

SC032565

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. It provides short breaks during weekends for up to six children at a time with learning and physical disabilities. More recently, short breaks are being offered to a small number of children during the week.

There is no registered manager in post.

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 August 2023

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

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

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

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 24 August 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/08/2022	Full	Good
11/08/2021	Full	Good
13/08/2019	Full	Good
29/05/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home provides short breaks for up to six children at any one time. Currently, 24 children access the service. This includes some children who are gradually increasing their time at the home in the daytime, with a view to staying overnight in the future. At the time of the inspection, two children were enjoying a short break.

Children like spending time at the home. They have trusting relationships with staff who know them well and understand their needs, including how to communicate effectively with them. Children participate in a range of activities. At the time of the inspection, children were benefiting from the staff's temporary use of a car and went out with staff to enjoy a drink at a local coffee shop. Leaders told the inspector that they were hoping to secure the use of the vehicle permanently to help children participate in a wider range of activities in the community.

Parents are happy with the support their children receive. Parents told the inspector that children are always happy to attend, and they have confidence in the support children receive while at the home. Some parents reported that they would like more notice about when their short breaks would be so they could plan well in advance.

Professionals provide positive feedback about children's time at the home. There is good communication from staff and managers. Professionals report that children are given consistency and are provided with opportunities to have fun. Key workers attend children's review meetings, and they share information if they are unable to attend.

Staff help children to progress towards individual targets. For example, one child's target was to prepare their own breakfast, which was observed during the inspection. This helps children to increase their independence skills and make progress with their learning.

The home is designed and furnished to meet the needs of children who have short breaks. However, the decor is dated and, in some places, damaged. The home is in need of repair and redecoration to ensure it is homely, welcoming and somewhere for children and staff to be proud of. Some children require specialist equipment, which is in place. However, some equipment needs to be repaired to ensure it is working properly and that children get maximum benefit from it.

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

Staff understand how to keep children safe and know how to recognise and report concerns. They have suitable training and receive regular refreshers and updates.

Children's individual risks are identified, and there are suitable plans in place to

manage these risks. Staff know the children well and understand their risks and how to support them to stay safe.

The staff team works together to support children to manage their emotions and behaviour when required. There are consistent boundaries that contribute to a feeling of security for children. Key workers get to know the children well and identify positive ways to support them. When incidents happen, these are reviewed to identify any learning or areas for improvement. In response to a particular incident, additional bespoke training for staff has been planned to further improve the support offered to a child.

Staff use physical intervention only when it is proportionate and as a last resort. Records have been improved to ensure they are detailed and thorough.

Positive behaviour is promoted, and there are few consequences used to address children's behaviour. Consequences, when they are used, are restorative to help children recognise how their behaviour impacts on themselves and others. However, one inappropriate consequence has been recorded, and this was recognised immediately by leaders and addressed with the staff member.

Staff manage medicines safely to ensure that children receive their medicines as prescribed to manage their health conditions. One child is prescribed medicine that can be given as and when is required to help reduce their anxieties. Staff can describe what sort of changes in behaviour would alert them to consider whether to administer this medicine. However, the records were not as clear. This meant that newer staff may not have this information. Staff acted immediately to update the records to make them clear for all staff.

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

There is no registered manager at the service. This lack of one coherent leader at the service has led to some disorganisation in the monitoring and review systems at the home and gaps in oversight. For example, a routine review of the fire risk assessment had not been booked in.

Monitoring systems had not identified some areas of records that had not been updated. This was rectified when the inspector informed staff, and they acted promptly to make improvements. However, this had not been identified by managers.

Some weaknesses have been identified by leaders and acted on to make improvements. For example, a review of restraint logs identified that there was not enough detail recorded to enable a proper review and learning from incidents. A new log has been introduced, and restraint records now clearly show the actions taken by staff. Learning has been implemented following incidents, including the delivery of a bespoke training day to help staff support one child to manage their emotions and associated behaviours.

The children's guide contained out-of-date information, despite having been recently updated. This is important as new children are being introduced to the service, and they need to have accurate and up-to-date information about the service and who to contact to share any worries or concerns.

There is an ambitious vision for the service, with plans for a refurbishment that will vastly improve the facilities on offer to children. However, there are no clear timescales for this work to be completed. This means the environment remains dated and in need of repair. Some equipment is broken and has been for some time. Leaders have failed to ensure that repairs happen promptly to ensure the premises meet the needs of each individual child.

Staff feel supported in their roles. They receive regular supervision and have regular team meetings that allow them an opportunity to reflect on the support they provide to children and their own development needs. However, there is no workforce development plan to look at the continuing professional development needs of the whole staff team, which is particularly important as the service provided by the home expands and develops.

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— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that any damage, disrepair or redecoration to the premises are addressed promptly so that the environment is homely, nurturing and welcoming for all children. In addition, the registered person must ensure that equipment is repaired and available to meet the needs of each child.	26 October 2023
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and	26 October 2023

take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— keep the children's guide and the home's complaints procedure under review and seek children's comments before revising either document; ensure that an explanation is given to each child as soon as reasonably practicable after the child's arrival about— the children's guide. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(c)(d)(i)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that the children's guide is up to date and shared with children when they start to access the service, so that they have the information they need.	
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)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that there are effective monitoring and review systems in place and that they are used consistently to review and improve the quality of care provided to children. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	26 October 2023
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.	12 October 2023

The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to the registered person having a workforce plan that can fulfil the requirements of the regulation, including the current staffing structure, details of staff experience and qualification and a clear training plan for all staff.	
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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: SC032565

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Registered provider address: Swann House, Boothern Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 4SY

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Tara Lovatt, Social Care Inspector

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