

SC047483

Registered provider: Mulberry House Care Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run home provides care for up to three children who may have social and/or emotional difficulties.

The manager holds a level 5 leadership and management qualification and has been registered with Ofsted since 30 October 2020.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 June 2022

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: 8 March 2022

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
08/03/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/10/2019	Full	Good
05/02/2018	Interim	Not judged
15/05/2017	Interim	Not judged

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There are currently three children living in the home. Since the last inspection, no children have moved into the home and no children have left the home.

Staff and children develop and share positive relationships. Inspectors observed interactions between staff and children which were warm, meaningful and good humoured. Staff understand the children's specific needs and provide individualised care. Children speak fondly of staff and the support they receive. These positive relationships help children to feel safe and secure.

Staff ensure that children are respected and valued in the home. They support and encourage children to express their views and develop their own identities. For example, the home has a treasure box which children use to share their views. In addition, staff ensure that children are fully involved in their own plans. For example, the registered manager has introduced a new online system which means that children now have access to their plans and records of the key-work sessions carried out with them. This allows children to comment and provide feedback to staff and leaders. This new approach helps to empower children and allows them to share their views, wishes and feelings on the care that they receive.

Staff support children to engage positively with their education. Also, staff work effectively with education professionals to ensure that children receive support relevant to their individual needs. For example, one child has recently started to engage with a new education provision. Staff supported the child and communicated well with the education provider to make sure they fully understood her needs. This support and positive communication mean that children make progress and settle well into their learning environments.

Leaders and staff support children to keep in touch with people who are important to them. They work with parents and children to ensure that family time takes place regularly and safely. As a result, children maintain safe relationships and develop a positive sense of their identity.

Staff support and develop children's independence well. They work with professionals effectively and encourage children to participate in independence programmes delivered in and out of the home. For example, one child has engaged positively with a local housing project. Staff encouraged the child to attend all independence sessions with the project. These sessions have helped to develop the child's confidence and resilience. Furthermore, she has achieved awards and qualifications to recognise the work completed. This further enhances her self-esteem.

The home provides a safe and nurturing environment, within which children thrive and make progress. The atmosphere in the home is calm, relaxed and has a real

family feel. Children's bedrooms are personalised and well maintained. As a result, children feel comfortable and develop a sense of belonging. However, there are locks on the communal doors, which are sometimes used by staff to manage children's behaviour. They are also used to limit children's access to some areas of the home at night. This has the potential to restrict children's liberty and devalue the home's overall ethos.

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

Staff carry out direct work with children, which supports self-regulation, empathy and positive relationships between peers. In addition, staff understand children's risks and are confident in the actions they need to take to keep children safe. Children's risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated following incidents. Furthermore, staff discuss strategies to keep children safe with external professionals and the home's clinical psychologist. This helps children to feel safe and secure.

When children go missing from the home, staff follow children's protocols effectively. Staff try their best to encourage children to return home. They remain in contact with children and liaise effectively with others such as parents, social workers and the police. This approach helps to ensure that children are promptly located. When children return home, staff welcome them and provide them with reassurance and support. In addition, staff ensure that return home interviews are completed with children within timeframes. This approach means that children rarely go missing from the home.

Staff take effective action to safeguard children at risk of child sexual exploitation and when using the internet. For example, there have been two significant incidents with children since the last inspection. On both occasions, staff took immediate action to safeguard the children. They worked directly with the police and children's social workers to ensure that children received instant support. This proactive response helps to support and promote children's welfare.

Since the last inspection, the number of significant incidents with children has reduced. For example, there have been no incidents requiring staff to use physical restraint. Furthermore, sanctions are rarely used by staff to manage children's behaviour. When they have been issued by staff, the registered manager has good oversight and reviews their effectiveness. She also ensures that children are regularly spoken to after an incident. This helps them to understand their feelings and provides reassurance.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager. She advocates for the children in her care and they speak fondly of her. One child said the registered manager was a 'superstar' and that she 'genuinely cares' for the children in the home. Another child said that 'the manager was the best manager in the world'.

Staff feel supported by the registered manager. They receive regular supervision and appraisal to support their practice. Children's plans and progress are reviewed as part of supervision sessions and staff are given opportunities to share their views and opinions. This means that staff feel valued and that they contribute to the home's development. In contrast, the registered manager's appraisal has not been carried out by senior leaders. This has the potential to impact on her development and ability to carry out her role.

The registered manager uses internal and external monitoring systems to make improvements to the quality of care for children. Since the last inspection, she has made changes to the home's quality of care review to ensure that consultation with children and external professionals is carried out. This feedback is used to inform improvements in the home. In addition, external monitoring via the home's independent visitor identifies areas for improvement. As a result, monitoring systems develop and improve the home.

The registered manager has good oversight of the home. She knows the home's strengths and weaknesses. Since the last inspection, she has worked hard to ensure that 13 of the 14 requirements and recommendations issued have been met. This reassures the regulator that the registered manager can make improvements to the home. Consequently, this improves the care that children receive.

However, the inspectors found recording errors and areas of inconsistency in some children's records. For example, children's placement plans, risk assessments and behaviour support plans do not always provide staff with specific information or guidance. Furthermore, some records are not consistent and have the potential to mislead staff. These recording shortfalls have the potential to impact on children's progress.

Overall, staff receive regular training relevant to children's needs. However, not all staff have completed training in autism and online safety, which was a requirement at the last inspection. This does not assure the regulator that all staff have the skills and up-to-date knowledge to meet the needs of children.

Feedback from professionals about the home is very positive. One professional stated that 'the home feels like a family home and not a children's home'. Several professionals have commented positively on the relationships that staff share with children. Parental feedback is equally positive, and one parent could not fault the communication and support provided for their child in the home. They said, 'Staff are amazing and they need recognition for it.'

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, 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 have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff undertake all relevant training to meet children's needs, for example, training based on internet safety and autism awareness. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	14 July 2022
The registered person must ensure that— children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(iv)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that door locks on internal doors are not used as a strategy for managing children's behaviours in the home.	14 July 2022

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 are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that children's records are regularly reviewed and monitored. Also, that any recording errors are identified and addressed, to ensure that all children's records contain factual and accurate information.	14 July 2022
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that all staff and managers have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should consider, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member and manager over the year and children in the home's care. As part of the performance management process, poor performance should be addressed by a timely plan to bring about improvement. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 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: SC047483

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Mulberry House Care Homes Limited

Registered provider address: 2 Railway Street, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 2EA

Responsible individual: Lisa Hall

Registered manager: Anita Yewdall

Inspectors

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector
Sarah Berry, Social Care Inspector

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