

SC034849

Registered provider: Cheshire West and Chester Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is managed by the local authority. It is registered to provide short-break care for up to three children with physical and cognitive disabilities.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since March 2018.

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 March 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 13 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/01/2022	Full	Outstanding
02/05/2019	Full	Good
19/07/2018	Full	Good
22/02/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children benefit from highly-quality short-break care. The home is welcoming and child focused, with photos of children and staff up on display. It is designed for children with additional needs, and is wheelchair accessible with a variety of beds in different rooms to meet children's individual needs.

Children's visits are exceptionally well planned. Staff prepare individual child-centred welcome bags for each child. These bags contain a blanket, fidget toy, and other items to help the child to settle in to the home. Each child's name and photo are put on their bedroom door when they are staying, and their goals are displayed to ensure that staff support them to achieve these. There are communication boards that are accessible around the home, and each child has their own preferred communication signs that they can use.

The staff team offers children a variety of activities, both in the home and in the wider community. Children have access to a soft-play area, a sensory room and two lounges. Equipment is kept updated to ensure that children have access to new and stimulating items of interest. During school breaks, hours are adjusted to ensure that children have the opportunity to go out somewhere new during their visits.

Parents say that there is excellent support and communication from the staff team. They say that their children enjoy visiting. One parent said, 'He's [child] always so happy when he's going and gets his suitcase packed.' Another parent said, 'They are absolutely amazing. It is like home from home.' The home creatively supports children's families. They facilitate successful coffee mornings for parents to meet other parents, discuss their services, and meet the staff who care for their child.

Staff help children to achieve their individual goals at a level that is personal to each child. They work collaboratively with children's education providers, families, and other professionals to develop children's goals and assess children's progress to ensure the best outcomes for each child. Professionals are highly complimentary of the levels of care and communication from the team. One professional said, 'I cannot speak highly enough of the staff there.' Another said, 'They make sure all the child's needs are met but also look at the family as a whole, which is fantastic.'

Staff support children to become familiar with the setting at a pace that is right for each child and their family. One professional said, '[Name of child's] transition was absolutely done in her best interests.' Staff help children to develop their independence skills in accordance with their needs. When children transition to adult services, staff help them to prepare for this change and work with new services to support a seamless transition.

Many children attend this home from a young age until they reach adulthood. Staff support children throughout their childhoods and provide consistent, high-quality care. Children are supported to develop stable, trusting and long-lasting relationships with staff who care about them. This helps children to feel safe and secure.

Staff help children to develop their life skills. They celebrate children's progress and achievements. One professional said, 'They [staff] are absolutely helping the children to progress, and the staff team are absolutely delighted when the kids make those little increments of change. It may seem like a small thing to some people, but for our kids it's huge.'

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

A strong safeguarding culture underpins practice in the home. Staff are vigilant and responsive to children's individual and group vulnerabilities and risks.

Staff have a clear, dynamic understanding of children's individual needs. They consult with parents before each visit to determine the child's current presentation and whether anything has changed for the child or family. Children's plans are kept up to date and include relevant information about children's needs and vulnerabilities.

Children's health needs are exceptionally well understood. Medical support plans for children who are due to stay are moved into the active medical file, which staff keep nearby. This enables staff to have easy access to key information and to remain responsive to children's health needs.

Children are safeguarded during their visits with robust risk and response plans. These include strategies for staff to follow to keep children safe. Information from children's plans is incorporated into key documents, which ensures that their needs are consistently met. One parent said of their child, 'He's still my baby and it can be really hard to trust people with him. They're like family there though, I really do trust them.'

Safeguarding concerns and allegations are rare, but staff understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe. Appropriate processes are followed when concerns arise, and staff work well with other agencies to ensure that children remain safe. Staff have clear strategies to follow should a safeguarding concern arise.

Staff have a good understanding of each child's individual preferences. This enables them to carefully consider the needs of all children staying in the home and effectively plan activities and routines to meet children's needs. Staff are able to recognise when children are becoming distressed and intervene early to avoid children becoming dysregulated. This enables children to feel safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

This home is run by an experienced and passionate manager. The staff team is skilful and cohesive. Their dedication, along with well-established relationships, supports children to make positive and consistent progress.

The manager supports staff to provide nurturing care to children by offering the same kind of support to the team. She checks their well-being and continually monitors staff morale. This promotes an open and honest workplace culture and supports staff to provide the best care to the children. One staff member said, 'The support is really good. I've had a tough time and I wouldn't have got through it without the support from the team, and especially the manager.'

Children are at the centre of staff practice and devotion. There is a genuine passion and commitment among the staff team, which is apparent when they speak about and interact with the children. The staff view the children who they care for as part of an extended family, and take authentic pride in talking about their individual progress and personalities. This promotes a culture of inclusion and supports the children to feel valued.

The manager effectively uses robust internal and external monitoring systems to review practice in the home. She is aware of the strengths of the service and is working to address areas that can be improved. The manager is keen to develop even stronger relationships with external professionals. She continues to promote a trauma-informed culture, alongside exploring the benefits of music for children. The manager encourages staff to get to know other professionals who work with the children, and ensures that the child's key worker attends children's meetings. Staff are supported to continue their own learning and take ownership of different aspects of practice in the home.

Parents and professionals say that the manager and staff team are very responsive and communicate well with them. One parent said, 'They're all just absolutely amazing. They are on the end of the phone if I've ever got a problem.' Another parent said, 'I feel really listened to and [my child's] needs are really well met. I don't know what I'd do without them.'

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: SC034849

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Cheshire West & Chester Council, Council Offices, 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 0BE

Responsible individual: Sarah Banks

Registered manager: Sarah Pay

Inspector

Aislinn Cooper, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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