

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.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2018 and is suitably qualified.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 March 2022

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: 22 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/01/2020	Full	Good
18/02/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
22/10/2018	Full	Good
13/12/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Each child is helped to move into the home at a speed that is right for them. The staff are very sensitive to the need for careful planning. They carefully consider each child's learning difficulty, health needs and ability to cope with change.

The staff have creatively designed the children's bedrooms. They encourage the children to choose their bedding, curtains and wall colours. The children's bedroom furniture is appropriately safe and feels homely and comfortable.

The manager and staff work collaboratively with social care professionals. There is good communication and partnership working to help support local authority placement plans for the children. As a result, the children progress with their plans, and agreed targets are reviewed and, over time, met. One social worker said, 'The staff have a clear understanding of what is needed for the children.'

Children attend school regularly. The staff recognise the value of education. They liaise with schools to share practice and strategies to meet the children's specific needs and promote their growth and development. This consultation between the home, school, parents and specialist health professionals supports educational outcomes. It also helps to ensure that key information about the children's day-to-day lives is shared. One professional said, 'The staff team's communication is excellent.'

The staff support the children's families well. When families need more support, the staff and the registered manager are there to listen and offer practical solutions. One child receives extra staff support when spending time with their parent in the community. Another example is the staff providing medication training to carers so that they could support trips out of the home with the child. This way of working helps families to sustain their relationships with their children.

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

The staff demonstrate strong communication skills. They understand children's body language and behaviour. As a result, they ensure that children's individual needs are promptly and sensitively met. One professional said, 'The child has come on leaps and bounds in their communication and physical abilities.'

The staff understand children's individual needs and vulnerabilities and do all they can to protect them from harm. The staff are confident in processes to follow should they be concerned about a child's safety. The staff have all received safeguarding training and respond effectively when there is a concern. A social worker said, 'I am made aware of safeguarding concerns without delay.'

Safer recruitment practices are good. New employees do not join the staff team until all the required pre-employment checks have been fully completed.

The staff work closely with the children's emotional and behavioural support plans. The staff review these regularly and there has been a notable decrease in behavioural incidents for one child. However, not all the information recorded in the children's plans is helpful to the staff. For example, some of the strategies the staff are to follow include professional terminology and language. This has the potential to hinder the staff team's understanding of how to support a child effectively when it is most needed.

The staff store the children's medication appropriately. Medication administered is recorded accurately. However, the inspector noted some shortfalls in how the manager is following the statutory guidance for managing medications in care homes. While these omissions have not impacted on the quality of care the children receive, they detract from otherwise good and safe medication practices.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is visible, experienced and demonstrates a clear understanding and knowledge of the children in her care. She is committed to developing a culture of improved and continued outcomes for the children and providing a good quality of care for them.

The staff receive training that meets the individual needs of the children. The staff attend regularly and receive a variety of face-to-face and online learning opportunities. However, the manager's systems for recording staff attendance need improvement. Several gaps in the staff's training were identified and then later evidenced by senior staff. This approach makes it difficult for the registered manager to have effective oversight of the staff's training history and needs.

The registered manager is aware of her safeguarding responsibilities in the home. She has the necessary skills, experience and training to act in accordance with safeguarding policies, including local statutory guidance, and has done so on several occasions. However, on one occasion, she did not report a safeguarding concern to all safeguarding professionals within a suitable time frame. This omission did not impact on the safety or welfare of the children. However, it did hinder the local authority's normal safeguarding practices.

The registered manager keeps a continual development plan for the upkeep and maintenance of the home. It is a large building with several communal areas accessible to the children. The local authority has recently appointed a new buildings manager who has actively started planning for repairs and renewal. This is mostly aesthetics, such as the need to paint walls and replace bathroom flooring and panelling. Although this does not impact on the quality of care the staff provide for the children, it does detract from the otherwise homely feel.

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, 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 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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) In particular, the registered manager must have clear oversight of staff training.	1 June 2022
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or	1 June 2022

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming and supportive for the children. This particularly relates to the bathrooms being replaced in line with the registered manager's development plan and the repainting of identified communal walls. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)
- The registered person should use and refer to 'Managing medicines in care homes (March 2014)' guidelines for the administration of medicines. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.17)
- The registered person should ensure that behaviour management strategies are understood and always applied by staff. These strategies should be kept under review and revised where appropriate. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.34)

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

Responsible individual: Kathy Marriott

Registered manager: Charlotte De Retuerto

Inspector

Kelly Monniot, Social Care Inspector

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