

SC034849

Registered provider: Cheshire West and Chester LA

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: 25 and 26 January 2024

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: 2 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/03/2023	Full	Outstanding
13/01/2022	Full	Outstanding
02/05/2019	Full	Good
19/07/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The short-break service continues to provide exceptional care.

Children experience their short breaks in small, compatible groups. The manager and staff place emphasis on good-quality planned introductions. The children will complete a series of tea visits before their first overnight stay. Staff form close links with parents and specialist services. As a result, important information is shared from the beginning to promote good outcomes.

Staff maintain the home to an excellent standard. This is evident in the decor and very good-quality furniture, which promotes a homely and relaxed environment. The children's bedrooms have recently been redecorated and they are bright and clean.

Children's wishes and feelings are at the centre of everything that happens in the home. Children grow in self-esteem and confidence by having access to a wide range of communication tools that are bespoke to each child. One parent said, 'Staff were instrumental in getting the ball rolling to improve his communication, and now he has started to use his symbols at home and is now able to request items.' Consequently, children are making exceptional progress using their preferred communication methods.

Although children do not reside permanently at the home, staff promote good educational outcomes. Staff actively take part in all school annual reviews and are fully aware of the educational needs of the children. This provides children with a consistent approach.

Everything achieved in the home is focused around making it an inclusive experience for children. Activities are captured on photographs and scrapbooks. This helps children develop a sense of self-worth and belonging. When the children leave the service, the memories are captured in journey folders and given to the children as gifts.

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

Excellent and robust safeguarding practices are in place to ensure that children are safe. Parents said that their children are safe on their short break and staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe from harm. Effective practices such as high staff ratios ensure that children do not go missing. One professional said, 'Children are extremely safe in the home, they share valuable information to help get the right plan in place to keep a child safe.'

Staff have a trauma-informed culture and approach towards behaviour management when children become upset or frustrated. New training has recently been implemented. This training has enabled staff to use a variety of de-escalation techniques, such as change of staff and humour. This helps children to reduce their levels of anxiety and divert their attention positively. As a result, there have been no incidents of physical intervention and other incidents are very minimal.

Medication practices are robust, and medicines are stored safely. Recently, the manager has introduced a further medication auditing process. This has improved the procedures in place.

Some children are totally dependent on highly competent staff to support their intimate care needs sensitively. This provides children with privacy and dignity. Staff are attentive to each child's individual needs and encourage children to make choices in their lives.

Children do not go missing from the home due to the high staffing levels. Staff know the children well and understand the actions they are required to take should a child go missing from this home and if there is a child protection concern. This keeps children safe.

Staff are thoroughly and carefully selected and vetted to ensure that they are suitable to work with vulnerable children. Staff have the relevant skills and experience and enjoy working in the home. Staff morale is high.

Fire practices in the home are robust. All staff are suitably trained in fire awareness. Each child has a personal emergency evacuation plan that provides staff with details of the support they require in the event of a fire. Additionally, social stories are used with children to help them understand the importance of staying safe during a fire evacuation.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager has worked in the home for several years. She is suitably qualified. She knows the children extremely well and talks passionately about improving children's outcomes. Staff say the manager is supportive, always available and operates an open-door policy.

Children's case records are detailed, up to date and have excellent management oversight. The manager and staff have used research to help them improve the quality of children's records, developing person-centred care plans. The manager is passionate at driving continual improvements. Consequently, the staff are working collaboratively with a local school to further include music therapy to enhance the children's short breaks. This is a further indicator of the child-centred ethos and culture that is firmly embedded into care practices.

The manager understands the importance and value of her management oversight. She ensures that she monitors daily care practices and regularly reviews all records,

plans and daily logs. As a result, the manager can identify strengths and areas of development. The registered manager is always looking at development opportunities and innovation in the home and has plans to enhance the short-break offer to families. These plans are included in the detailed development and workforce plan.

The manager ensures that parents and carers are very much involved in the development and review of the service through regular coffee morning events. The local police community support officers are welcomed as part of these events to keep the manager updated with risks in the local area. Furthermore, these coffee mornings provide an excellent opportunity for parents to spend time together sharing vital resources and information.

The manager has high aspirations for all the children and her staff team. The use of reflective practice and discussions through regular team meetings and supervisions supports staff to strengthen and extend the high quality of care that they provide.

Feedback from parents was very positive. They spoke about the excellent communication systems in place and were positive about the photographs provided to show their child enjoying their short-break stay. Parents report that they are kept updated about their child's stay in the home. One parent said, 'The home is like home from home.'

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, The Portal, 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 0BA

Responsible individual: Sarah Banks

Registered manager: Sarah Pay

Inspector

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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