

SC035380

Registered provider: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated and managed by a local authority. It provides care for children with physical and/or learning disabilities. The home offers short-break care and accommodation, and up to one long-term placement, for a total of six children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2022.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 7 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 February 2022

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: 26 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/02/2020	Full	Good
12/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
01/08/2017	Full	Outstanding
17/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy spending time at this short-break service. One child said, 'Staff make me feel settled, and that helps me feel safe and that helps me have a good sleep.' A parent said, 'The environment they offer my son is like a home from home.'

Staff plan children's visits and activities in advance. For some children, this involves attending groups and clubs in the community. This improves children's confidence and social skills. Staff ensure that children are with peers who have similar interests and abilities. Each child has their own individual box of toys and sensory objects which have been carefully chosen by staff. This helps children feel important and have the best possible experiences.

Staff work in partnership with families. Staff listen to and act promptly on their wishes and any concerns they may have. For example, staff will complete social stories for those children who sometimes struggle to make the transition from home or school to the home. The stories show children what they will be doing when they visit and with which member of staff. The stories are provided to parents, and often to schools, to read and show the child to help prepare them. Staff will also visit children at home or school and go through the story with them if that will help. This helps alleviate children's anxieties and results in a more successful transition.

Children make progress very quickly. In reference to the short-break service, one education professional said, 'Within a couple of weeks there is an immediate change in them emotionally. It really makes a difference to the children's lives and the lives of their families.'

For one child, their progress has been particularly significant. Challenging and harmful behaviours have reduced in frequency and severity. Staff have worked hard to help the child, and the child has been able to develop positive relationships with some staff. The child's father described staff as 'brilliant' and 'absolutely fantastic'.

Sanctions are rare. Praise and rewards are frequent. Children gain stars for good behaviour and achievements, and after receiving eight stars are given a treat of their choosing. This helps children feel valued and want to do well.

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

Staff are alert to risks and respond swiftly to potential hazards in the home. This helps protect children and staff by reducing accidents and injuries. Risk assessments are thorough, clear and regularly reviewed and updated. However, they are not always signed and dated which means there is a lack of accountability.

Some documents have been streamlined. Each child's care plan now contains all necessary information in one place. This makes it easier for staff to locate information and helps prevent duplication.

Safeguarding is the focus of team meetings, supervisions and shift handovers. Staff are informed of any current issues and any actions which have been put in place to help and protect children. Staffing ratios are dependent on numbers and needs of children, and are increased if required. This offers better protection for both children and staff.

All safeguarding incidents are recorded and cross-referenced to other relevant documents. Training and guidance have been recently provided to improve the quality of the recording of any such incidents. This has led to more detailed, clearer and consistently written documents.

Restraints are infrequent and happen only as a last resort. Debriefs take place after a restraint which allow staff to reflect and learn. Training is provided if a need is identified. This could be for an individual or the whole staff team.

Mandatory training has either been undertaken by all staff or is due to take place. Many more courses have been attended to equip staff with the knowledge and skills to better safeguard children and help them progress. The team development day which was enjoyed by staff has introduced restorative practices. This will help to further strengthen relationships between the children, and between children and staff, by better managing any conflicts or tensions.

Medication is carefully administered with additional checking in place for increased oversight. Learning has been achieved from a recent incident when an incorrect dose given at the child's family home was not identified by staff on the child's return. Documents have been amended to help prevent this from happening again.

Safer recruitment takes place. This prevents unsuitable adults from having contact with children in this home.

One allegation has been made. This was thoroughly investigated, and learning was identified, and actions made and implemented. There was, however, a delay in the designated officer for the local authority being informed of the allegation. Whilst this had no adverse impact on this occasion, it could have affected the decisions which were initially made.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is experienced in working with children who have a range of disabilities. She is ambitious for the service. This is in respect of short breaks and long-term placements. Her commitment to the children and staff team is clear to see, as are the improvements she has made in the short time she has been manager. She is responsive to the needs of the service and will make the necessary adaptations where required.

The manager and leaders are very much aware of the impact on children and families from the recent suspension of short breaks. The service has now been reinstated, much to the relief of families. While it is currently at a reduced level, the service will increase. Those children and families with the greatest need and without access to other services have been prioritised. Great care has been taken to reintroduce those children and families back into the service. The manager is also proactive in helping children access and receive other services relevant to their needs. This improves children's care and experiences.

The manager sets high standards for staff. Staff are expected to provide consistently good care for all children, and care which helps children achieve and progress. The manager benefits from a monthly auditing tool which allows her to have oversight of all areas. She is able to quickly identify and remedy any outstanding tasks or issues.

The manager will challenge practice issues firmly, yet supportively. Staff say they feel supported and listened to by managers. They are provided with regular and reflective supervision and team meetings. One staff member said, 'Our management team has been supportive and flexible, ensuring that our mental health has been cared for.'

The manager is well regarded by professionals. She has developed strong links with important services. This means she has support at hand and will access that whenever needed to benefit the children and staff.

Staff appreciate the additional support which is provided from specialist services and professionals. They are given advice and strategies to manage particularly challenging behaviours and situations. This has been provided as a staff group and on a one-to-one basis, where individual difficulties and anxieties can be addressed on a more personal basis. This helps staff feel cared for and valued.

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 procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular— provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located. (Regulation 34 (2)(b)) In particular, ensure that the timescale for referral to the designated officer for the local authority is clearly set out in the home's statement of purpose.	16 March 2022
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(c)) In particular, ensure that impact risk assessments are signed by the author.	16 March 2022

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: SC035380

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered Provider: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Registered provider address: Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland TS18 1LD

Responsible individual: Rhona Bollands

Registered manager: Ailisa Williams

Inspector

Emma Ridley, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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