

SC028905

Registered provider: Staffordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is managed by a local authority and can provide care for up to 4 children with social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, one child was living in the home. They shared their views with the inspector.

The manager commenced their role in January 2026. They are in the process of applying to Ofsted to be registered.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 June 2026

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

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 13 May 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/05/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
30/04/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
16/05/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/01/2023	Full	Good

Summary of findings

The child lives in a stable environment where committed managers and staff support their complex needs. They are forming positive relationships. The child has made progress following a challenging period, but routines remain inconsistent. This has negatively impacted the child's wellbeing and education. Staff effectively support the child's physical health. There has been a reduction in incidents linked to behaviour management due to staff responding to the child in a consistent and effective way. The child's emotional wellbeing is being supported by external services, but it remains a concern. Safeguarding practice is generally effective, though not always consistently applied. Leaders are ambitious and driving improvement; however, systems and team cohesion are not yet embedded to sustain progress.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Managers and some staff demonstrate a clear commitment to supporting the child, contributing to a stable living environment. The child is developing positive relationships with managers and some staff, who provide individualised care that reflects the child's complex needs.

However, managers and staff do not consistently model structured routines that promote the child's wellbeing. For example, staff do not routinely eat meals with the child. There is no identified space in the home for staff and the child to sit and eat together at a table. The former dining table is currently used for art activities and has inappropriate drawings on its surface. This means that the child snacks during the day and then eats a main meal late at night.

Staff support the child to access medical advice and treatment in relation to their sleep. The child said that their mattress was uncomfortable. The manager responded promptly by agreeing to purchase a new mattress and take steps to make the child's bedroom a more welcoming and comfortable space.

The child has an individualised home education plan, which is promoted by staff. However, the child's engagement in education is inconsistent, influenced by life events and difficulties with sleep, which, at times, impact the child's motivation to attend lessons. The child's talent for art is recognised and encouraged, and they continue to attend regular art sessions. Staff liaise effectively with education professionals, who speak positively about the support that staff provide.

Staff ensure that the child's physical health needs are assessed and understood. Routine health appointments are attended, and health advice is followed. Specialist services support staff through consultation, reflection and guidance. There is a plan to further support the child's emotional needs through specific therapeutic work.

The child is supported to maintain relationships with people who are important to them. This promotes their identity. The child is increasingly engaging in activities that they enjoy, which supports their overall wellbeing.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

High levels of staff supervision contribute to reducing the risk of the child going missing or being exploited. However, this has also led to some inconsistencies in practice. On one occasion, staff did not follow the child's care plan and switched off the hall light, preventing effective monitoring. On another occasion, a member of staff failed to respond appropriately to a staffing concern during the night and delayed reporting the concern in line with safeguarding procedures.

Managers take allegations or concerns regarding staff conduct seriously. These are appropriately investigated, and outcomes are shared with relevant individuals.

Monitoring systems to ensure safe recruitment are not fully effective. Employment gaps are not consistently identified or explored. In addition, managers do not always ensure that certificates of good character are obtained and verified for staff who have previously lived abroad.

Managers and staff have a clear understanding of the child's behaviours and associated risks, which require a high level of permitted restrictions. These measures are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain proportionate. A large multi-disciplinary team meets regularly to inform and support care planning. Professionals speak highly of the support provided to keep the child safe and recognise the commitment of current managers and staff.

The manager ensures that the child's views, wishes and feelings are understood by those involved in decision-making. The child has been supported by managers to talk with decision-makers regarding additional restrictions implemented to maintain safety. This practice ensures that the child's voice is heard and considered when reviewing risk management strategies. The child reports that they feel able to express any concerns or worries to staff, particularly those with whom they have developed positive relationships.

In recent months, both the frequency and severity of incidents have reduced. Staff are trained in de-escalation and physical intervention, which is used appropriately when required to reduce risk. Strategies implemented to minimise injury have been effective in keeping the child safe.

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

Leaders and managers are child centred, ambitious and motivated, with high aspirations for the child. This has had a positive impact on staff practice and the quality of care provided.

Managers demonstrate a clear understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development and are actively prioritising improvements. They have developed a clear plan to achieve a child-focused vision for a child who requires high levels of support. This includes ongoing recruitment to strengthen the permanent staff team and reduce reliance on agency staff who do not have established relationships with the child.

Staff speak positively about the support they receive and recognise the progress made under current leadership. However, a cohesive team approach has not yet been fully established, as permanent and agency staff are not well integrated. For example, permanent staff do not consistently undertake supervisory responsibilities when the child is asleep or in their bedroom. Additionally, agency staff work a different rota pattern, with handovers occurring mid-evening. This has the potential to disrupt continuity of care and impact daily planning.

Managers work effectively with external professionals. Communication is strong, and agreed strategies for managing risk are understood and implemented.

Systems for monitoring incidents are strong. However, oversight of training and recruitment processes is less effective. It is not always clear what training agency staff have completed or whether they have the skills and experience required to meet the child's complex needs. All staff are offered regular clinical consultations with the therapeutic team, which provide opportunities to develop knowledge and skills specific to the child. However, attendance at these sessions is inconsistent.

Managers ensure that staff receive regular supervision. However, formal appraisal processes are not yet fully established.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(ix)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff consistently model clear and structured daily routines that promote the child's health, wellbeing and development.	22 July 2026
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— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vii))	22 July 2026

In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff understand their responsibilities to safeguard the child, by following plans in place to keep children safe. Ensure that strategies to keep children safe are accurately reflected in plans and practice concerns are responded to and reported to the manager without delay.	
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; 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)(h)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that all staff who support the child work cohesively as a consistent team and ensure that they all have the appropriate skills, experience and training to provide high-quality care that meets the child's complex needs. Furthermore, the registered person should ensure that there are effective monitoring systems in place to ensure staff are suitably vetted before working in the home and any training needs are identified and arrangements put in place to support their development.	22 July 2026
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or	22 July 2026

if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home,

if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).

The requirements are that—

full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.

(Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that safer recruitment practices are consistently applied. This includes fully exploring and verifying gaps in employment history and ensuring that appropriate checks are completed for all staff who have lived or worked abroad, to confirm their suitability to work with children.

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: SC028905

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: 1 Staffordshire Place, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 2DH

Responsible individual: Joanne Spender

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Helen Dunn, Social Care Inspector

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