

SC035387

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 by a local authority. It provides short- to medium-term care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There has been no registered manager since December 2024. The new manager has not yet applied to register with Ofsted.

Two children were living in the home at the time of the visit.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 January 2025

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: 6 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/02/2024	Full	Good
26/01/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/10/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
04/02/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The inspector spoke to two children during the inspection.

Children build trusting relationships with those caring for them. Staff regularly complete direct work with children and use creative ways to engage children in sessions. One professional said, 'Staff have produced an emotion chart that worked at school to help the child at home and provide consistency.' This has helped children to understand their emotions and learn ways to manage their emotions.

Children are supported to achieve in education. Children have good attendance because staff promote structure and routine. This has helped one child to be more alert in school. When children have been unsettled in the home, this is communicated to school, helping children to get the support they need to learn.

Staff encourage children to get involved with a variety of activities. Children enjoy spending time with staff, experiencing days out and holidays. Children regularly attend extra-curricular activities such as judo, swimming and football. This has helped one child to learn how to swim and another child make a noticeable improvement with their social skills.

The manager carefully considers all new referrals to the home to ensure that children's needs can be met. Children visit the home and get to know staff and the other children before they move in. When children move out of the home, they are supported throughout the move. Staff continue to keep in touch with children after they have moved on. One child's foster carer said, 'It is amazing how well he has fitted in, and I think this is due to the plan being done gradually.'

Staff do not always promote important relationships for children. One child does not have a structured plan in place of when they can spend time with their family. Staff have not been proactive in escalating this to the local authority. This prevents children from building and maintaining important relationships.

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

Risk assessments help staff to understand and respond appropriately to each child's individual risks. Assessments are up to date and have clear guidance for staff to follow, which includes any indicators that a child may be at risk. This helps staff to intervene effectively when a child is at risk of harm, helping children to stay safer.

Staff help children to understand risks in the community. Direct-work sessions take place with children regularly. These are individual to each child and link with their plans. This helps to educate children around risks in their lives and how they can help to reduce these.

When children go missing from home, staff understand what to do. Missing-from-home protocols are followed by staff who actively search for children to help them to return home safely. When children return home, staff are supportive and children are offered the opportunity to speak to an independent person. This is followed up with direct work to help children reflect on their behaviours and better understand risks.

Physical interventions are rare and only used as a last resort to keep children and others safe. Staff are knowledgeable about de-escalation strategies and use these effectively. When children have been held, they are given the opportunity to discuss the incident and speak to an independent person. Staff are encouraged to reflect on their use of physical intervention and to learn from each incident. The manager has oversight of all holds and completes a review of the interventions used. This helps to ensure that restraint practice is safe and used appropriately.

Positive behaviour is promoted in the home using achievable incentives to encourage children to behave well. Staff encourage the children to participate by choosing their own rewards based on their own likes and interests. If consequences are used, they are designed to help the child to understand and reflect on the impact of their behaviour. This helps children to understand and adhere to the rules and boundaries of the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is well respected by staff and professionals, who all spoke highly of her. Feedback from staff is that they feel supported by a committed management team. Feedback from professionals has been overwhelmingly positive around the supportive and consistent care that children receive from staff. This helps embed a nurturing culture within the home.

The manager has a clear process in place for auditing and monitoring all aspects of the home. There is regular communication between the deputy and the manager to reflect on the quality of care provided to children. The manager's oversight allows her to continue to make improvements to how children experience living in the home.

Team meetings are held regularly and provide staff with a clear and consistent message for expectations for staff practice and how the children's needs should be met. Staff are provided with feedback from the manager's oversight and monitoring of the service and care provided. This helps to ensure that staff share accountability for their practice and that there is consistency for the children.

Not all staff have up-to-date first-aid training. There have been occasions where there have been no staff on duty with this qualification. This leaves a child at risk of harm if a child required first aid.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet The Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. The registered person must ensure that— at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31 (1) (2)(a))	28 February 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that appropriate forms of family time are promoted and facilitated for each child, including, where appropriate, visits to the child in the home; visits by the child to relatives and/or friends; letters, emails and texts; use of social media and other forms of contact via the internet. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.18)

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: SC035387

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Registered provider address: Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton on Tees,
TS18 1TW

Responsible individual: Debra Farrow

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Natalie Clark, Social Care Inspector

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