

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 five children.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2016.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 January 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: 29 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/02/2024	Full	Good
14/02/2023	Full	Good
13/10/2021	Full	Good
04/12/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are extremely well cared for. They form strong and positive relationships with staff and say that they feel safe and secure. One child's parent said, 'Staff are really child centred. My child loves the staff, I wish they could stay there forever.'

Staff make sure that the children's views, wishes and feelings are heard and acted on. They actively seek children's views on all aspects of their care, using their preferred communication methods. Staff encourage children to express their individual identities.

Staff make sure that they provide children with opportunities which expand their life experiences. Staff support children to experience a wide range of stimulating and age-appropriate activities to meet their sensory needs and their hobbies and interests, such as walks, cinema, bowling, water parks, theme parks and sensory play centres. This means that children have the opportunity to access experiences which they may not otherwise be able to, and they benefit greatly from spending time at the home. However, opportunities could be enhanced if staff were aware of what is available through the local authority local offer.

The manager and staff are committed to working together with parents, placing authorities, specialist health advisers and children's schools. These positive and effective working relationships support children to receive a high level of care and ensure that there is a wraparound approach to supporting children's progress in line with their individual targets and goals.

There is robust planning in place to help and prepare children who are new to the home. Impact assessments are completed to ensure that the building and staff team can meet the child's needs, and that staff have suitable training prior to children moving in or staying at the home. Children are made to feel welcome, and this is done with clear planning which takes into account children's individual circumstances and needs. This ensures that children can gain confidence in their new surroundings and build positive relationships with staff and each other.

Children who have left the home have left in a positive and planned way in line with their individual plans. This is usually to move on to adult services. Staff have supported them with the moves to their new services in order to make the transition as comfortable as possible for them. When it has been necessary and in their best interest, children have remained at the home for a short period of time following their 18th birthday. When this has happened, their plans have been carefully considered and staff work with local authorities and families to ensure that there is a clear plan in place for their move into their new homes.

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

When there have been safeguarding concerns raised, management have taken suitable action in response to this and ensured that children's well-being was a priority throughout. Staff have demonstrated the effective use of the whistleblowing procedure. However, staff are not aware of the role of the local authority designated officer (LADO).

Staff know the children in their care very well. Each child's individual risks are detailed in their risk management plans. These are robust documents, which are frequently reviewed and updated and give clear information, guidance, and strategies to staff to ensure that there are consistent responses to children's behaviours. Staff understand these documents and use them to guide their practice.

Physical intervention has been used minimally. When it has been necessary, the method used has been the least restrictive possible and used for the minimum amount of time needed. Staff have received a debrief, and the child is supported throughout. The manager has oversight of these reports and uses them to identify any changes needed to children's plans.

Children's individual health needs are met. There are detailed plans in place for children's complex health needs, such as epilepsy support plans, to ensure staff have access to all necessary information. When needed, external support is sought to provide staff with training specific to children's individual health needs.

There are planned direct work sessions taking place to support children to understand significant events, learn new skills and to support their behaviour and manage their emotions appropriately. These are completed with children using their preferred communication methods.

There are systems in place for the safer recruitment of staff. When agency staff are used, there is a suitable system for managers to access agency staff recruitment information to ensure that they can be confident that agency staff are safe to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is an experienced manager in post, who is supported by an assistant manager. Staff spoken with describe the management team as supportive and always available for advice and guidance.

Leaders and managers use internal and external monitoring of the home effectively and have an ambitious vision of the development they want to achieve, alongside an understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses. This enables them to take effective action when required.

There is a stable and reliable staff team in place, whose members know the children well and are suitably qualified and trained in relevant subjects to meet children's individual needs. They are complimented by the use of regular agency staff when needed to ensure that there is consistency of care for the children.

Staff do not receive regular practice-related supervisions. This is a missed opportunity to support staff development and to reflect and learn from significant events. In addition to this, not all staff have had their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year.

Team meetings are well attended, and staff understand the value of these meetings. They are an opportunity for the team to meet and share information and updates and to review support strategies for children.

The service is held in high regard by families, social workers and other professionals. They all report that the care and support provided at the home is child focused and that there are excellent levels of communication.

The manager and staff ensure that the home environment is safe and secure for children and protects them from harm or the risk of harm. The home is warm and welcoming and with photos of the children throughout. Sensory equipment is available in communal areas of the home, and this helps to meet children's sensory needs and provides children with a safe place to relax and unwind.

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 ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c))	13 March 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that supervision of staff practice ensures that staff in the home are engaged in the safeguarding culture of the home so they understand what they would need to do if they found other staff misusing or abusing their position to the detriment of the safety of a child. They should also ensure that staff understand the role of the local authority designated officer. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.14)
- The registered person should ensure that staff and children understand what local services are on offer for children through the local authority local offer. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.6)

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: The Together Trust

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

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Helen Marston

Inspector

Katie Tomlinson, Social Care Inspector

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