

SC044975

Registered provider: Essex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care for up to 5 children who experience social and emotional difficulties. It provides a solo placement for one child and shared provision for up to 4 children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2025.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 April 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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 28 October 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/10/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
05/08/2025	Full	Inadequate
15/10/2024	Full	Good
05/12/2023	Full	Good

Summary of findings

Children living in the home are making good progress from their starting points. Children experience planned transitions when moving in and out of the home. Children have good structure and routines to support educational engagement. Staff promote activities and hobbies to support children's physical and emotional health.

Leaders and managers have good oversight. They ensure that staff receive regular supervision to help them in their roles. Staff speak positively about the registered manager, and overall feedback from professionals is positive. However, shortfalls were identified in respect of accurate record keeping and children not consistently being spoken to about physical interventions.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, 4 children have moved out of the home and 3 children have moved in. There were 3 children living in the home at the time of inspection. One of these children moved out of the home in a planned way during the inspection. One child spoke to the inspector.

Children make good progress from their starting points. Feedback from those who know children well reflects the positive difference that living at the home has made. One child who has moved on contacted the registered manager to say that they recognised the progress they had made during their time at the home. A professional for another child said that there had been real improvement in the child's behaviour and presentation, and that the consistent support from staff helped to secure a smooth move to their new home. Although 2 children are relatively new to the home, early signs of progress are evident. They have settled well, formed positive relationships with staff and are beginning to build positive relationships with each other.

Children develop trusting and meaningful relationships with staff. One child said, 'It's really lovely here. The staff are friendly and helpful, and I get on well with them.' Another child is able to speak openly with staff about their emotional wellbeing, which shows that they feel safe and trust staff. Children who have moved on remain in touch with staff, which further reflects the strength and value of these relationships.

Children benefit from thoughtful and well-planned moves into and out of the home. Where appropriate, staff meet children before they move in and children are given opportunities to visit the home. This helps children to begin building relationships with staff and gives staff the opportunity to prepare for their arrival in ways that are meaningful to them. For example, staff purchased items a child liked for their bedroom before they moved in, helping to create a sense of familiarity and welcome. When children move on, staff support them through carefully planned transitions and make

sure they experience a positive ending. Children are given cards, gifts and a warm send-off, which helps them to feel valued and cared for.

Staff support children to make good progress in their education. Children have clear routines in place that help them to attend education full time. One child was not in education when they moved into the home. The home's education lead worked closely with the school to support a successful return to full-time education. Another child is being helped by staff to address gaps in their learning, in line with guidance from their school.

Children's wishes and feelings are listened to and acted on. One child said that staff listen to them and that they can raise their views in weekly meetings or speak to staff individually if they prefer. Children are also able to make choices about their day-to-day lives, including how they decorate their bedrooms and the activities they would like to do.

Children live in a comfortable, welcoming and nurturing home. The environment has improved significantly and is well decorated and suitably furnished. Children are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms, helping them to feel settled and at home. One child spoke positively about their room and the way they had been able to make it their own.

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

Children have individualised risk assessments and safety plans in place. These identify known risks and how these present for each child. They provide staff with clear guidance about the actions needed to reduce risk and support children to stay safe.

Staff understand children's individual risks and vulnerabilities. They take appropriate action when concerns arise and follow agreed plans to help keep children safe. Practice is generally consistent and supports children's safety and wellbeing.

Missing-from-home incidents are managed appropriately. Staff take suitable action, including attempting to contact children, looking for them and speaking with relevant professionals. Children are welcomed back to the home and return home interviews are arranged. Feedback from professionals shows that these incidents are responded to appropriately.

Staff talk to children about risks and support them to understand how to keep themselves safe. Through regular conversations, children are helped to reflect on their behaviours and make safer choices over time. Positive behaviour is encouraged through rewards, and any consequences used are proportionate and support children to reflect on their behaviour.

When children have raised concerns about the conduct of staff members, these incidents have been responded to appropriately. Referrals are made to the local authority

designated officer when necessary, and safeguarding procedures are followed. Action is taken to ensure that children are protected. This helps children to feel that their concerns have been understood and taken seriously.

Physical intervention is used as a last resort and only when necessary to keep children and others safe. However, records do not consistently demonstrate that children receive debrief conversations following these incidents. This means that children may not always have the opportunity to talk about what has happened, share any worries or concerns and reflect on their experiences.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is currently working towards their level 5 diploma. They are supported by the deputy manager and a clinical specialist team. Leaders and managers know the children well and take pride in their progress. They are able to identify the difference the home has made for children, including where placements have been short. This helps to ensure that care is purposeful and focused on achieving positive outcomes for children.

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. Improvements have been made following recent inspections, and systems are in place to support more consistent practice. For example, regular reviews of children's plans and multi-agency meetings help to reduce delay and support more timely planning for children's futures.

Leaders and managers advocate for children and work effectively with partner agencies to promote their best interests. They maintain regular communication with professionals and take appropriate action to challenge and escalate concerns when needed. This helps to ensure that children receive the support they require.

Leaders and managers are committed to staff development. Staff receive relevant mandatory training, as well as additional training reflective of children's individual needs. Opportunities are available for staff to develop their roles and responsibilities. This supports their confidence and contributes to a stable and increasingly skilled workforce. Induction processes are being strengthened to better support new staff.

Staff benefit from regular team meetings and consultation with the home's clinical lead. This provides staff with therapeutic insight into the children's needs. It also supports them to reflect on and develop their practice.

Feedback from professionals is positive. They describe staff as approachable, invested in children and effective in their communication. One professional noted that staff are consistent in their approach and easy to work with, while another said that children appear happy and well supported.

Although records have improved, they are not yet consistently clear or sufficiently detailed. For example, following one physical intervention, a child made an allegation about an agency member of staff. While this was appropriately followed up by leaders and managers, the written records do not clearly demonstrate the actions taken or the outcome of the enquiry. This limits the ability for effective oversight and does not provide a clear audit trail of how concerns have been responded to. Leaders and managers have not consistently notified Ofsted of serious incidents within the required timescales. This limits Ofsted's ability to maintain effective oversight of the home.

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 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— ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)) In particular, leaders and managers must review records to ensure that there is a full and accurate record. This requirement has been restated	26 June 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any child who has been restrained is given the opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable, ideally within 24 hours of the restraint incident, taking the age

of the child and the circumstances of the restraint into account. In some cases, children may need longer to work through their feelings, so a record that the child has talked about their feelings should be made no longer than 5 days after the incident of restraint (regulation 35(3)(c)). Children should be encouraged to add their views and comments to the record of restraint. Children should be offered the opportunity to access advocacy support to help them with this (regulation 7(2)(b)(iii)). ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.60)

- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified to the appropriate people within 24 hours. Notification must include details of the action taken by the home's staff in response to the event. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)

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: SC044975

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: County Hall, Chelmsford CM1 1QH

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Wayne Russell

Inspector

Emilja Myers, Social Care Inspector

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