

SC060554

Registered provider: Mulberry House Care Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private organisation operates this home. It provides care for up to three children who experience social and emotional difficulties. There is a permanent registered manager in post, who is suitably experienced and qualified.

At the time of the inspection, there were three children living at the home. All the children spoke with the inspector.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 September 2025

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: 19 December 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/12/2024	Full	Good
21/08/2023	Full	Good
04/10/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
10/08/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Overall, children have a good day-to-day experience. There have been some changes at the home. Two children have moved on, one in a planned way and one following immediate notice being served, due to escalating risks. Two children have moved to the home, and they have benefited from short but planned introductions.

Children enjoy a variety of activities, in line with their age and interests. This includes two children who have been on holiday with staff this summer. While the older children often prefer to be out socially with friends, they will also choose to spend some time with staff.

Children are encouraged to have a healthy lifestyle, through sensible food choices and being active. For example, one child has weekly swimming lessons for their health and enjoyment. The manager invites specialist organisations to educate children about health and wider risks. This includes some joint learning opportunities for staff and children, for example to learn about substance misuse and knife crime. Staff also talk to children about these important topics and promote positive choices.

Staff understand children's educational plans, and they strive to embed routines to promote children's participation in education. When there are barriers to this, staff offer alternative suitable activities. For example, two children focus on completing an independence programme to help prepare them for moving on. The manager has been proactive over the summer in securing a school placement for one child. As a result, they were able to start high school at the start of term alongside their peers. This significantly helped them manage this change well.

The manager has listened to children's feedback about how they want to be consulted with. As a result, staff changed this and developed a 'you say, we did' approach. This helps children to understand how their requests have been responded to.

Staff help children to spend time with those who are important to them. This includes liaising with relevant people to modify the plans, to improve enjoyment of this time for the child and their family members.

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

Staff provide guidance and boundaries for children. Children do understand what is expected of them. When their behaviour falls outside of the expectation, staff talk to children, using curiosity, with a focus on understanding the cause of the behaviour. Staff use this opportunity to reinforce rules and boundaries.

Staff talk to children about relevant topics to help them learn about keeping safe. They broach difficult conversations in sensitive ways. For example, carefully planning the best

person, timing and location for discussions, such as in private, during a car journey. As a result, children are supported to reflect and learn in ways that reduce or avoid feelings of shame.

There have been some incidents of children going missing. Staff follow children's plans and take timely action to safeguard them. The manager is proactive in sharing information with the relevant professionals, such as information about new associates and places linked with children's missing incidents. This has contributed to the disruption of unsafe situations for children.

Managers promote children's opportunities to take positive risks, in line with their age and abilities. For example, children have clear plans and agreements to help them safely manage and enjoy free time. Staff balance promoting independent travel with the children's safety. Therefore, staff offer children lifts to help the older children return safely home. This is also effective in reducing missing incidents.

Appropriate action is taken in response to behavioural incidents in terms of initial response to safeguarding, direct work with children and information-sharing with relevant professionals. However, there is a lack of management oversight documented. This reduces the learning from past practice and means that the effectiveness of strategies used has not been reviewed.

The home's complaints policy is not adhered to. When one child made a complaint, staff spoke to the child about this. However, the manager did not speak to the child or make a written response. Another child told the inspector they had made a complaint, but there was no record of this. Furthermore, the complaints process is not easily accessible to children. This could inhibit children's ability to make complaints and have their views heard.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The senior management team comprises the registered manager, responsible individual and the manager from the organisation's other home. The three leaders work in close collaboration and support each other well. The manager continues to develop in their role, as their experience increases. They have a good understanding of the home's strengths, and they have a vision and plan for further development.

There is a very experienced staff team. This is also a very stable team, with no staff leaving since the last inspection, and just one new staff member starting. The home seldom needs agency staff. As a result of this stability and consistency, staff have built effective relationships with children.

There is a staff training programme, which covers a broad range of topics. This equips staff well for their roles. The organisation encourages staff progression. For example, senior staff are encouraged to undertake management qualifications. The whole staff team is now qualified; this strengthens the competence of the work force.

Staff receive regular supervision that is supportive of their well-being and development. Staff say that they feel very well supported by managers. Managers have focused on empowering staff and increasing their confidence in decision-making. The manager welcomes team reflections and sharing of ideas. Staff recognise that this has been a positive change in management culture.

The manager is skilled at partnership working and has developed effective working relationships with relevant professionals. Several professionals have provided feedback that compliments the high level of communication from the manager and staff. As a result, there is shared planning of children's care and management of their risks across the multi-agency arena.

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— 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. use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that they have full oversight of children's incidents and experiences. Specifically, that they review and evaluate these, and that they use this to develop the quality of care.	12 December 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff encourage children to share any concerns about their care or other matters as soon as they arise. Children must be able to take up issues or make a complaint with support and without any fear that this will result in any adverse consequences. Regulation 39 sets out the requirements on the registered person to have a complaints procedure. Children must be aware of this procedure and be reminded of it, as necessary. In addition, this should be fully and easily accessible to children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13)

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: SC060554

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: Hannah Smallman

Inspector

Alison Snell, Social Care Inspector

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