

SC065059

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. It offers care for up to two children who have experienced early childhood trauma.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 3 to 4 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 28 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
17/07/2018	Full	Outstanding
20/06/2017	Full	Good
17/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

One child lives in this home. The child is making steady progress from her starting point. A child who was previously living at the home moved on to independent living accommodation through a planned move.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions, children have received good quality of care from a committed staff team. Most staff have good knowledge and understanding of each child's vulnerabilities. As a result of this, staff support children to make positive changes and progress.

Children's health needs are continually promoted. Staff support children to help them maintain healthy lifestyles to improve their well-being. Children attend all routine and specialist medical health appointments.

During the periods of restrictions, and when it has been difficult for children to attend school, staff have stepped in to help promote the children's learning. This has enabled the children to sustain some academic success. One child, who previously experienced difficulties with education attendance, has successfully re-engaged in learning. This child's attendance has improved, and they are beginning to make good progress in their education.

Staff recognise the importance of children's family relationships and promote these well. This has helped to support children's sense of identity and emotional well-being.

Staff communicate well with the relevant professionals and agencies to ensure that recommendations raised at statutory reviews are acted on. Because of this, children's needs are continually under review. Children receive individualised care, and staff fully understand children's care plans.

Some staff have positive relationships with children and know them well. These staff have a good understanding of the children's complex behaviours and vulnerabilities. They show patience and resilience, and this helps children to begin to develop trusting relationships. However, the home has experienced a high turnover of staff. This has left children struggling to build up the same level of positive relationships with newer members of staff.

Most areas of the home are welcoming and well furnished. However, some parts of the home require attention to bring it up to a consistently good standard. The registered manager has identified areas which require further development, such as the garden and minor repairs throughout the home.

Staff do not always promote equality and diversity well. Although some discussions about children's differences, characteristics, cultural background and identity take place, these areas are not actively encouraged and promoted to a high standard. For

example, the cultural needs of one child have not been promoted and maintained. This creates a missed opportunity to help children to understand and develop culture and diversity.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The managers and staff ensure that each child has a detailed and individualised risk assessment in place. These documents reflect children's specific vulnerabilities and provide clear guidance in how to mitigate against and manage risks. Staff fully understand how to keep children safe.

Managers did not seek enough information from all the relevant professionals before a child moved into the home. This undermined their ability to make an informed decision about whether staff could meet the child's needs effectively, and whether there was a suitable match. This resulted in a poor match of children which had a negative impact on children's relationships and safety in the home. The manager took steps to rectify this and improve children's experiences.

Managers and staff use restraint as a last resort and implement strategies well to de-escalate children's behaviours. However, the manager's oversight is not always good. For example, one record missed information about how long one child had been restrained. Furthermore, restraint records lack relevant information about measures used and their effectiveness. Not all staff have received debriefs following an incident. These missed opportunities do not ensure that restraint practice is proportionate and safe.

Staff do not seek feedback from children consistently well following bullying incidents. For example, one child, who was bullied by another child, was not given the opportunity to talk about what happened. In addition, staff did not speak to the child who had targeted the other child or encourage them to undertake any restorative work. As a result, staff had not helped children to understand the impact of their behaviour on others and to maintain positive relationships.

When children go missing from the home, staff respond quickly and work closely with the police, social workers and local services. This coordinated response helps to safeguard children.

Managers ensure that staff undergo the required checks before they start to work with children. This means children are cared for by suitably vetted adults.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has been in post since May 2021. When they were appointed, they quickly identified the strengths and weaknesses in the home. An effective action plan is ongoing to address the shortfalls.

The manager is passionate and enthusiastic about the care children receive. He ensures that recommendations made by the independent visitor are acted on swiftly. As a result, staff practice reflects the ethos of the home's statement of purpose.

The manager challenges staff practice effectively when he considers their actions fall short of acceptable standards. For example, when one member of staff had not intervened when a child had been bullied by another child, the manager challenged this. As a result, staff reflected and reviewed their practice to ensure they act in the best interests of children in the future.

Children benefit from good partnership working with other agencies, including the local authority, mental health services, police and schools. This provides children with tailored support to enable them to stay safe and make good progress.

Staff provide positive feedback and confirm they are well supported by the registered manager. Staff benefit from regular team meetings and clinical consultations. Overall, staff receive regular practice-related and reflective supervision. However, one out of six staff members has not received supervision in line with the home's statement of purpose. This creates a missed opportunity to help staff to discuss their performance and to develop their practice.

Overall, the manager has developed effective monitoring and review systems. However, the home's fire precautions have outstanding work that needs completing. The impact of this is considered low as there is ongoing work being undertaken by the local authority to address this shortfall.

Restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on face-to-face training for staff. However, the registered manager has not ensured that staff continue to receive refresher training. Not all staff have not received specialised training in the home's therapeutic approach, suicide and ligature awareness, safeguarding, first aid, fire safety and physical intervention. This omission has the potential to compromise the staff's ability to update their knowledge.

The manager's first quality of care review does not yet meet the regulations. Although he has a clear plan for the future of the service, information such as the children's wishes, feelings and views are omitted from the report. This does not show that children are consulted about the care they receive.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(vii)(c)(i)) This particularly refers to providing children with a nurturing environment.	3 September 2021
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— an understanding about acceptable behaviours; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;	3 September 2021

encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practice skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship. understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11(1)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)(xii)(xiii)(b)) This particularly refers to staff supporting children to explore their emotions and build positive relationships.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— 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; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;	3 September 2021

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(c)(d)(e)(h)) This particularly refers to the registered manager ensuring that all staff receive refresher mandatory training. It also refers to the registered manager providing continuity and consistency of care to children. It also refers to ensuring the registered manager has effective monitoring systems.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring relevant information from professionals is sought about children who move into the home.	3 September 2021
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— a description of the measure and its duration; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and 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. 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)(iv)(vii)(b)(i)(c))	3 September 2021

This particularly refers to the registered manager ensuring that all relevant information is contained in behaviour management records.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience employees. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that all staff receive regular reflective supervision.	3 September 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that adequate precautions against the risk of fire are in place and that the fire risk assessment is kept up to date. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that views of children are captured in the review of quality care report. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)

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: SC065059

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: City of Stoke-on-Trent, Swann House, Boothem Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 4SY

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Harry Rayner

Inspector

Patrick McIntosh, 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
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