

SC036186

Registered provider: Derbyshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority operates this children's home. It is a short-break service for disabled children. It provides care for up to eight children who have a learning disability, a physical disability and/or a sensory impairment. Due to the complex and individual needs of children the home often operates with fewer children at any one time. This enables each child to receive the support they need to make progress and thrive.

The registered manager is qualified and experienced.

One child had short breaks on the day of the inspection and was spoken with.

Inspection date: 9 September 2025

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: 25 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/02/2025	Full	Outstanding
05/03/2024	Full	Outstanding
14/03/2023	Full	Outstanding
11/01/2022	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children who attend the short break benefit from a wide range of positive experiences. Staff prioritise developing children's independence skills, with some children learning to do their own laundry, cook and bake. Staff understand the importance of community involvement and plan children's days carefully to ensure they have regular opportunities to engage in activities outside the home. Children are taken swimming, to the seaside, on walks, and out for meals. For some children, these experiences are new and would not have been available to them while at home.

Children continue to make progress from the support given by the dedicated staff. Children have highly individualised support plans that help them to develop essential life skills. One child has been supported to build up their resilience when out in the community and is now able to go for walks with staff, whilst other children have been supported to eat meals at the table. These achievements not only enhance children's well-being but also have a positive impact on family life, helping to create more settled and enjoyable time at home.

Staff promote children's sense of belonging and stability through consistent, and nurturing care. They ensure children feel valued and included by recognising their individual needs, backgrounds, and preferences. The staff team provides routine, with clear boundaries, which helps children feel safe and secure.

Staff know each child exceptionally well and are highly responsive to their individual needs. This consistent high standard of care is evident for all children who stay at the home. For example, staff ensure that when the children arrive that their favourite items are out. Staff provide support that is underpinned by patience, empathy and a deep understanding of each child's experiences.

Children's transitions are well planned and thoughtfully managed by staff. For example, one transition to another home was approached gradually, allowing the child time to become familiar with their new home. Staff from both homes worked together, visiting each other with the child to promote continuity and build trusting relationships. The child was provided with familiar objects, and introducing items from the new home, to promote a sense of security. A social story was developed to help the child to understand and prepare for the move. In addition, the manager made a referral to an advocacy service to ensure that the child's wishes and feelings were central to the planning process.

Staff provide exceptional support to families, consistently going above and beyond to support families who struggle to cope at times. Staff respond methodically to challenges to help the child's life at home better. Their proactive approach ensures

that families feel well supported. One parent said, 'Staff do not have to do half of much as what they do, I was struggling to manage [child's name] and staff came to my home in the early hours in the morning to help me, my child would not be living at home if it wasn't for the staff at the short break service.'

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

Staff help children to understand their triggers and they develop strategies to manage their emotions more effectively. This support builds children's resilience and helps them to cope better during times of stress. For example, one child previously became angry when their parents did not buy them computer games. Staff worked closely with the parents to introduce budgeting work, helping the child understand the value of money. Pocket money was introduced, and the child now understands how much things costs. As a result, there have been no further outbursts at home related to this issue.

Detailed behaviour support plans identify individual risks and provide clear strategies for staff. This enables staff to manage challenging situations confidently and consistently. Their proactive and nurturing approach promotes positive behaviour and helps create a safe, supportive environment for all children.

There have been no physical interventions required, thanks to the staff's deep understanding of the children. They are highly skilled at recognising early signs of distress and what know children's triggers. Staff use these warning signs to effectively distract and de-escalate any incidents.

There are clear processes and plans in place to manage medication, which can be challenging given that children only stay for two to three nights. To stay on top of this, staff communicate with parents before each child's arrival to get updates on any medication, ensuring that all medication is accompanied by prescription labels.

Children do not go missing from the home. If they do there is a protocol in place that staff know and will use to ensure that children are located as quickly and safely as possible.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager remains dedicated to providing an outstanding service for the children and their families. He consistently strives for ongoing improvement and development of the home.

The manager is supported by two deputies who all demonstrate a clear and ambitious vision for the home and have high expectations for children. They are committed to ensuring that each child receives high-quality, individualised care tailored to their unique needs and circumstances. This is reflected in detailed care

planning, personalised support, and a strong emphasis on children's progress and well-being.

The manager demonstrates strong and visible leadership in the home. Staff say that leaders and managers are through in their approaches and have an open-door policy. The manager supports staff, covering shifts where necessary and observing staff practice first-hand. This ensures continuous oversight of the quality of care and enables the manager to monitor how staff respond to children's needs and behaviours in real time. This hands-on approach creates a culture of accountability, support and reflective practice.

Staff are highly complementary of the support provided by managers within the home. They consistently spoke positively about the strengths of the team and highlighted the strong culture of mutual support. This collaborative approach contributes to a positive and nurturing atmosphere that is evident throughout the home.

Staff supervisions are reflective and focused on practice. They support professional development by providing staff with opportunities to adapt their approach to better meet children's needs. Leaders and managers acknowledge staff's good work and commitment, helping them to feel valued and supported in their role. Supervision sessions offer a safe space for staff to discuss personal circumstances.

Staff are up to date with all mandatory training, including safeguarding, paediatric first aid and the administration of medication. In addition, bespoke training is provided to support children with specific medical needs, such as epilepsy. Leaders and managers are proactive in researching best practice, for example around sensory processing. This knowledge is effectively cascaded to the wider team, enabling staff to understand and support children's sensory profile and behaviours.

Professionals and parents spoken to recognise how important short breaks service is for the children and all have said that if it wasn't for the service the children would not be living at home.

Although there has been a delay in completing the most recent quality of care review, independent quality assurance visits are in place and contribute to the monitoring of the home's effectiveness. Furthermore, deputies support the manager by completing weekly audits. Any concerns or areas for improvement identified through these audits are escalated to the manager and addressed promptly.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the quality-of-care review is completed and sent to Ofsted within the time frame. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', Page 65, paragraph 15.3)

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: SC036186

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Derbyshire County Council

Registered provider address: County Offices, Matlock DE4 3AG

Responsible individual: Luke Impey

Registered manager: Mark Nichol

Inspector

Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspector

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