

2828500

Registered provider: Country Homes For Children 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 company. The home provides care for up to three children who may experience emotional and social difficulties.

The home currently has two managers; both are experienced and have the required qualification. Both managers are registered with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 30 June and 1 July 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

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

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: not previously inspected

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 since the home was registered in February 2025. The home previously operated under a different organisation and was required to re-register. At the time of the inspection, three children were living at the home. The inspector spoke with all three children.

Children develop excellent relationships with staff, who understand and meet their individual needs and who are invested in their progress. During the inspection, children were observed laughing and cuddling with staff, demonstrating clear emotional bonds. One social worker said, '[Name of child] wants to stay here until she is an adult, this home is absolutely the right setting for her.'

Staff support children's health needs through careful planning and effective communication with external providers. They ensure that children attend routine health appointments. The organisation's in-house therapist provides additional guidance to staff on appropriate approaches to supporting children's emotional health and well-being. Where necessary, staff seek specialist support, including referrals for counselling. This multi-agency approach to care ensures that children's holistic health needs are met.

Staff provide great support for children with their education. One child has made significant progress and has excellent attendance. Their education provider said, '[Name of child] strives to always do her best.' Another child receives home tutoring, with staff tailoring their support to the child's learning style to enhance progress. This child's education provider said, 'Managers and staff work well with me to promote [name of child's] education.' This approach not only improves outcomes but also empowers children to reach their full potential.

Children make meaningful progress in developing their independence skills. They prepare simple meals and keep their bedrooms tidy. One child said that they complete their own weekly shopping and manage their budget effectively. The child also demonstrated a clear understanding of their future plans after leaving the home, saying, 'With the support I've had I can look after myself.' The inspector viewed photos of a child baking a birthday cake for one of the managers and decorating the birthday table for everyone to enjoy. This highlights how children are learning practical skills, building confidence and taking pride in caring for others.

Children engage in a variety of activities that enrich their social experiences, such as swimming and community walks. They also choose their own holidays, with one child travelling abroad and another opting for a beach caravan break. These opportunities help children build confidence, develop social skills and create lasting memories. They also promote choice, independence and a sense of belonging.

Staff support children in spending time with the people who are important to them, such as family members. They maintain positive relationships with families, ensuring that safe and meaningful visits take place when appropriate. One parent said, 'This is fantastic. The staff support [name of child] and me in family time.' This approach helps children to maintain connections with those who are significant in their lives.

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

Children form strong, trusting relationships with staff, built on mutual respect and affection. One child said, 'I love and trust the staff they are kind and very funny.' Another child said, 'I'm not really an open person, but if I was worried, I would go to staff and tell them.' Children feel safe in the home and have confidence in staff who care for them.

When children go missing from the home, staff actively search for them and work with the police until they are safely found. During this time, managers engage with external professionals to coordinate a holistic, multi-agency response tailored to each child's needs. They work proactively to prevent further incidents of children going missing from the home and to safeguard the well-being of children.

Staff manage children's behaviour effectively, and as a result, there have been very few physical interventions. They follow the home's care model, and use strategies such as humour, playfulness and empathy to provide support. When physical intervention is required, staff use it safely and only as a last resort. Following these interventions, staff offer children the opportunity to express their feelings. Staff also participate in reflective discussions focused on the safety and effectiveness of the intervention. This process promotes accountability and reinforces staff knowledge.

Staff ensure that children use the internet safely. Parental controls are implemented to ensure that children only access age-appropriate content online. Staff conduct checks on children's devices as necessary and in line with their individual plans. In addition, dedicated staff take proactive measures to equip children with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the online world responsibly. Through engaging sessions, children learn about potential online risks and the importance of privacy and responsible behaviour.

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

The home employs two registered managers, although one will be leaving their role shortly. Both managers maintain a child-centred approach and hold high aspirations for the children and the staff team. One member of staff said, 'Both managers are supportive, one is a good leader and the other is very knowledgeable.'

Managers have failed to identify shortfalls in staff practice and have not consistently taken the necessary steps to ensure that children are safe and well cared for. The systems used by leaders and managers for monitoring and review do not consistently

support effective oversight. For example, several gaps were identified in the recording of children's incident forms, and housekeeping routines have lacked strong managerial oversight. These issues led to inconsistencies in the delivery of high-quality care and in maintaining robust safeguarding measures. Leaders have given assurances that these shortfalls will be addressed immediately.

Allegations and complaints are rare. When concerns do arise, managers share relevant information with external professionals. However, on one occasion, managers failed to ensure a child's safety. Despite the concern raised by the child, the staff member remained working in the home, which compromised the well-being of both the child and the staff member involved. This does not reflect safe or responsible safeguarding practice.

In addition to the above, managers admitted a child to the home in an emergency without having all the required documentation to identify and meet the child's needs. They also overlooked the fact that the existing staff team lacked the necessary experience to support some of the child's individual needs. This practice is inconsistent with the home's statement of purpose and placed additional pressure on the staff team to care for the children effectively.

Despite the effective action taken by staff when incidents occur, managers do not consistently provide clear guidance for staff to follow in children's individual plans. For example, missing-from-home plans often omit current levels of concern and specific vulnerabilities. They also do not clearly state when staff should report a child as missing to the police. This lack of clarity hinders timely safeguarding responses and increases the level of risk to children.

Team meetings and supervision take place regularly, and managers recognise the importance of supporting staff welfare. One staff member said, 'I am asked how I am doing, and we also discuss my role and responsibilities.' Following supervision discussions, managers make a deliberate effort to acknowledge and thank staff for their hard work. This approach fosters a sense of value and motivates the team.

Partnership working with external agencies is good. The registered managers and staff develop strong relationships with parents and all external professionals, including social workers. One professional said, 'The partnership working and updates from the managers is so good.'

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 staff— have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and 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)(iii)(v)(vi)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that the registered manager takes prompt and appropriate action to safeguard both staff and children following any serious allegations made by children.	4 August 2025
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— 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;	4 August 2025

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;

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1) (2)(c)(g)(ii)(h))

This specifically relates to ensuring that the manager's monitoring systems are effective and robust, and that all staff have the required experience to meet children's individual needs.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 2828500

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Country Homes For Children Ltd

Registered provider address: Manor House Farm, Hall Lane, Hilderstone, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 8SQ

Responsible individual: Neil Booth

Registered manager: Jason Sellars and Claire Campbell

Inspector

Jas Nahar, Social Care Inspector

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