

SC047483

Registered provider: Mulberry House Care Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A privately owned company runs this home. It is registered to provide care for up to three children who may have had adverse childhood experiences.

A suitably qualified and experienced manager leads this home. The manager has been registered with Ofsted since October 2020. The manager is dual registered and manages another home within the organisation.

Inspection dates: 27 to 28 June 2023

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 June 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/06/2022	Full	Good
08/03/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/10/2019	Full	Good
05/02/2018	Interim	Not judged

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, two children have moved into this home and two children have moved out. At the time of this inspection, three children lived at the home.

The home is spacious, inviting and warm. It is decorated to a good standard throughout. Areas of development within the home are well known to managers and plans are in place for improvement. Children's rooms are personalised and decorated to their taste. Some of the ground floor internal doors have locks on them. Although this does not appear to detract from the homely feel, the decision-making around having locks in place is not recorded and kept under review to ensure that it is necessary and proportionate.

Children develop positive relationships with staff. This helps children to express themselves safely, talk about their feelings and reflect on past experiences. Children are supported to develop healthy routines, which have allowed them to spend more time out in the community doing the things that they enjoy. Recently, children have enjoyed attending trampoline centres, trips to the beach, playing in the paddling pool in the garden, and going to the cinema.

All children attend education and make good progress against their starting points. Professionals spoken to during the inspection reported that the care provided to children has enabled them to progress in all areas. Children learn vital independence skills, and the expression of their wishes and feelings is actively promoted. One social worker told inspectors, 'I am really impressed with the home. I just wish [name of child] was there a long time ago.'

Children express their aspirations for the future, which are fully advocated for and supported by the team. Staff support children with parents' evenings and college visits. This helps children to have a positive view of their education and future.

Children's moves in to and out of the home are comprehensively planned and managed. Managers consider the needs of all children, the location of the home, and the skillset of staff before agreeing that it is the right home for the children. In supporting children with moves, managers work with the children's social workers and families to make what can initially be an unsettling and upsetting experience, a positive and successful one for the children.

Managers and staff develop good working relationships with partner agencies. However, when placing authorities have failed to provide up-to-date statutory documents for children, managers do not sufficiently challenge them. For example, a record of some children's annual health assessment was not available and, because of this, not all of children's healthcare needs are known. During the inspection, managers were proactive in obtaining all relevant documents to better inform their knowledge and understanding.

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

Staff provide consistent care to the children. Well-written, up-to-date plans provide staff with clear guidance. These help staff to understand children's individual triggers and implement strategies to support children effectively if they become upset.

Staff ensure that the home environment is safe for children to live in. A range of health and safety checks are carried out to assess whether there are any hazards that could pose risks to children. Regular fire drills take place to ensure that children know how to safely evacuate the home in case of such an emergency.

Children say they trust staff and always have someone who they can talk to. Staff work in a sensitive and nurturing manner to support children who show their emotional distress through their behaviours. Staff provide non-judgemental and consistent care in circumstances that are sometimes emotionally and physically challenging.

Staff manage children's behaviour well. They recognise and promote positive behaviour and use de-escalation techniques consistently. As a result, physical or police intervention are rarely needed. There is a clear ethos that physical intervention is only used as a last resort and to prevent harm. Consequently, children live in a calm and happy atmosphere.

Despite this, not all incident records contain all relevant information. Staff have been required to lock doors on one occasion to safeguard a child during an incident of distress. This has not been recorded as a measure of control. This lack of recording and reflection does not help managers and staff to identify learning.

Since the last inspection, five new members of staff have started working in the home. For the most part, managers undertake relevant checks before any appointment is confirmed. However, when gaps and queries in employment histories are highlighted in these checks, they have not followed these up thoroughly to seek clarity. This is an area of practice that has been identified for improvement.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A suitably qualified and experienced manager manages the home. The manager is supported by a passionate assistant manager, who shows ambition for the children.

The home is suitably staffed to meet the needs of the children. When staffing levels have been affected due to absence or vacancies, managers have ensured that external staff are consistent and known to the children, allowing for continuity of care. Staff enjoy working at the home and are positive about the support they receive from the manager. One staff member told the inspectors, 'The support we receive as a team is phenomenal.'

Almost all of the staff team are qualified. The small number who are not are either enrolled or are due to be enrolled following the successful completion of their probationary period. Staff complete a number of training courses that equip them with the skills and knowledge to provide good care and security to the children. Managers identify additional training for staff to complete when new issues arise. However, a lack of oversight with regards to one particular course means that they have not ensured that all staff have done so. This is a missed opportunity for staff to understand more about the emerging needs of children quickly.

Team meetings are well attended, and staff supervisions are held regularly. These forums provide staff with the opportunity to reflect on the needs of each child, the support being offered, and the relationships that they have developed.

Complaints and disclosures are effectively managed. There is good partnership working and communication with external agencies. Social workers speak positively about the care that children receive and working together to ensure the best outcomes for children.

Some aspects of monitoring and oversight are good. However, managers do not effectively review all incident reports and control measures. While incidents are few, this is a missed opportunity to identify learning and make practice or recording improvements where necessary.

The organisation has a written policy for surveillance and monitoring in the home. Shortfalls were recognised during the inspection that the use of a video recording doorbell, which stores images and recordings on the home's mobile phone, is not considered within the policy. This means that all visitors to the home are being recorded with images saved without their knowledge or consent. The provider reflected on this and agreed to take action to address this.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c)) This specifically relates to ensuring that children's plans and health documents are received from each child's placing authority social worker.	11 August 2023
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and	11 August 2023

a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))	
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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) This specifically relates to the registered manager having effective monitoring tools to ensure that shortfalls in training, incident report oversight, and recordings can be highlighted and addressed in a timely fashion.	11 August 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should maintain good employment practice. They must ensure that with recruitment, the registered person obtains all details of gaps in employment and if a person has previously worked in a position involving work

with vulnerable children or adults. The registered person should verify so far as reasonably practical the reason why a person's employment or position ended. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

- The registered person should have a written policy about the use of CCTV or other monitoring equipment. Specifically, that this includes the use of the video recorded doorbell. Furthermore, the registered person should gain consent to any monitoring or surveillance by the placing authority in writing at the time of placement. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16 paragraph 3.16)
- The registered person should ensure that any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home, must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)

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 Deaville

Inspectors

Kev Brammer, Social Care Inspector

Helen Dunn, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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