

SC065189

Registered provider: Meadows Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a private provider and is registered to provide care for three children with emotional or social difficulties.

Three children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2020.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

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	outstanding
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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: 10 May 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/05/2023	Full	Good
24/05/2022	Full	Good
14/06/2021	Full	Good
19/02/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, one child has moved into the home and one child has moved to another home in the same organisation. Children have been supported in these transitions to ensure that they settle well into their new living arrangements.

Children make good progress in relation to their health, education and emotional, social and psychological well-being. When historic and current difficulties arise that may interrupt this progress, staff provide children with effective therapeutic and practical advice and support to help them to get back on track.

As a result, and despite personal setbacks such as bereavement, all three children have felt able to persevere with their education and have recently completed their GCSE exams. Children feel optimistic about their futures and are excited to be attending their school proms. They have each decided on options for their further education and are now starting to plan for independence.

During their time at the home, children's health has improved. For example, substance misuse has diminished. Children are more willing to engage with health services and are more receptive to advice being offered. They gain weight in a healthy way due to an improved diet, and they attend routine and specialist health appointments. Children like to use their leisure time to engage in activities that will keep them fit, such as football and horse riding.

Children's emotional and psychological health are managed with care and sensitivity. One child said about staff that, when things are going wrong, 'I know they are there for me.' This reflects the positive and nurturing relationships that staff provide and that children benefit from.

Children have frequent opportunities to share their views, wishes and feelings. They have felt confident in using the complaints procedure and the manager's response demonstrates that their concerns have been listened to and acted on.

Staff understand the value of children maintaining close links with family members, and the importance of gathering memorabilia to remind them of their family connections and heritage. As a result, children have positive contact with their families and mementoes to hold on to.

For unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, the manager ensures suitable translation services are available, and has sought assistance from the Red Crescent to track down family members.

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

There is a strong safeguarding culture in the home. Children's safety and well-being are significantly enhanced by the actions of the manager and staff, who fulfil the home's statement of purpose by providing an environment that is 'structured, safe, predictable and consistent'. Children say that they feel safe here.

Several factors contribute to children being helped and protected to a very high standard. These include the quality of staff relationships with individual children, their in-depth knowledge of children's known and likely risks and the highly effective way in which behaviour is managed. In addition, staff have received research-based training that is relevant to children's particular risks. For example, when there was an increased risk for one child around drug misuse, staff received specific training and resources on the issue and implemented this training in their day-to-day practice. As a result, they managed to disrupt the cycle of drug misuse and the child no longer uses illegal substances.

When children are particularly vulnerable to harm from their own behaviours, or in the community, the manager takes decisive action to protect them. The manager and staff are extremely vigilant and proactive in sharing any safeguarding concerns and soft intelligence with relevant agencies, including the police. The manager also personally visits children's families and friends to share with them any concerns about risk.

The manager also takes practical steps to ensure children's safety, for example, by increasing staffing levels or reducing children's free time for short periods. In these situations, the manager works closely with the local authority to ensure that an application for a restriction of liberty order is not required.

Such actions are highly effective in eliminating children's exposure to dangers, such as drug misuse and sexual exploitation. For one child, this has meant significant improvement and change to their behaviour. They are now engaged with their education, comply with house rules and accept help from staff and health professionals.

Children's need for protection and their right to increasing independence is managed very effectively. When children are out and about, staff keep in frequent contact with them using phone and online video calls, so that they can see in real time where children are and who they are with. Children are happy to let staff see what is on their phones. In line with good parenting, staff contact children's friends and families to ensure that these are suitable and safe relationships.

The positive relationships between staff and the children serve as a strong protective factor in keeping the children safe. Children are treated with dignity and respect. Children respond positively to this by complying with house rules, making better choices about their behaviour and getting on with each other. Staff follow a

restorative approach to respond to negative behaviours and have discussions about making positive decisions. As a result, the group is living more harmoniously together and there are no longer any incidents of bullying.

Children do not feel the need to go missing from the home, and staff do not need to hold children to manage their behaviour. This has been achieved through staff's excellent individual work with the children, clear boundaries and close liaison with other professionals.

Managers' strong recruitment practice focuses on safety, suitability and the needs of children. The staff team is now more balanced in terms of gender, which children are finding beneficial. New members of staff are vetted, and supported through their induction and probation period. There is continual assessment of staff performance and those who are no longer suitable to work with children are dismissed. This ensures that children are only looked after by those who are safe to work with vulnerable children.

The manager ensures that the home is a safe and comfortable place to live. All the required health and safety checks are in place. During this inspection, the home was awarded a five-star rating by environmental health inspectors, who were particularly impressed by children's knowledge of food hygiene and storage.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Children benefit from the home being managed effectively by a qualified and experienced registered manager, who is supported well by her deputy manager and the team leader. Together they lead by example, showing real warmth and care for the children.

The manager is a visible presence in the home and so has first-hand experience of the difference that staff are making to children's lives. She immediately implements change where necessary. The manager is a strong advocate for children and ready to respectfully challenge other professionals to get children the services they need.

Partnership working is a strength of the home. There is frequent and productive communication with other professionals involved in children's lives. One headteacher explained how helpful it was to have a handover discussion each Monday morning and an exchange of information each morning when the children attend school. This helps to highlight any issues that may be worrying children and helps to provide consistency in managing behaviour.

Children are helped to achieve positive outcomes because they are looked after by a knowledgeable and skilled staff team. Training and the development of staff are strengths of the home. The manager provides excellent support to a diverse and motivated staff team. They feel valued and staff morale is good.

Staff have access to a wide range of training, support and learning opportunities provided through supervision, team meetings and training events delivered by the manager. In addition, the manager is providing her deputy and the team leader with specific developmental input.

Children's progress and outcomes are closely tracked through the manager's monitoring. She knows the strengths of the home and areas for development and sets specific actions to continually improve the quality of care that children receive.

The independent visitor's assessment of the home also provides a valuable oversight of the home's operations. However, on one occasion, an issue raised by an external stakeholder was not addressed by the visitor, the manager or the responsible individual. This had no impact on children but was a missed opportunity to satisfy a professional concern.

Children's outcomes have improved because the manager has successfully met the requirements set at the last inspection in relation to alternative educational provision, health assessments and staffing levels.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. Specifically, ensure that concerns expressed by external stakeholders are considered and addressed. ('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: SC065189

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Meadows Care Limited

Registered provider address: Egerton House, Wardle Road, Rochdale, Lancashire
OL12 9EN

Responsible individual: Katie Knox

Registered manager: Paula Harden

Inspector

Stella Henderson, Social Care Inspector

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