand the impact of the intervention and to identify any areas to improve practice

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that each child is provided with support to communicate their views, wishes and feelings and participate as fully as possible in all aspects of daily care and planning. Communication aids should be readily available to children and allow children to request every-day references and objects that are important to them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.6)
- The registered person should ensure that the home has effective working relationships with each child's placing authority and with the other key people in each child's life. The home should work in collaboration with key professionals and family members to share strategies and practicalities so that children's needs are met. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.3)
- The registered person should lead a team which provides high quality care for all children living in the home. Specific guidance on the care a child needs should be made clear to all staff. Children's documents should be up to date and provide the latest advice for staff to follow. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.4)

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: 2819760

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Estuary Residential Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Glass House, Alderley Park, Congleton Road, Nether Alderley, Macclesfield, Cheshire East SK10 4TG

Responsible individual: Neil Johnstone

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors:

Nickie Doney, Social Care Inspector
Darren Wickens, Social Care Inspector

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