

SC031410

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by the local authority. It provides care for up to seven children with learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities. There were seven children living in the home at the time of this inspection.

The home has undergone major necessary work due to extensive damage to the roof, which led to children having to move into another home until it was safe to return. Children were able to safely return to the home in September 2024.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since December 2018.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 December 2024

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: 28 June 2023

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
28/06/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
27/03/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
23/03/2022	Full	Good
22/01/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children are cared for by a team which is predominantly made up of permanent staff and regular agency staff. There has at times been a lack of communication and planning between staff to ensure children's needs are consistently met in line with their plans.

Children have a variety of needs and are supported well to understand changes that occur with their physical development. A range of social stories are used by staff to assist children in understanding their self-care. However, children do not have access to their basic toiletries as they are locked away, meaning that their home is not an enabling environment.

Children are supported to have a voice, and staff use a variety of communication aids to support children to communicate their needs. This includes the use of social stories to help children understand specific events or activities. Most children have been involved in choosing how they would like their bedrooms decorated. During the visit to the home one bedroom had a damaged door, this was being addressed by the manager however it was taking some time for the works to be completed.

There had been significant works completed at the home prior to the children and staff returning to the home. Most of these works had been completed with a few areas still needing to be addressed and completed, this included the refresh to the sensory room. Children's health needs are met and they are supported well to attend appointments.

Staff have also supported children during hospital stays. Generally, staff have good communication with external professionals, however, there are times when information is not shared effectively, meaning that this often results in misunderstandings.

Although there are improvements to be made in the home, this does not detract from some of the positive experience's children have. Children enjoy an array of activities, and their hobbies and interests are promoted. One child was supported by staff to go camping with their family for the first time, promoting positive relationships between them.

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

Staff have generally supported children in line with their preferred approach to manage behaviour and when physical intervention has been used it has been in its lowest form for the shortest time frame possible. Records detailing the use of physical intervention are shared with relevant professionals, however, there has been inconsistent management oversight of these. In some situations, staff have not been clear in how best to support a child and there has been confusion regarding what is required.

Children are encouraged to have conversations after incidents in line with their needs and preferred communication style. Staff have also had the opportunity to reflect on these incidents and consider what may need to change in a child's plan to support them better in the future.

Children and staff have not taken part in a fire evacuation since returning to the home in September 2024. New children and staff have joined the home in this period. This means that they have not been given the opportunity to practise what to do in the event of a fire. Leaders did address this by holding a fire drill during the visit to the home.

Staff can be risk averse and apply blanket restriction to some children who may not require it. Some children have been restricted from exploring their environment or in taking age-appropriate risks that can lead to personal growth.

At times, managers have failed to hold staff accountable for their poor practice and reporting of complaints and allegations is inconsistent. Staff do not fully understand or have clarity about what they are responsible for and fail to recognise the line of accountability.

There have been shortfalls in practice in making sure medication is kept safe. On one occasion, staff sent controlled medication with a child in their taxi to their place of education. Although no harm came to the child, this had the potential to do so.

Recruitment practices are not monitored or scrutinised by the registered manager to ensure that staff are safely employed. Employment checks are managed by the wider organisation and the manager does not always confirm that legal requirements are met. Confirmation of employment history has not been obtained for some staff working in the home.

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

The registered manager is due to leave in January 2025. A newly appointed manager is in post and will be supported by the former registered manager until they become established in their role. Positive efforts are being made to address the ongoing recruitment issues in the team and two deputy managers are due to be appointed. Only regular agency staff are used to cover shifts, providing continuity of care for children.

Managers have systems in place to monitor aspects of the home. However, these systems are not effective, resulting in managers having limited oversight of the service. Managers are aware of the strengths and weakness of the home, but there are not appropriate systems in place to progress areas for development. There are weaknesses in the workforce development plan, meaning it limits staff development.

The independent visitor offers an additional layer of scrutiny to the home. They provide the manager with recommendations on how to improve the quality of care for children.

Quality of care reviews are carried out to identify improvements needed. However, this review does not give specific time frames for actions that are considered necessary to further improve the quality of care provided to children.

Staff told us that they are supported by managers, however, there are limited opportunities for them to learn and develop. This has been hindered by some not having regular good quality practice related supervision and no staff having had their practice appraised at least annually.

Managers have not appropriately dealt with poor performance and professional conduct issues in a timely way. Children have been exposed to poor practice by staff, such as staff arguing and raising their voices.

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— manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(iv)(v))	20 February 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— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1) (a) (b) (2)(a)(h))	20 February 2025
The registered person must ensure that all employees—	20 February 2025

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 (1) (4)(b)(c))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a supportive environment that meet the needs of their children. They will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than institutional impression. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguard children and minimise potential risks to them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 59, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which monitors and supports the development of staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

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: SC031410

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Registered provider address: East Sussex County Council, County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1UE

Responsible individual: Fiona Lewis

Registered manager: Charlotte De Retuerto

Inspectors

Karen Flanagan de Martinez, Social Care Inspector
Jill Sephton-Wright, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024