

SC006017

Registered provider: Care Afloat Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a private provider. It is registered to provide care for one child with social and emotional needs.

One child is currently being cared for at the home. The inspector spoke with the child as part of the inspection.

The registered manager is suitably experienced and has been in post since August 2023.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 January 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: 5 March 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/03/2025	Full	Good
04/12/2023	Full	Good
14/02/2023	Full	Good
12/10/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The child receives a good standard of care from a stable and experienced staff team who know them well. Staff have built positive relationships with the child. The child said, 'Staff are kind and caring and help me keep calm and connect with family.'

The manager and staff promote education. The child is in full-time education and is supported to attend school daily. Staff work well with education staff and communicate effectively about challenges that impact the child's ability to access education. Education staff visit the child at home to encourage learning and ensure that the child knows that they are welcome in school when they are ready.

The manager and staff seek the child's views and wishes and advocate on their behalf. Staff routinely seek the child's views through regular discussion and the child also has access to an advocate. The child's views are considered when preparing for care planning and education meetings, ensuring that the child is meaningfully involved in decisions about their day-to-day care. However, the most recent education and care plans are not available at the home. This limits staff's ability to ensure that the child's care and education are being delivered in line with the agreed arrangements set out by the child's professional network.

Staff support the child to manage their health needs. The child is registered with a doctor and dentist and has access to support from specialist healthcare services when needed. Staff support the child to attend these appointments and understand why they are important. As a result, the child's routine health appointments and checks are up to date.

The home is warm and welcoming and well decorated. Staff create a warm, nurturing and homely atmosphere. They make themselves available at the home, which helps to encourage the child to spend time out of their bedroom and to make full use of their home.

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

Allegations are taken seriously and are fully investigated. Leaders and managers liaise with relevant professionals to ensure that investigations are thorough and that the child is provided with the right support throughout investigations.

The child receives weekly direct therapeutic support from the home's allocated assistant psychologist. When the child does not wish to engage directly, therapeutic work is delivered indirectly through the staff team. This ensures that the care provided continues to align with and supports the child's therapeutic needs.

There has been a high number of missing-from-home episodes since the last inspection. Some missing-from-home episodes are for prolonged periods. Staff follow the child's missing-from-home plans, checking with friends and searching in known locations to support the child's safe return. When the child returns to the home, staff welcome them back and ensure that they are safe and well.

Significant incidents are well managed and staff respond appropriately and sensitively to the child. Staff have a good understanding of the child's risks and the strategies in place to support them. However, incident reports do not always provide a complete account of what has taken place, as staff fail to record how incidents conclude. This does not reflect the resolution of the incident. The manager provides an overview of each incident and works with children's networks to implement plans that reduce risk.

Staff complete training that is specific to the individual needs of the child, including self-harm, substance misuse, neurodiversity, child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation. This ensures that staff have the knowledge and skills required to support the child effectively.

Staff carry out direct work with the child on internet safety, sexual health, missing from home and relationships. This helps the child to recognise risks and understand potential consequences. As a result, the child is increasingly able to make informed decisions about friendships, staying safe online, their health and how they spend their free time.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager provides a consistent and stable presence in the home and is clearly committed to improving outcomes for children.

The manager has good oversight of the home and this is evident across reports and plans, all of which show clear management review. The manager completes a weekly report and a monthly audit with clear actions for the upcoming month. He also uses findings from the independent person visits and information gathered for quality of care reports to identify and address shortfalls. This ensures that the home continues to operate in line with regulatory requirements.

The manager and staff have built positive relationships with the professionals involved in the child's care. However, parents say that they are not regularly updated and are sometimes unaware of concerns or achievements. This does not ensure that parents always feel informed or included in their child's care.

Leaders and managers follow safer recruitment procedures. This ensures that all staff are fully vetted before providing care and enables leaders to be assured of staff members' integrity and suitability for their roles.

The manager has a good understanding of the staff strengths and areas for development. Staff receive regular supervision, which provides opportunities to reflect on practice, review risk assessments and consider their wellbeing. Annual appraisals focus

on supporting individual development. The manager also seeks feedback from colleagues and the child to help evaluate staff performance. Staff say that they feel fully supported by the manager.

Team meetings take place regularly and are used to discuss the child's needs and support strategies, review risk assessments, consider routines and reflect on recording and reporting. These meetings help to promote consistent practice and cohesive teamwork.

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 registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that statutory care plans and education plans are up to date and stored securely in the home. Staff must understand work with children's current plans.	30 March 2026
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must ensure that staff— seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (d)) Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that they seek to involve those with parental responsibility and establish an effective working relationship.	30 March 2026

Recommendation

- The manager should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. 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: SC006017

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Care Afloat Ltd

Registered provider address: 158-160 Birkrig, Digmoor Parade, Skelmersdale,
Lancashire WN8 9HP

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: Mark Craven

Inspector

Renée Sims, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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