

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 a local authority. It is registered to provide short break care for up to 3 disabled children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2018.

There were 2 children staying at the home at the time of this inspection.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2026

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: 27 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/02/2025	Full	Outstanding
25/01/2024	Full	Outstanding
02/03/2023	Full	Outstanding
13/01/2022	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are settled and enjoy their short stays at the home. The consistent support they receive helps children to make steady progress in many aspects of their lives.

Children experience their short breaks in small, compatible groups. The manager works closely with families and other professionals to understand each child's needs prior to them staying overnight. The manager introduces children to the home in a sensitive and supportive way through a series of visits at the child's pace. As a result, children have opportunities to make new friends, take part in new experiences and enjoy spending time in their new surroundings.

Staff provide children with opportunities to build on their life experiences. They plan a wide range of interesting and engaging activities for children to choose from. These activities are tailored to meet children's sensory needs and reflect their individual interests.

Staff are skilled communicators and seamlessly adapt their communication styles when interacting with children. They use a variety of communication resources to create opportunities for children to influence decisions about their daily lives. Direct work with children is accessible, purposeful and educational. For example, staff created a bespoke social story to help one child to understand different cultures and heritages.

Children learn new skills that increase their independence and improve their long-term outcomes. For example, staff are helping one child to learn to wash themselves more independently. This represents significant progress for the child and reduces their reliance on adults for personal care.

Children are cared for by staff who know them well. Each child has a care plan that clearly details important how their needs must be met. In addition, staff are trained to meet the children's complex health needs. This ensures that children are safe and receive appropriate support.

Staff strive to create a warm, welcoming and homely environment. The home is spacious and well maintained. Children enjoy using the well-equipped sensory room and the large grounds include a range of outdoor play equipment for them to use.

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

Children have a high level of supervision and support. Parents and external professionals say that staff know the children well and they are confident in their abilities to keep children safe.

Risks to children are well understood. The manager ensures that clear risk management plans are in place to help staff manage these risks effectively. These plans are reviewed regularly and updated promptly when incidents occur and/or when children's needs change.

Children are settled and incidents that raise concerns about their welfare are rare. When children become upset or distressed, staff use a variety of strategies to help them manage their emotions, such as reassurance and distraction. Staff manage difficult and challenging situations calmly and effectively. As a result of this, physical intervention has not been used in the home.

Managers take allegations and concerns about staff practice seriously. When alerted to concerns, managers act promptly and robustly to investigate and resolve the issues. They implement interim safeguarding measures to ensure children's safety while investigations are on-going. However, there have been delays in staff reporting their concerns to managers, which has hindered the timeliness of the managers response.

There have been two errors in the administration of children's medication. On one occasion, staff did not follow agreed protocol to inform a manager immediately. The manager has taken steps to strengthen practice and develop safer systems. Additional training has been provided to the staff involved in these incidents and their competency has been reassessed. This has helped to reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

Recruitment procedures and practices are safe and effective. All staff are suitably checked and vetted before starting work at the home. These checks provide reassurance that staff appointed are safe and suitable to work at the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

This home is led by an experienced and confident manager. She is supported by a deputy manager who plays an active role in the day-to-day running of the home. Together they form a cohesive and effective management team.

The manager has a good understanding of the children's individual needs and the progress they are making. She has high expectations of the staff team to deliver good quality, individualised care that secures positive outcomes for children.

The manager has effective oversight of events in the home. She uses learning from significant incidents to improve practice and the experiences and care of children. On one occasion, the manager did not notify Ofsted about a significant event in the home in a timely way. This delay hinders the regulators oversight of practice in the home. A recommendation has been raised in relation to this matter.

The provider is planning to increase the opening hours of the home. In preparation for this, the manager has been recruiting additional staff. New staff receive a thorough induction into their role. This ensures that they have the knowledge and skills needed to meet children's complex needs. Staff value the support they receive and say that it is

helping to build their confidence. One member of staff said, 'As a new starter, I have felt encouraged, guided, and valued, which has made a significant difference in settling into my role.'

Staff rotas are planned well in advance to ensure that there are sufficient staff available to care for children. However, copies of the rota contain numerous alterations and are not always legible. As a result, rotas cannot be relied on to verify who has worked at the home. Managers started to take steps to address this during the inspection.

The manager strives to make continuous improvements to the care provided to children. She is open to the new ideas generated by the staff team. However, the manager has not sufficiently consulted with children when reviewing the quality of care. This is a missed opportunity to listen to children's views and to use their feedback to shape future practice.

Staff benefit from a wide range of training that equips them with the skills to work with disabled children. One member of staff has a qualification in Makaton and is supporting their colleagues to learn new signs to enhance their communication with disabled children.

Staff receive regular supervision. This supports them to reflect on their practice and identify any areas for development. Furthermore, all staff receive an annual appraisal of their performance. These appraisals consider the views of children, professionals and families who have worked with the staff member.

Staff enjoy their roles and share their managers high aspirations for children. One member of staff said, 'The children are at the heart of everything we do. We work hard to provide the highest standard of care, ensuring that every child is supported in a safe, nurturing, and positive environment.'

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— are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(vii))	3 May 2026
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date; Specifically, the registered person must ensure that the staff rota is an accurate record of the actual shifts worked by staff in the home. (Regulation 37(1)(2)(a)(b))	3 May 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified to relevant professionals and Ofsted without delay. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on a public holiday. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)
- The registered person should ensure that when completing a quality of care review, children's feedback must be taken into consideration and evidenced within the report. In addition, they should include an evaluation of significant events in the home and

consider what impact these have on the quality of care provided to children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)

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

Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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