

SC065679

Registered provider: Staffordshire County Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is managed by a local authority and provides residential short breaks for up to 4 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There is a registered manager in post who is suitably qualified and experienced.

At the time of the inspection, 2 children were living in the home. Both children were present during the inspection and chose to speak with the inspector.

Inspection date: 24 March 2026

Date of last inspection: 9 September 2025

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

At the last inspection, the organisation was reviewing its service offer. Since then, a formal request has been submitted to the regulator for a variation to the conditions under which the home operates. Leaders have consistently communicated the emerging demands on the service to support children who require emergency care. The registered manager has kept the regulator informed of changes made to internal policies to reflect this development. Since the last inspection, no families have received planned short breaks. A total of 14 children have used the service for emergency accommodation.

Three of the 6 requirements raised at the last full inspection have been repeated following this inspection. The remaining 3 requirements have been met. In addition, both recommendations made at the last inspection have been completed.

Since the last inspection, the quality of care planning for children when they arrive at the home and when they move on has improved. Staff support children to establish clear and consistent routines as they settle into the home.

Children are supported to access appropriate education provision, and all necessary routine health appointments are attended. Staff make arrangements to help children maintain pre-existing positive relationships and to develop new social activities that reflect their individual interests and hobbies. This approach supports children to build stability, develop a sense of belonging and make positive progress in their overall wellbeing and development.

Staff and leaders actively seek and respond to children's views, wishes and feelings. Children benefit from a wide range of meaningful planned discussions, during which staff consistently invest time in helping them explore both past and current experiences. For example, one child was supported to complete a family tree, which provided valuable opportunities to explore and understand key relationships in their life. This approach supports children to develop trusting and safe relationships and strengthens their sense of identity.

When children go missing from the home, staff take appropriate and timely action to ensure that they are safely located and returned. Each child has an individualised risk plan in place that provides clear guidance for staff to follow. Information is shared, escalated and reviewed effectively through regular multi-agency meetings. This ensures that professionals carefully consider all factors that may increase a child's vulnerability to harm. This coordinated approach enables professionals to implement targeted plans to reduce and disrupt the risks associated with children going missing from home.

When children experience difficulties in safely regulating their behaviour, staff do not consistently apply behaviour management strategies approved by managers to minimise risk at the earliest opportunity. This results in missed opportunities to prevent children from becoming at risk of criminalisation. When additional agency staff are deployed to support children with complex safety needs, leaders do not ensure that children's individual behaviour management plans are accurately updated to reflect the full range of measures of control used in practice. This shortfall limits the effectiveness of behaviour management approaches and reduces the consistency of care that children experience.

Leaders do not consistently provide the home's quality of care review and the monthly independent visitor reports to the regulator as required. These delays reduce the effectiveness of external oversight in ensuring that children's experiences consistently meet the required standards. Systems for monitoring and reviewing staff supervision records, as well as oversight of staff's progress in completing required training, lack efficiency. As a result, leaders do not yet have sufficiently robust systems in place to ensure that all staff are effectively supported and suitably skilled to consistently meet children's needs. The leadership team has recognised these shortfalls and has started to take steps to strengthen monitoring and review systems.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/09/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/05/2024	Full	Outstanding
23/05/2023	Full	Good
09/11/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)) This specifically relates to staff consistently following the guidance set out in children's individual risk assessments, to ensure children are safeguarded effectively when there is a serious concern raised about their welfare.	8 May 2026
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—	8 May 2026

helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(h)) This specifically relates to the registered person maintaining good oversight to ensure that there are effective monitoring and review systems in place to improve practice, particularly around staff training and development.	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy (“the behaviour management policy”) which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children’s home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2)) This specifically relates to the timely and proportionate use of effective measures of control to ensure children do not experience delays in staff supporting them to safely manage their behaviours to minimise their exposure to harm.	8 May 2026

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC065679

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Staffordshire County Council

Registered provider address: 1 Staffordshire Place, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 2DH

Responsible individual: Joanne Spender

Registered manager: Susan Dodd

Inspector

Charlotte Tippet, Social Care Inspector

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