

SC032838

Registered provider: Appletree Treatment Centre Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to 8 children who experience social and emotional difficulties or learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2014.

At the time of this inspection, 7 children were living in the home. The inspectors spoke to all children.

There is a school on the same site as the home. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this site.

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 March 2026

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected, their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or the care and experiences of children and young people are poor.

Date of last inspection: 20 August 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/08/2024	Full	Good
19/07/2023	Full	Good
08/11/2022	Full	Good
03/08/2021	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Poor safeguarding practice and ineffective leadership and management mean that children's views, concerns and feedback about their experiences are not consistently heard. There is limited evidence that children are supported to raise concerns or that their views are actively sought and responded to. At times, children's voices are restricted through the language used by staff in daily practice and during children's house meeting

Some children's bedroom furniture is worn and needs replacing. Children's bedrooms have damage to walls that requires repainting. The rest of the home is comfortable and welcoming.

Despite the safeguarding concerns, planning for children to move into the home is effective. Careful consideration is given to the impact of the child moving in on other children already living in the home. Children's moves out of the home are equally well planned and taken at the child's pace. The staff team has worked with children's rights to support a child whose transition out of the home took longer than expected.

Children report that they are happy living in the home and that they have positive relationships with staff. Parents and professionals also provide positive feedback about children's experiences. There is evidence that children are making progress in several areas of their lives from their starting points. Staff implement consistent routines that help children feel settled, and they promote children's independence by encouraging age-appropriate free time, supporting the development of self-care skills and involving children in cooking.

Children's general health needs are monitored well. All children access weekly play therapy to support their emotional well-being. Children engage in 'time with' sessions with their child champion, to help them to talk about their feelings. An independent listener also provides children with someone external to talk to.

Children enjoy school and their attendance is consistently positive. Some children are attending mainstream school experience sessions. Children engage in fun activities in line with their interests, such as youth clubs, netball camps and church clubs. They have enjoyed holidays away with staff and they are involved in community work, such as charity work. This is captured in videos and memory books for children to keep.

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

Leaders and managers oversight of safeguarding practice and procedures is ineffective. Staff are not always given clear guidance about how to safeguard children in their daily practice. This has placed children at risk of harm.

When staff and professionals have raised concerns about staff practice or allegations have been made by children, leaders and managers have failed to follow appropriate safeguarding procedures or take suitable action to safeguard children. Staff involved in the concerns have continued to work with children. On one occasion, an internal investigation was concluded without speaking to the member of staff who had raised the concern.

A child informed inspectors that they had been hurt by staff during the use of physical restraint. Record samples show that when the child raised concerns following a restraint, these concerns were not explored in sufficient depth. During the inspection, the manager began an investigation to review and address the issues raised.

Good practice guides used by staff with children are recorded but not they are not always shared with children's social workers. In addition, some records are unclear as to if a good practice guide has escalated into a physical restraint. Leaders and managers do not actively monitor trends and patterns in the use of restraint. This does not promote a transparent culture with regards to reviewing the use of physical restraint with children.

On a few occasions, one child has expressed that they have been hurt by another child in the home and felt frightened. The child's views have not been listened to and explored thoroughly to prevent potential bullying. In addition, there has been no follow up work to address this with all children involved.

Managers have missed key safeguarding concerns when reviewing incidents. On two occasions, staff failed to seek advice from medical professionals following a child's use of a ligature. This has compromised the child's health and emotional well-being. Furthermore, the child's risk assessment did not include the action that staff should take to have the child medically assessed following the use of ligatures.

There are no reports of children going missing from the home. Staff supervise children to ensure that they know their whereabouts, this is due to the age of the children. Children are not given consequences. They are given praise and recognition for positive behaviour and choices.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders and managers have not been professionally curious when exploring safeguarding concerns. When children, staff and professionals have raised concerns about staff practice, they are not always addressed transparently to promote an open culture in the home.

Leaders and managers oversight of safeguarding records is poor. Records do not provide a clear account of the action taken to investigate allegations and safeguarding incidents. Sometimes no action is taken at all. Leaders and managers review of some serious incidents does not identify poor staff practice that has placed children at risk of harm.

Some serious incidents have not been reported to Ofsted, children's social workers and the local authority designated officer (LADO). This means that key professionals are not provided with information relating to safeguarding incidents, to enable them to provide independent scrutiny or speak to children to ensure that they are effectively safeguarded.

Staff do not have training in self-injury and harmful sexualised behaviours, to enable them to effectively safeguard children. There are also multiple missed opportunities by leaders and managers to share lessons learned with staff following incidents, to improve staff safeguarding practice and children's experiences of living in the home.

The independent visitor does not often speak to children out of a group setting as part of their visits. This means that children are not given regular opportunity to talk to the visitor privately about their experiences of living in the home. In addition, the independent visitor does not always speak with staff and parents of children about the quality of care provided to children. A new independent visitor has recently taken over the role and the manager is working with them to address these shortfalls.

The manager and senior team know children well and they talk about them fondly. They have positive working relationships with professionals and families. They challenge external services when required to promote positive outcomes for children.

There is a stable and consistent staff team in place to support children. They feel supported by the senior leadership team. Team meetings take place at least monthly. All staff including the manager have regular practice-related supervisions. This enables them to reflect on children's individual needs and to review their own professional development.

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 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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; 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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)) Specifically, leaders and managers should ensure that appropriate safeguarding procedures are followed and investigations conducted in response to allegations raised by children and staff, serious incidents and self-injury. Leaders and managers should provide staff with clear guidance about how to safeguard children who are at risk of self-injury or ligature use.	1 May 2026
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—	1 May 2026

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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(b) (2)(a)(c)(g)(ii)(h)) Specifically, leaders and managers should demonstrate professional curiosity when exploring safeguarding concerns. Leaders and managers oversight of safeguarding records should provide a clear account of the action taken to investigate allegations and safeguarding incidents. This includes identifying where staff practice could be changed to protect children from the risk of harm and evidencing the action taken to improve this. Leaders and managers should provide staff with training in self-injury and harmful sexualised behaviour. Leaders and managers should share lessons learned with staff following incidents, to improve staff safeguarding practice and children’s experiences of living in the home.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.	1 May 2026

(Regulation 40 (4)(c)(e)) Specifically, leaders and managers should ensure that serious incidents and allegations made by children are reported to the relevant professionals, including Ofsted, children's social workers and LADO.	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. 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. (Regulation 35 (1)(b) (3)(a) (iv)) Specifically, leaders and manager should share all good practice guide records with children's social workers. Leaders and managers should ensure that records are clear as to if good practice guides has escalated into a physical restraint. Leaders and managers should actively monitor trends and patterns in the use of restraint.	1 May 2026
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;	1 May 2026

understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(iv)(xii)(b)) Specifically, leaders and managers should ensure that children's views are listened to and explored thoroughly when they have concerns about peer relationships. Leaders and managers should ensure that follow up work is conducted with all children involved in incidents of suspected bullying to prevent it escalating.	
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— 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— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care. (Regulation 7 (1)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) Specifically, leaders and managers should ensure that children are supported to raise their concerns and to have their views listened to through daily practice and children's meetings.	1 May 2026

Leaders and managers should ensure that staff use language that supports an open culture when working with children.	
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (2)(a)) Specifically, leaders and managers should ensure that the independent visitor speaks to children individually and also with staff and parents as part of their visits.	1 May 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC032838

Provision sub-type: Residential children's home

Registered provider: Appletree Treatment Centre Limited

Registered provider address: Meathop Park, Meathop, Grange-Over-Sands, Cumbria
LA11 6RF

Responsible individual: Rowan Knapton

Registered manager: Amanda Fishwick

Inspectors

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector
Justina Henry, Social Care Inspector

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