

SC031698

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority-owned and run children's home. The home can provide care for up to eight children with learning and physical disabilities.

There has been no registered manager since October 2024.

There were two children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 January 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 9 May 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
09/05/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
24/01/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/10/2022	Full	Inadequate
16/09/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

The overall judgement for this home is requires improvement. This is due to shortfalls in help and protection and leadership and management. These shortfalls impact on the overall experience for children.

Due to the children's complex needs, there are high levels of staffing. Children have strong relationships with staff. Children have teams of dedicated staff who provide consistent care for them. Staff spend quality time with children and children enjoy activities such as going to the cinema, eating in restaurants and visiting local attractions. One child enjoyed their first short holiday away with staff.

Since the last inspection, several children have moved in or out of the home. These moves have been well managed. Managers have thoughtfully assessed the impact of these moves on the children. One child said they were well prepared when several children moved in from another home within the local authority at short notice. Staff used individualised communication aids to help the children understand the moves. One child has moved from the home into an adult provision. This move was carefully planned with the child and relevant professionals.

Children make progress. One child has benefited from a stable placement at the home. Their permanence and consistent care from staff have been key to this progress. There has been a significant reduction in instances when the child has been distressed, and they are developing insight into their emotions. Staff have helped the child to learn how to express their feelings and wishes safely. One child who is new to the home is settling in well. Consistency from staff is helping them to develop trusting relationships with them.

Staff promote education with children. They help children to attend their alternative education provisions. One child says he likes the forest-based activities they attend each week. Another child has a tutor who visits the home and they are making progress with their language and mathematics.

Children are fully supported to spend time with their family. Staff work hard to help make family time good quality. They help children spend time with their families in the home and away from the home. One child proudly displays pictures of themselves and their family in their living area.

Staff involve children in day-to-day decisions. Children choose what meals they eat and their activities with staff. Children personalise their living areas and bedrooms to reflect their interests. Staff use communication aids to help children understand routines and express themselves.

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

Staff understand the risks for children. They understand children's vulnerabilities and how their risks have reduced. These risks are carefully assessed to enable all staff to have a shared understanding of how to keep children safe. Risk assessments are reviewed often to ensure staff know the current risks for children.

Staff follow detailed behaviour management plans for children. A positive behaviour support specialist creates these plans. They identify proactive strategies with parents and staff that include learning from incidents. This underpins a consistent approach for staff to help children when they are in distress. This approach helps children understand what is expected of them and supports them to develop social skills.

Staff are highly effective at working with health professionals. They work closely with specialist health professionals to monitor, assess and treat children's complex health needs. When one child's health needs were beyond the skills of staff, managers escalated this promptly. The child had a period of assessment in hospital and is now back in the home with improved health. Staff meet regularly to discuss the child's care and review their treatment plans. Nurses work with staff to help monitor and treat children's health conditions.

Physical interventions are used often with children. One child with complex health needs is subject to regular high-intensity interventions. These include being held on the ground by several members of staff. Managers are reviewing the need for these interventions with the agency staff caring for the child. Specialist trainers from within the local authority have provided equipment to reduce the risks for the child. The records of these interventions are poor. They lack key information such as the duration of the intervention and whether the child's social worker was informed. Records of conversations with staff and children following incidents are not detailed. This limits the manager's ability to scrutinise practice effectively. On one occasion, a child said they were hurt by staff during an intervention. This was not identified by the manager and no action was taken to investigate this.

Medication is appropriately stored. Nurses oversee the dispensing and administration of one child's medication. The records of administration of controlled drugs are not always completed. This has not been identified by managers through auditing.

Recruitment checks are not always carried out rigorously. Managers have not checked with a new member of staff's previous employers the reasons why they left. Some agency staff have convictions. These have been shared with the managers, but they have not assessed the risks for children.

The home environment is highly restricted. There are several locked doors and children have extremely high levels of staff supervision. These arrangements are in line with the

children's relevant legal orders. Children's social workers and staff regularly review these. One child's bedroom has a door alarm fitted, which is outside of the court orders. Although it is documented in their care plan, there is no organisation policy to ensure that there is an individualised approach to the use of alarms and that these arrangements are subject to regular review.

Legionella has been found in the home. The organisation has acted on this and there has been regular testing and flushing of the systems to reduce risk to children. A building coordinator has effective oversight of health and safety.

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

A new manager has been appointed and they have submitted an application to register with Ofsted. They are an experienced leader in the organisation and already know the staff and children well. The manager has already identified areas for development for the home. A new responsible individual has also been appointed, along with the operational manager. These leaders and managers are present in the home.

There have been weaknesses in management oversight. These have led to shortfalls in the protection of children and have limited the improvement of practice and record-keeping.

Staff say that they feel well supported in their roles. They describe the manager as approachable and having an open-door policy. New staff are welcomed to the home with a structured induction. Staff have regular supervision, however, safeguarding is not always discussed to help develop staff knowledge.

External professionals say that staff communicate effectively with them. Staff keep them up to date on the children's care and inform them of notable events. Staff are actively involved in children's reviews and provide reports and records for court when needed.

Staff benefit from regular training to help them carry out their roles. Managers have good oversight of the training for agency staff. However, core staff have not had up-to-date training in the management of ligatures. The impact of this on children is minimal, as the agency staff supporting children with these risks are all trained.

The manager has not completed a review of the quality of care. Ofsted has not received a report since May 2024. Despite this, the manager does know the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has an action plan in place to address weaknesses.

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— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vi)(vii)) In particular, managers must have strong oversight to identify and investigate allegations made by children. Also, managers must ensure that staff know when and how to raise concerns when allegations are made against them.	14 March 2025
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 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).	14 March 2025

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 reasons why staff have left previous employment in the care sector must be verified as far as reasonably practicable. Also, before agency staff work in the home, their identification and original Disclosure and Barring Service certificate must be seen and a record kept that this check has been completed.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— a description of the measure and its duration; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(iv)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	14 March 2025
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. The registered person must—	14 March 2025

supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1) (4)(a))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the supervision of staff practice makes sure that staff are engaged in the safeguarding culture of the home. There should be regular discussions of safeguarding topics relevant to the needs of the children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.14)
- The registered person should ensure that the home has a written policy which describes how the use of monitoring equipment, including door alarms, will safeguard children and how often their use will be reviewed. There should also be written consent for use from the placing authority and parents where appropriate. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16)

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: SC031698

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: Post vacant

Inspector

Mark Dawkins, Social Care Inspector

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