

SC067753

Registered provider: West Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care and support for a maximum of 10 children with complex needs. The home can accommodate children with physical and learning disabilities. The home provides permanent placements and short breaks for children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2023, and is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 January 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	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: 31 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/01/2023	Full	Outstanding
22/03/2022	Full	Outstanding
25/09/2017	Full	Good
27/02/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This purpose-designed home comprises two separate dwellings: one for children who live at the home and one for children staying for short breaks, each with their own entrance. This means that children living in the home are not impacted by children visiting for short breaks. The children can share some areas, such as an art room and sensory room, so that all can enjoy this space.

The staff are attentive to the children's care needs. They understand how children communicate and this has built great relationships between the children and staff. This supports the children's progress. One child who was unable to communicate their needs when they came to live at the home now has a bespoke communication tool that is constantly evolving to give this child a voice and expand their vocabulary. Another child has been supported to explore childhood experiences that were previously not possible, such as going to a shop or playing with other children.

The staff are very dedicated and passionate about the children they work with. They ensure that the children have lovely experiences that are tailored to their interests. This ranges from playing on the garden swing, exploring slime in the art room or visiting places of interest. There is joined-up working between other children's homes in the local authority for the children to share experiences such as baking competitions and celebrations at the home.

The children who visit for short-break stays have fun, learn new skills and share wonderful relationships with the staff who care for them. They have well-planned stays which include their favourite activities and are supported to share their views on how they want their stays to be.

All the children who live at the home are attending education. There are strong links between the school staff and the staff at the home to ensure that they work in collaboration to meet the children's needs. This also applies to the children who stay for short breaks. One child who attends the short breaks has been supported to return to an education setting with work from the dedicated staff, who resourced external support for this child.

The children living in the home have complex and multiple learning and physical disabilities. The staff work with children's families and professional networks to ensure that children's health needs are met and this can often result in changes to how children need to be cared for or supported. However, there are shortfalls in some children's care plans and records kept to share these changes to ensure that staff practice reflects the care being given to the children.

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

A recent visit from the local fire service highlighted some shortfalls in the home's fire safety. Urgent action was taken to address this. Regular fire drills and tests are carried involving the children to ensure that they can be evacuated safely in the event of a fire.

The registered manager appropriately consults with the local authority safeguarding team following any serious incidents. Action is taken to safeguard children when an incident occurs. Risk plans are reviewed and learning from any incident ensures that children are safe.

Due to children's complex needs and disabilities, safeguarding arrangements and risk plans are in place to prevent children going missing from home. The staff are knowledgeable about children's behaviour plans and adapt their approach to support children with kindness, routines and boundaries. This is effective and children have not gone missing from home.

There are robust procedures in place to ensure that internal staff are recruited safely following appropriate vetting. However, this has not extended to agency staff, which means that not all checks are in place to ensure that external people working with children have been suitably vetted. An action plan was provided during the inspection to address this.

The staff support children well during their times of emotional difficulty. Very rarely, some children may need physical support from staff to be safer. While this is done sensitively, there are missed opportunities to reflect with children and staff after some incidents, and a lack of management oversight on some incidents to review this as a whole and ensure that records are complete.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is a consistent staff team in place and where staff work is carefully considered around the children's needs. For example, in short breaks, a core team is allocated to support each child so that they see someone regular when they stay.

The registered manager ensures that staff are supported with regular supervision and opportunities to come together and reflect, such as team meetings. Staff feel supported by the senior managers and are overwhelmingly positive about working in the home and the children's progress through the work they do.

Feedback from external professionals and families is very positive. There is good communication between the staff, families and professionals involved with the children. One child's social worker praised the commitment of the care and progress of the child, saying '[the child] is a different child, seeing what they have done for them is amazing.' One child's parent gave the following feedback regarding the care

for her child: 'It is wonderful here; [the child] is so happy and they couldn't ask for anything better.'

The registered manager has not maintained effective systems of management oversight as the short-breaks service expanded and new recording systems were introduced. This left several shortfalls in the oversight of records, staff training, incidents and the availability or duplication of documents, some of which give conflicting information. The registered manager recognises this as an area for development and has started to build an action plan to address this with her senior leadership team.

Senior leaders are unable to demonstrate that all the staff have the required skills and refresher training required for their role. For example, records show that some staff have not attended mandatory required training as the home requires, such as safeguarding children, their behaviour support model or supporting children with epilepsy. This means some staff may not have the skills required to support children's needs.

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 recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d)) This specifically relates to the safer recruitment processes for agency care staff who work with the children.	29 February 2024
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(c)) In particular, the registered provider should ensure that: ■ children's care plans are update to reflect current practice or when a child's needs change	31 May 2024

■ important documents that inform children’s care planning are obtained in a timely way and are embedded as part of children’s care needs.	
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— 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)) In particular, the registered provider should establish effective monitoring systems to review the quality of care for children, and ensure that all staff have up-to-date mandatory training, and that this is reflected in records.	31 May 2024
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. The registered person must ensure that— 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; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and 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.	31 May 2024

(Regulation 35 (1)(a) (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	
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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: SC067753

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: West Sussex County Council

Registered provider address: Democratic Services, County Hall, West Street,
Chichester PO19 1RQ

Responsible individual: Julian Skeates

Registered manager: Sharlene Vallance

Inspector

Sara Stoker, Social Care Inspector

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Manchester
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