

SC008575

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a charitable organisation and provides care for up to five children who may have physical disabilities and/or special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The home provides short-term breaks together with long-term placements for up to 5 children. Two of these places may be given to accommodate a child to live at the home continuously or on a shared care arrangement.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2016.

There were 5 children accessing the service at the time of the inspection, the inspector spent time with all the children.

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 March 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: 28 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/01/2025	Full	Good
29/02/2024	Full	Good
14/02/2023	Full	Good
13/10/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have positive and trusting relationships with staff. Staff are nurturing with children and understand their communication needs. They invest time in them, are proud of the progress children have made and talk about their developments with enthusiasm. Children's achievements are celebrated and recognised by the staff team.

Professionals and family provide positive feedback about the quality of care and support provided to children and the impact of children accessing the service on their well-being, progress and family dynamics. One parent said, 'They have changed mine and my child's life. I cannot thank them enough.' The staff team works closely with children's families to effectively support children's transitions from their family home to the service and in relation to care planning.

Children make progress in a variety of areas of their lives, such as independence skills, improved sleep patterns and personal care. They have access to new experiences and activities in the community that they would not necessarily do so if they were not accessing the service. Children attend weekly disability football clubs, theme parks, swimming and ice skating. Staff have effectively used the local offer to improve children's recreational time, enabling them to have fun with staff and their peers.

Children have detailed 'All about me' plans, providing staff with a good understanding of children's needs and communication styles. Some children's case files do not contain the most up-to-date records from the placing authority to ensure that staff have the most current information about the child. Action was taken during the inspection to obtain these records.

The staff team consults with additional health professionals such as occupational therapists, sleep services and paediatrics services to ensure that children's complex health needs are monitored well. All children are supported to attend school as part of their daily routines. Staff communicate with teaching staff to share good practice and to ensure that consistent boundaries are implemented with children.

Children's views are sought in a variety of ways. Individual sessions and questionnaires are conducted with children to help them understand situations, to convey how they are feeling and to reflect on incidents. Children are supported to communicate their views using Picture Exchange Communication Systems, social stories, daily interaction with staff and individual strategies such as now and next.

The home is comfortable and meets the needs of the children. Children who live in the home have personalised their bedrooms nicely. It has a large garden that is adapted for children in wheelchairs. There is a plan to develop the home and the garden further with redecoration having already begun.

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

Children are safe and secure during their stays at the home. Children's risk assessments and positive behaviour support (PBS) plans provide staff with the information that they require to work with children to keep them safe. Staff understand children's triggers to their behaviour and how best to support them when they become upset or anxious. This enables staff to effectively de-escalate situations, reassure children and help them to settle back into their routine quickly.

Children who are new to the service, have well planned transitions taken at the child's and their family's pace. Careful consideration is given to the suitability of them accessing the service with current children. From the beginning of children's placement, staff implement clear boundaries for children to promote a predictable environment and to help them to settle into the home.

Physical restraint is rarely used. When required, it is for the least amount of time and the least restrictive measure. Incidents of self-injury are shared with the relevant professionals to ensure full transparency and to safeguard children. The manager oversees all incidents to ensure that they have been managed appropriately. She works with the PBS coach to review lessons learned and to identify alternative strategies to help children to manage their behaviours.

The staff team has a good understanding of their safeguarding roles and responsibilities, including working with external safeguarding professionals such as the local authority designated officer (LADO). Staff act promptly to report any unexplained bruising to the relevant professionals and children's families. This has enabled investigations to be conducted without delay to ensure the safety of the child.

There has been one medication error that involved several staff. Suitable changes have been made to promote safe medication administration. There has been shared learning and retraining of staff in response to investigation conducted by the trust lead nurse. Parents and the child's placing authority were notified. However, leaders and managers did not notify the LADO, which was key due to the numbers of staff involved and the potential impact there could have been on the child.

There has been no complaints or allegations raised by children, their families or professionals. However, there are clear forums in place for them to be able to do so effectively.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager and senior leadership team know children well. They advocate on behalf of children in the home and they are positive role models. They talk about children fondly, understand their progress and additional support that children require to develop their skills. The manager and deputy manager operate the home well and have oversight of all records and staff practice. Multi agency working is a key strength of the staff team.

They work closely with health, education, social care and other professionals to ensure that children's needs are met to the best of their ability.

The manager's workforce development plan is detailed and ensures that she has a good overview of her staff and their professional development. It includes individual staff targets and how the manager plans to upskill her team. There are some gaps in refresher training that staff require for their role and children's needs led training. The manager's training matrix identifies these needs. However, this requires acting upon to ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge to meet children's needs to the best of their ability.

There has been some long-term staff absence. This means that staff have been required to cover shifts and there has been a reliance on agency or bank staff to cover gaps in the rota. There has been no identified impact on the children, as the manager makes every attempt to use the same agency and bank staff that know children well. The senior leadership team monitors this situation well to ensure that children are provided with continuity of care and support.

All staff receive regular practice-related supervisions. Appraisals and probationary reviews are carried out at timely intervals to ensure that existing and new staff are provided with the support they require. Staff are supported by the leadership team and well guided in the work that they do with children. They are extremely complementary about the transparent approach the manager takes in leading the team and involving staff in specific champion roles to improve the quality of care for children.

Team meetings are held regularly with most staff in attendance. They are used as a valuable opportunity for the staff team to come together and to review each child's progress and care needs. The manager also brings creative activities and developmental work to the meetings to enhance staff skills and knowledge in their roles.

The manager's review of the quality-of-care report provides a clear analysis of the impact of the service on children's experiences. It demonstrates that the manager has a good oversight of the operation of the home. However, senior managers are to review the purpose of the home and the service it offers, as the number of overnight stays that some children are accessing is not in line with the home's current registration conditions.

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
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (5)) Specifically, leaders and managers must review the purpose of the home and the service it offers to children, to ensure that the number of overnight stays that children access is in line with the home's current registration conditions.	17 April 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that as required by regulation 40 they notify other relevant persons about serious events (see paragraphs 14.9-14.15). Specifically, leaders and managers should ensure that they inform LADO of any medication errors that could place a child at risk. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.4)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. Specifically, leaders and managers should ensure that staff undertake training in child needs led courses, such as autism and global development delay. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that all children's case records (regulation 36) must be kept up to date. Specifically, leaders and managers should ensure that children have up-to-date placing authority records on their file, so that staff have the most up-to-date information to work with children effectively. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

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: SC008575

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Together Trust Centre, Schools Hill, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 1JE

Responsible individual: Sara Aldridge

Registered manager: Helen Marston

Inspector

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector

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