

SC035971

Registered provider: St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home. It offers short breaks to a maximum of four children.

The provider states in their statement of purpose that they provide care for children with learning difficulties and physical disabilities.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since June 2012.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

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: 7 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/09/2021	Full	Outstanding
03/12/2019	Full	Outstanding
27/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
06/12/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

This short-break service continues to provide excellent care for children with complex needs and disabilities.

Children benefit from well-planned stays. They are suitably matched together, taking into consideration their individualised needs. Children are introduced to the service through a series of visits. The children are actively encouraged to share their preferences of who they would like to stay with, which means that they have opportunities to socialise and make new friends. This ensures that children are gaining confidence in their new surroundings and building relationships.

The home is spacious and maintained to an excellent standard. Children have access to a wide range of books, toys and sensory equipment. Bedroom furnishings and decoration are carefully planned around children's individual needs. One parent said, 'Staff provide a family culture with a warm and welcoming atmosphere.'

The relationships the children and their families have with staff are a key strength of the home. Various professionals said that the management team and staff consistently go above and beyond to support families. Excellent care is provided by staff who know the children well. Staff are meticulous in detail to ensure children's likes and dislikes, and relationships between each child are fully considered. This enhances the children's stays.

Children are making excellent progress in their independence skills. They are learning how to access various local transport networks and are cooking, dressing and washing dishes. One parent said, 'These things are milestones for my child.' Another parent said, '[Name of child] has made progress with his turn-taking skills and waiting, which is helpful for us as a family.'

Children are regularly consulted during each stay. The children's progress and outcomes are captured through the unique use of the home's technology. This is shared with families at the end of each short break. One professional said, 'This work is inclusive and essential, especially for those children with non-verbal communication.' Another professional said, 'This is a great way to capture memories and helps children build their confidence.'

Although children do not reside permanently at the home, staff frequently visit educational settings and take part in children's reviews. This effective partnership working ensures that staff are fully aware of children's educational needs.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities. These activities enrich children's experiences and strengthen their relationships with others. For example, children

participate in the community allotment and have enjoyed celebration events in the home with a garden party. Children also enjoy trips to waterfalls in Wales, safari parks and visits to Blackpool. Parents commented about the newly introduced coffee mornings. These have been great opportunities to chat to other parents and share their experiences.

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

There is a strong and proactive response to safeguarding. Staff are trained in safeguarding specifically to meet the needs of children with complex needs. Staff are very clear on their roles and responsibilities. Procedures for reporting and recording any concerns are clear and effective. One professional said, 'Their response to any safeguarding concern is always very robust.'

Staff have a gentle and calm approach towards behaviour management when children become upset or frustrated. Staff use a variety of de-escalation techniques, such as going out for a drive, going for a local walk or spending time in quiet areas. This means children are helped to reduce their anxiety and divert their attention positively. Furthermore, the recent research-informed practice has seen the addition of in-house trainers and partnership working with behaviour specialists. This means incidents of physical intervention have been minimal. Recent training sourced by managers has improved reporting and recording. As a result, incident records and body maps are detailed and well written.

Medication is stored in a safe place, and records are detailed. When there are queries, staff ensure that these are followed up with parents or seek advice from all relevant healthcare professionals.

The manager has ensured that fire practices in the home are safe. Each child has a personal emergency evacuation plan that provides staff with details on the support a child requires in the event of a fire. All staff are suitably trained in fire safety, and children regularly take part in fire evacuations.

Managers and staff attend all child in need meetings and reviews. There is a great emphasis placed on multi-agency and partnership links. Consequently, plans are detailed and up to date with accurate information to best meet the children's needs. There are effective working relationships with complex needs nurses, social workers and schools.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

There is an experienced and qualified management team that has worked in the home for several years. The team is ambitious for children. Staff say they are well supported by managers who genuinely care. The managers provide staff with strong leadership and strive to create a culture of high expectations. They offer reassurance and guidance. There is a stable and consistent staff team in place that

provides high-quality day-to-day care to many families. One professional said, 'Staff go above and beyond to ensure that families are supported.'

The manager undertakes robust monitoring of the home. He consistently reflects on the strengths and areas for further development. There is a new independent person who has provided improvements in the quality-of-care reports. The manager makes excellent use of the external monitoring recommendations to make ongoing improvements. However, the manager should ensure that he completes a workforce development plan that takes into consideration arrangements of supervision, induction and management of poor performance. A recommendation has been made to address this.

Regular supervision and appraisals take place. Staff say these are reflective and support their development. Handovers are thorough and well organised. These provide staff with opportunities for effective information-sharing.

Staff learn through a wide variety of training courses. These are individualised to the children's needs. Staff are all trained in Makaton and Picture Exchange Communication System. Managers and staff enhance their practice by sourcing research. For example, the staff have recently introduced a 'sign of the week'. This helps children make choices. However, the manager should ensure that additional resources are provided to staff to further enhance their knowledge and understanding of some children's specialist needs, such as Rett syndrome. A recommendation has been made to reflect this.

The staff are exceptionally strong advocates for the children in their care. A parent said, 'Staff know my child very well. There is great communication, and they are passionate about the care of all the children.'

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should have a workforce development plan that can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working in the home and be used to record their ongoing training and continuing professional development. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate resources to support their training needs. For example, managers should seek out additional information about Rett syndrome to enhance staff knowledge and understanding. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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: SC035971

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Children & Young Peoples Services, Atlas House, 2 Corporation Street, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 1LD

Responsible individual: Paula Swindlehurst

Registered manager: Paul Spencer

Inspector

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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