

SC035387

Registered provider: Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. It provides care for up to 3 children, who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There is currently no registered manager for the home. An acting manager is overseeing the home but has not yet applied to register with Ofsted.

There were 3 children living in the home at the time of the inspection. All children were seen and one child was spoken with by the inspector.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 January 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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 6 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/01/2025	Full	Good
06/02/2024	Full	Good
26/01/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/10/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children say they love living in the home and have warm, nurturing relationships with staff. Children enjoy playing football and attending matches to support their local team; they enjoy swimming and achieve swimming awards, and one child has developed creative writing skills to enable them to write their life story.

Managers and staff work with education providers and the virtual school to ensure that children are in the right education provision for them with the right support. The manager advocated for one child to have a tutor to enable them to access their preferred training course. When children struggle to engage with their learning, the manager works with the child's school to agree a timetable and environment that is supportive of the child's needs. Children are making progress in school and improving their attendance and engagement in learning.

Children are in good health and attend routine appointments. Staff encourage children to have healthy routines and good hygiene. They have supportive conversations with children to develop their awareness about the changes they may experience through adolescence. Staff comfort children when they have worries such as going to the dentist, to enable them to attend. Furthermore, children access mental health support and work with specialist services when needed. Therapeutic practitioners advise staff on how to meet the children's emotional and mental health needs.

Staff use a variety of resources to engage children in conversations to help them understand their history, support their health needs, and develop their independence skills. Staff work creatively with children to help them understand, talk about, and manage their emotions, wishes and feelings.

Managers and staff work with the wider network of professionals to ensure that when children move in and out of the home this is well planned. Staff prioritise the children's wishes and move at the child's pace to help them settle into their new home. Staff help children understand why they are moving and to cope with the conflicting emotions such an event can bring. One child has been well supported during their time at the home. Their move to a 'staying close' provision was very well planned and at a pace dictated by the child. The child is settling well into their new home with the continued reassurance of the staff they know well, being nearby.

Staff record the children's wishes and feelings clearly in their plans and records. However, the language used is not always child friendly and easily accessible to a child.

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

Children say that they feel safe in the home and can name staff that they will talk to if they have any worries. One child said that they know the staff keep them safe because

they encourage them not to go out when it is past their curfew and look for them when they are late home. Staff manage risks well and communicate with professionals openly when there has been an incident. This ensures that there is a coordinated response to any concern about a child's welfare and safety.

When children move into the home, staff quickly work to address known risks. They get to know children's interests and help them to channel their energies more positively, when before they may have got into risky situations.

Staff understand children's vulnerability to going missing from home and to peer pressure. They work closely with the police when children are reported missing from home. Specialist police officers talk with the children to build relationships and help them understand how to keep themselves safe in the community. Further conversations by staff around going missing from home and dangers in the community are frequent. This coordinated approach is helping to reduce the frequency of missing-from-home incidents.

Consequences for behaviour that can challenge others are natural and responsive to the behaviour displayed. Staff facilitate restorative conversations to enable children to talk things through and reflect on their actions. Children are developing a greater awareness of socially acceptable behaviour and are learning how to make amends when their behaviour has an impact on other people.

Staff understand children's risks and complete well planned, proactive discussions with children to reduce risks. Staff access various resources to support their work with children and will often revisit a topic to ensure that learning has been retained. Furthermore, meaningful conversations happen with the children after any incident, and these have contributed towards the children's risks reducing.

Physical restraint incidents are mostly well recorded by the staff. However, occasionally staff do not record how long a restraint lasts for. Managers have not always identified this in their oversight of incidents. Therefore, some records do not provide a full account of the incident and limits the analysis of staff's practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There has been no registered manager at the home since December 2024. A new manager was appointed but did not register with Ofsted and left their role in December 2025. The absence of a permanent registered manager does not provide children or staff with stability or opportunities to further develop the service.

Children and staff have been affected by the changes due to the uncertainty about the management arrangements. The deputy manager has been a pillar of support for children and staff during this time. Staff described the deputy manager as 'very supportive.'

The current acting manager who was the deputy, has a vision for the home to be full of playfulness and nurture for the children. She knows the children well and is an important feature in their lives.

Practice-related supervision sessions with staff are regular and supportive. Staff are encouraged to reflect about the children's progress and about their practice. Staff say that they find their supervision useful and that they value the support from managers. Members of the team who have had specific help or time away from work say that the acting manager has been understanding and supportive.

Staff access a variety of training that meets their learning needs and the needs of the children. Managers encourage staff to develop and progress in their career and provide opportunities for them to complete management tasks. External speakers attend team meetings to enhance staff's knowledge and staff cascade their learning to their colleagues when they have attended training outside of the home.

The manager has an effective system for monitoring all aspects of the home and the children's progress, including ensuring that all staff are up to date with their training and that feedback is sought from children, families, and professionals. Professionals value the attitude and frequent communication of the staff.

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

Statutory requirement

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) 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(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)) In particular, the appointed person must apply to register with Ofsted without delay.	25 March 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff maintain clear and accurate records about each child that represent a significant contribution to their life history and are written in a way that is easily accessible to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 62, paragraph 14.5)
- The registered person should ensure that all records of restraint should include all information to effectively review the incident and identify any emerging patterns. In particular, ensure that the duration of a restraint is clearly recorded. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 49, paragraph 9.59)

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: Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, Stockton-on-tees, TS17 6BJ

Responsible individual: Debra Farrow

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Kirstie Sutherland, Social Care Inspector

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