

SC035954

Registered provider: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides short breaks for up to six disabled children and one child under a shared care arrangement. In addition, the home provides care on a permanent basis for up to six children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2022.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 August 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	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: 18 June 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/06/2024	Full	Good
13/02/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
23/08/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
30/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, six children were living at the home, and one child was staying there as part of a short break arrangement.

One child moved into the home in an emergency. This meant that short stays for some children were cancelled. However, the decision made was in the best interests of the child moving in.

Children learn new skills that will increase their independence and improve their long-term outcomes. For example, staff are helping one child to overcome their reluctance to have their hair washed. In addition, this child is learning to attend to their personal care more independently. This represents significant progress for this child. One family member said, 'I have nothing but praise for the home. [Child's name] has come on leaps and bounds.'

Staff provide children with opportunities to build on their life experiences. They plan lots of interesting and engaging activities for children to choose from. These activities meet children's sensory needs and reflect their interests. For example, trips to the beach and swimming baths.

Children are cared for by staff who know them well. All children have a care plan which details important information about the child's needs. However, some plans contain incorrect information. For example, one child's plan incorrectly stated that the child used a wheelchair when accessing the community. This requirement was issued at the previous inspection and is restated.

Children who live at the home attend school regularly and are making progress with their learning. Communication between the home and school is regular. However, the targets identified in children's education plans are not well linked to children's care plans. Managers have identified this as an area for improvement and have plans in place to address this.

The home is safe and welcoming. Some children have chosen to personalise their bedrooms. However, some of the paintwork in children's bedrooms is marked and chipped. This detracts from the homely environment that the staff try to create.

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

Children receive high levels of supervision and support. This is aligned to their complex needs and helps to keep children safe.

Staff understand how to keep children safe and who they need to talk to should any safeguarding concerns arise. Staff receive safeguarding training that is specific to disabled children.

Staff manage difficult situations with children in a calm and confident way. There have been occasions when staff have held children to keep the child safe. These interventions were necessary and proportionate. Children are always given an opportunity to talk about how they feel following these incidents. For those children who do not use words to communicate, staff make careful observations of the child's presentation to check on their welfare.

Allegations and complaints are taken seriously. Managers take action to investigate the concern and address any shortfalls in staff practice through supervision.

Children are subject to restrictions of their liberty. The manager ensures that these restrictions are necessary to keep children safe. However, the appropriate consents for these restrictions had not been sought for one child. Managers took steps to address this immediately during the inspection.

Risks to children are well understood and well managed. However, some children's risk management plans lack detail about the steps staff should take to manage children's behaviours and minimise risks to children. For example, some children are known to bang their heads when they are upset. Staff carefully monitor the child's welfare following these incidents, but there is no clear guidance for staff about when medical advice should be sought.

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

This home is led by an experienced and qualified manager. She understands the needs of the children. However, internal monitoring systems are not sufficiently robust to identify and address shortfalls in children's plans. This means that staff do not always have access to up to date and accurate information to care for children effectively.

Staff receive regular training that equips them with the skills to work with children with complex needs. However, the manager has not ensured that all staff have gained a relevant residential childcare qualification in the timescale specified by regulation.

Permanent members of staff receive regular supervision that supports them to reflect on their practice. However, managers are not consistently providing agency staff with supervision. Furthermore, not all staff have had a formal annual appraisal of their performance. These are missed opportunities to ensure that staff understand their roles and responsibilities, and their practice is reviewed.

The manager works collaboratively with other professionals. Professionals report that they are updated about the progress children are making. However, on one occasion, Ofsted were not informed about an allegation made by a child about a member of staff. This compromises the regulator's ability to monitor the effectiveness of children's care.

In addition, there was a delay in referring the matter to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Team meetings are regular and well attended. The manager uses team meetings as an opportunity to refresh staff knowledge in areas such as missing-from-home protocols and safeguarding procedures. Staff report that they find these meetings helpful, and communication across the team has improved.

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, 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 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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This specifically relates to ensuring that children's risk management plans are updated and contain accurate information. In addition, protocols about seeking medical advice and/or attention when children bang their heads should be available to staff.	28 September 2025
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(h))	28 September 2025

The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) This specifically relates to ensuring that children's records contain accurate information. This requirement is repeated.	28 September 2025
The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home. (Regulation 32 (2)(a) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)) Specifically, the manager should ensure that all staff gain the relevant residential childcare qualification in the timescale specified by regulation.	28 December 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a domestic, homely environment. Specifically, internal redecoration should take place in a timely way. Children should be consulted and involved in generating ideas for changes to décor. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that agency members of staff receive supervision which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children they care for. In addition, there must be annual appraisals for all permanent members of staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraphs 13.2 and 13.5).

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: SC035954

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, Education Department, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH41 4FD

Responsible individual: Debra Kewley

Registered manager: Susan Hughes

Inspectors

Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector
Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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