

SC063683

Registered provider: Manchester City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a local authority and is registered to care for up to six children who may experience social or emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, five children were living in the home and all gave their views to the inspector about their experiences.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since March 2018.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 September 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: 1 August 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
01/08/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/06/2021	Full	Good
25/09/2019	Full	Good
14/08/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

A monitoring visit took place on 25 January 2023, following a complaint made to Ofsted about the safety and well-being of children living in the home. The shortfalls identified at that visit have now been rectified, including all but one of the requirements.

Children experience positive and well-planned moves into and out of the home. They visit the home before they move in, and meet the staff team. Staff consider children's wishes and feelings before they move. One child said, 'I visited the home before I decided to come and live here. This helped me feel at ease. I met staff, and they were all very helpful.'

Children live in a spacious and warm environment. The home is furnished to a high standard with bright, tasteful decor. Children choose how they want to decorate and personalise their bedrooms and are engaged in other key developments for the home. However, there are locks on internal doors, which creates an institutional environment in the home.

Staff help children to spend time with people who are important to them. The managers advocate for children and encourage additional time with family members, as appropriate. In addition, staff support children to spend time with friends when it is appropriate to do so. This ensures that children maintain important relationships.

Staff promote education. They ensure that children's education needs are met and attend all education meetings. Some of the children struggle with attendance at school. However, staff are proactive and creative in addressing this. Some children have been supported to re-engage in education and have successfully obtained qualifications.

Staff encourage children to become more independent. Children learn to manage their finances and prepare their own meals. They also learn to manage their own personal care needs. This helps to build confidence and prepare children for their futures.

Children receive the support that they need to actively engage in activities inside and outside the home, which includes going away on holiday. These activities enrich children's experiences and serve to strengthen their relationships with staff. Additionally, this helps children to make developmental progress and promotes positive self-esteem.

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

Children feel safe and supported. Staff work closely with other agencies to safeguard children. An independent reviewing officer said, 'The manager and staff are great; they put the voice of the child first always, even if this means challenging others.'

Strong partnership-working underpins practice in the home. Regular, multi-disciplinary meetings consider children's individual needs. Professionals and family members are positive about the care children receive. One social worker said, 'Staff don't give up on children; they endeavour to build trusting relationships. Some children present with behaviours that challenge adults; I feel other homes would have ended placement, but not this one.'

Assessments and plans consider a child's experiences and potential triggers for behaviours that may be challenging for staff. This helps staff to decide what action to take to de-escalate situations when needed and means that each child is kept safe, with a consistent approach by staff.

Children are supported to take safe and appropriate risks in line with their care plans and developmental needs. Staff complete risk-management plans for each child. This enables staff to identify and understand children's risks. Staff review plans regularly with children and discuss them in team meetings. This helps staff to maintain consistency when protecting children from harm.

When children are missing from home, staff take swift action to ensure that children return safely. Staff adhere to missing-from-home protocols by following children to encourage them to return. Records are well maintained and reflect a proactive approach by staff to achieve the child's safe return to the home.

Allegations and complaints are responded to appropriately to safeguard all involved. The staff are confident in their use of whistle-blowing. Professionals are notified promptly to ensure that there is a transparent approach. Children can identify trusted adults in the home who they can confide in. Allegations and complaints have been thoroughly investigated, and any lessons learned are discussed as part of reflective sessions.

Staff are trained in the use of holding a child to keep them safe. This strategy is only used if a child is presenting as a risk to themselves or others. The child and staff review the incident reports. This helps them to reflect and learn and further supports the identification of themes, which supports keeping children safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is suitably experienced and supported by her deputy manager and staff team. The leadership team has a thorough knowledge of the children. Managers listen to children's views and consider their wishes and feelings. This promotes children's development and progress.

There have been some changes in the staff team. However, the team is now consistent and stable. When there have been vacancies, these have been covered by the existing staff team or staff known to children from the sister home or agency. Staff said that the manager is approachable and that they feel valued.

Managers have a good understanding of the progress that children make. They spend time with children on a regular basis, which helps them to measure progress. Additionally, the manager completes a regular review of care to highlight children's progress and evaluate their care.

Staff receive regular supervision. Staff said that they feel fully supported in their roles and enjoy working at the home. This positive morale helps to retain staff and maintain their motivation. Staff also attend regular team meetings, which helps them to share current issues and practice.

Staff attend regular training to improve their skills and personal development, including obtaining the relevant childcare qualification. However, not all staff receive training to help them to respond to children's specific needs. Staff have researched best practice in support of children's needs; however, this needs to be strengthened with the relevant training. In addition, the workforce plan does not include the detail required to meet regulation.

Managers carry out annual appraisals with staff. Staff reflect on their work and set targets for the year ahead. However, appraisals do not include the views of children or key individuals. This limits the manager's understanding of children's experiences and the ability of leaders to make improvements.

Managers share information with other important people in the children's lives. A teacher said, '[Name of manager] and her team are always extremely proactive to ensure the best care is offered to some of our most vulnerable young people. I couldn't ask for anything more.'

The manager has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the care provided. The manager makes effective use of external monitoring to identify and address any shortfalls quickly.

Three requirements and two recommendations made at the monitoring visit in January 2023 have been met. The requirement around locks on internal doors has not been met and has been restated.

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 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— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; and is necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(i)(ii)) In particular, doors to shared living areas should not have locks. This requirement is restated.	1 November 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs, and that the training available meets the needs of the children in their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that the workforce plan can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should include details of management and staffing structure, the process and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction and training, and the process for managing and improving poor performance and supervision. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that staff appraisals include the views of children and other professionals who have worked with staff over the year. ('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: SC063683

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Manchester City Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall Extension, Albert Square, Manchester
M60 2LA

Responsible individual: Sean McKendrick

Registered manager: Esther Smith

Inspector

Jennifer Quest, Social Care Inspector

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